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

COMFORT FOR THE TEMPTED
NO. 2603

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 27, 1883.

"There has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."
1 Corinthians 10:13.

THE children of God are all subject to temptation—some of them are tempted more than others, but I an persuaded that there is not one, except those who are too young to be conscious of evil, who will enter Heaven without having endured some temptation. If anyone could have escaped, surely it would have been "the First-Born among many brethren," but you will remember how He was led of the Spirit, straight from the waters of His Baptism, into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And the Apostle Paul informs us that He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Truly, the Lord Jesus might say to us who are His followers, "If I, your Master and Lord, have been tempted, you must not expect to escape temptation, for the disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord."

The fact that we are tempted ought to humble us, for it is sad evidence that there is sin still remaining in us. I am old enough to remember the times when we used to strike with a flint upon the steel in order to get a light in the morning, and I recollect that I always left off trying to produce a spark when I found that there was no tinder in the box. I believe that the devil is no fool and that if there is a man who has no tinder in the box—that is, no corruption in his nature—depend upon it, Satan will not long continue to tempt him! He does not waste his time in such a useless exercise. The man who believes that he is perfect can never pray the Lord's Prayer—he must offer one of his own making, for he will never be willing to say, "Lead us not into temptation." But, Beloved, because the devil thinks it worth his while to tempt us, we may conclude that there is something in us that is temptable—that sin still dwells there, notwithstanding that the Grace of God has renewed our hearts.

The fact that we are tempted ought also to remind us of our weakness. I referred just now to the model prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ, which contains the sentence, "Lead us not into temptation." The reason for pre-

senting that petition must be because we are so weak and frail. We ask that we may not be burdened, for our back is not strong, and we plead that we may not have sin put before us in any of its enticing forms, for, oftentimes, the flesh borrows strength from the world and even from the devil! And these allied powers will be too much for us unless the Omnipotence of God shall be exerted on our behalf to hold us up lest we fall.

Some children of God, whom I know of, are very greatly troubled because they are tempted. They think they could bear trial if it were trial dissociated from sin, though I do not see how we can, as a general rule, separate trial from temptation, for every trial that comes to us has in it some kind of temptation or other, either to unbelief, or to murmuring, or to the use of wrong means to escape from the trial. We are tempted by our mercies and we are tempted by our miseries—that is, tempted in the sense of being tried by them—but, to the child of God, the most grievous thing is that, sometimes, he is tempted to do or say things which he utterly hates. He has set before him, in a pleasant aspect, sins which are perfectly abhorrent to him. He cannot bear the very name of them! Yet Satan comes and holds before the child of God the unclean meats which he will never touch. And I have known the devil to tempt the people of God by injecting into their mind blasphemous thoughts, hurling them into their ears as with a hurricane. Yes, even when you are in prayer it may happen to you that thoughts the very opposite of devotional, will come flocking into your brain. A little noise in the street will draw you off from communion with God and, almost before you are aware of it, your thoughts, like wild horses, will have gone galloping over hill and dale—and you hardly know how you shall ever catch them.

Now, such temptations as these are dreadfully painful to a child of God. He cannot bear the poisoned breath of sin and when he finds that sin stands knocking at his door, shouting under his window, pestering him day and night, as it has occurred with some—I hope not with many—then he is sorely beset and is grievously troubled. It may help such a person if I remind him that there is *no sin in being tempted*. The sin is that of the tempter, not of the tempted. If you resist the temptation, there is something praiseworthy about your action. There is nothing praiseworthy about the temptation—that is evil and only evil, but you did not tempt yourself—he or she that tempted you must bear the blame of the temptation. You are evidently not blameworthy for thoughts that grieve you—they may prove that there is sin still remaining in you, but there is no sin in your being tempted. The sin is in your *yielding* to the temptation, but blessed shall you be if you can stand up against it. If you can overcome it, if your spirit does not yield to it, you shall even be blessed through it! "Blessed is the man that endures temptation." There is a blessedness even in the temptation and though for the present it seems not to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless, afterward, it yields blessed fruit to those who are exercised thereby.

Moreover, there are worse things in this world than being tempted with painful temptations. It is much worse to be tempted with a pleasant temptation—to be gently sucked down into the destroyer's mouth—to be carried along the smooth current, afterwards to be hurled over the cataract. This is dreadful, but to *fight* against temptation—this is good. I say again that there are many worse things than to be tried with a temptation that arouses all the indignation of your spirit. An old divine used to say that he was more afraid of a sleeping devil than he was of a roaring one, and there is much truth in that observation, for, when you are left quite alone and no temptation assails you, you are apt to get carnally secure and to boastfully say, "I shall never be moved." I think no man is in such imminent danger as the man who thinks that there is no danger likely to befall him, so that anything that keeps us on the watchtower, even though it is, in itself, evil, is, so far, overruled for good. The most dangerous part of the road to Heaven is not the Valley of the Shadow of Death—we do not find that Christian went to sleep there when the hobgoblins were all about him and when he found it hard to feel the path and stay on it—but when he and Hopeful came to the Enchanted Ground, "whose air naturally tended to make one drowsy." Then were the pilgrims in great peril until Christian reminded his fellow traveler that they were warned by the shepherds not to sleep when they came to that treacherous part of the way.

I think, then, that to be tempted with painful temptations—those that goad the spirit almost to madness. Bad as that trial is—grievous as it is to be borne—may be, spiritually, not the worst thing that can possibly happen to us. Of all evils that beset you, always choose that which is less than another and, as this is less than something else might be, do not be utterly driven to despair if it falls to your lot to be tempted as many before you have been.

This will suffice by way of preface to a little talk about temptation with a view of comforting any who are sorely tempted of Satan. I know that I am speaking to many such and I would repeat to them the words of my text—"There has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." Remember, dear tried Friend, that you must not sit down in despair and say, "I am greatly tempted, now, and I am afraid that I shall be tempted worse and worse until my feet shall slide, and I shall fall and utterly perish." Do not say as David did when he had been hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul," but believe that the Lord, who *permits* you to be tempted, will deliver you in His own good time!

I. Here is your first comfort. THERE HAS BEEN A LIMIT IN ALL YOUR FORMER TRIALS. "There has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man."

Temptation has sometimes laid hold of you, like a murderer takes a man by the throat, all of a sudden. It has seized you—perhaps that is as correct a word as I can use—temptation has seized you, unawares, pinioned you and seemed to grip you tightly. And yet, up till now, the temptations you have had to endure have only been such as are common to man!

First, *they are such as have been endured by your fellow Christians.* I know that you are tempted to think that you are a lone traveler on a road that nobody has ever traversed before you, but if you carefully examine the track, you can discover the footprints of some of the best of God's servants who have passed along that wearisome way. It is a very dark lane, you say—one that might truly be called, "Cut-Throat Lane." Ah, but you will find that Apostles have been along that way, confessors have been that way, martyrs have been that way—and the best of God's saints have been tempted just as you now are. "Oh, but," says one, "I am tempted, as you said a little while ago, with blasphemous and horrible thoughts." So was Master John Bunyan. Read his *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* and see what he had to pass through. Many others have had a similar experience and among them are some of us who are alive to tell you that we know all about this special form of temptation, yet the Lord delivered us out of it.

"Oh, but," says another tried soul, "I have been even tempted to self-destruction!" That, also, has not been an unusual temptation, even to God's dearest saints and, though He has preserved them and kept them alive, yet they have often felt like Job when he said, "My soul chooses strangling and death rather than my life." "Ah," cries another, "I am tempted to the very worst sins, the foulest sins. I would not dare to even mention to you the abominations Satan tempts me to commit!" You need not tell me and I trust that you will be kept from them by the almighty power of God's Holy Spirit, but I can assure you that even the saints in Heaven, if they could speak to you at this moment, would tell you that some of them were hard beset—even some of the bravest of them who walked nearest to God were hard beset by temptations which they would not have told to their fellow men, so troubled were they by them. Perhaps yet another friend says, "I have been actually tempted to self-righteousness, which is as great a temptation as can befall a man whose whole confidence is in Christ." Well, so was Master John Knox, that grand preacher of justification by faith. When he lay dying, he was tempted to glory in his own bravery for Christ—but he fought against that evil thought and overcame it—and so may you!

You think that when a man is very patient, he is not tempted to impatience? Brother, the Spirit of God says, by the pen of the Apostle James, "You have heard of the patience of Job." I suggest to you this question—Have you not heard of the *impatience* of Job? You have heard, no doubt, of the strong faith of Peter. Have you never heard of Peter's unbelief?

God's people usually fail in the very point for which they are most famous—and the man who has the greatest renown for any work of the Spirit of God in him, so far as the Bible biographies are concerned, has usually been the man who has made a failure at just the place where he thought he was strongest! "I have been reading the life of a good man," you say, "and I am not like he." Shall I tell you why? Because the *whole of his life* was not written! But when the Holy Spirit writes a man's life, He tells it all. When biographers write the lives of good men, of course they do not put down their inward struggles and fears, unless the subject happens to be a man like Martin Luther, whose life seemed to be all an inward struggle and who, while he was brave on the outside, was often a trembler within! When they write my life, they will tell you that I had strong faith, but they will not tell you all about the other side of it. And then you will, perhaps, get to thinking, "Oh, I cannot reach even to such a height as Mr. Spurgeon attained!" That all comes of your not knowing the inside of us, for if you knew the inside and the outside of the man who walks nearest to God—if he is a sincere, true-hearted man, he will tell you that the temptations you have to endure are just such temptations as he has had and, as he expects to have again and again and that, as the Apostle says, "there has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man."

Then, again, no *temptation has assailed you but such as fit for men to be tried with while they are in this state of trial*. This is not the time for the final victory, Brothers and Sisters, this is the hour of battle! And the weapons that are used against us are only such as have been employed against the armies of the faithful in all ages. You and I never were tempted as were the angels who kept their first estate and overcame the temptation. I cannot tell you how the Prince of Darkness was tempted, or how he went about tempting his fellow servants from their loyalty to the great King. But of this I am sure—you were never tried with a temptation suitable to an angel! Your temptation has only been such as is suitable to a *man*, and which as other men, like yourself, have overcome. Others have fought valiantly against similar temptations as yours and you must do the same, yes, and you *shall* do the same by the power of God's Spirit resting upon you!

It is said, in the affairs of common life, that what man has done, man can do, and that is true with regard to the spiritual life. Temptations that have been grappled with by other men, can be grappled with by you if you seek the same source of strength and seek it in the same name as they did. The strength to overcome temptation comes from God, alone, and the conquering name is the name of Jesus Christ! Therefore, go forward in that strength and in that name against all your temptations. Up and at them, for they have been routed long before, and you shall rout them again! Tremble not to go from fight to fight and from victory to vic-

tory, even as did the others who have gone before you and who have now entered into their rest—

"Once they were mourning here below,
And wet their couch with tears.
They wrestled hard, as we do now,
With sins, and doubts, and fears."

If you ask them from where their victory came, they ascribe it to the resources which are as open to you as they were to them—even to the mighty working of God the Holy Spirit and the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ! There has no temptation happened to you but such as human beings can grapple with and overcome by the help of God!

Again, there has no temptation ever happened to you but such as is common to man in this sense—*that Christ has endured it.* That great Head of manhood, that representative Man has suffered from the very temptation which is now pestering you. "In all their affliction—that is, the affliction of His people in the wilderness, which is just the same as yours if you are in the wilderness—"in all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them." He was compassed with infirmity, "a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief." To repeat the text I have already quoted, and which is so suitable here, He "was, in all points, tempted like as we are." "In all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He, Himself, has suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted." He knows all about the case of each one of us and He knows how to deal with it, and how to bear us up and bear us through.

So you see, dear Friends, there has no temptation happened to you but such as is common to man in the sense of having been endured by men like yourselves, having been overcome by men such as you are and having been endured and vanquished by your blessed Representative, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Come, then, Beloved, let all mystery with regard to your temptations be banished! Mystery puts an edge upon the sword of trial. Perhaps the hand that wrote upon the wall would not have frightened Belshazzar if he could have seen the body to which that hand belonged. There is no mystery, after all, about your trouble! Though you did write it down as being bigger than any that ever happened to a human being, that is not the truth—you are not an emperor in the realm of misery! You cannot truly say, "I am the man that has seen affliction above all others," for your Lord endured far more than you have ever done—and many of His saints, who passed from the stake to the crown, must have suffered much more than you have been called to undergo thus far.

II. Now let us turn to the second comfort revealed in our text. That is, THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD—"There has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful."

Oh, what a blessed word is this, "God is faithful"! Therefore, *He is true to His promise*. Even Balaam said, "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?" One of God's promises is, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." "God is faithful," so He will fulfill that promise! Here is one of the promises of Christ, and Christ is God—"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." "God is faithful," so that promise shall be fulfilled! You have often heard this promise, "As your days, so shall your strength be." Do you believe it, or will you make God a liar? If you believe it, then banish from your mind all dark forebodings with this blessed little sentence, "God is faithful."

Notice, next, that not only is God faithful, but *He is master of the situation, so that He can keep His promise*. Note what the text says. "Who will not suffer you to be tempted beyond what you are able to bear." Then you could not have been tempted if God had not allowed it to happen to you. God is far mightier than Satan. The devil could not touch Job except by Divine permission, neither can he try and tempt you except as God allows him. He must have a permit from the King of Kings before he can tempt a single saint! Why, Satan is not allowed to keep the key of his own house, for the keys of death and of Hell hang at the belt of Christ! And without God's permission, the dog of Hell cannot even open his mouth to bark at a child of God, much less can he come and worry any of the sheep whom the Lord has called by His Grace into His fold! So, then, Beloved, you have great cause for comfort from the fact that the temptation that tries you is still under the control of the faithful Creator, "who will not suffer you to be tempted beyond what you are able."

That is a second reason for comfort—roll it under your tongue as a sweet morsel.

III. The third comfort lies in THE RESTRAINT WHICH GOD PUTS UPON TEMPTATION. He "will not suffer you to be tempted beyond what you are able." The tide of trial shall rise to high-water mark and then God shall say, "Hitherto shall you come, but no further: and here shall your proud waves be stayed."

He "will not suffer you to be tempted beyond what you are able." That may apply, sometimes, to *the period when the temptation comes*. I have carefully watched how God times the trials of His people. If such-and-such a trial had come to one of His children when he was young, I believe he could not have borne it. Or if he had lost some dear friend while he was, himself, sick, the double trouble would have crushed him. But God sends our trials at the right time and if He puts an extra burden on in

one way, He takes something off in another. "He stays His rough wind in the day of the East wind." It is a very simple thing to say, but it is true—if the wind blows from the North, it does not, at the same time, blow from the South. And if one set of troubles comes to a Christian, another set of troubles generally departs from him. John Bradford, the famous martyr, was often subject to rheumatism and depression of spirit—in which I can greatly sympathize with him—but when he was laid by the heels in a foul damp dungeon and knew that he would never come out except to die, he wrote, "It is an amazing thing that ever since I have been in this prison and have had other trials to bear, I have had no touch of my rheumatism or my depression of spirit." Was not that a very blessed thing? And you will usually find that it is so—you shall not be tempted above what you are able to bear because God will permit the trial to come at a time when you are best able to stand up under it.

There is also great kindness on God's part *in the continuance of a trial*. If some of our trials lasted much longer, they would be too heavy for us to bear. Concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, our Lord said, "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." And I have no doubt that, oftentimes, God makes quick work of His children's trials because if they were continued longer, they would have not a good, but an evil effect upon us. If a child must be whipped, let not the punishment last as if he were a criminal who must be sentenced for a long period—let him have his chastisement and have done with it. So is it often in the discipline of God's house, yet there are other trials which are protracted year after year because trial is an ingredient in their efficacy and they might not be blessed to us if they were shortened. In every case there is Infinite Wisdom which makes our troubles to be just as long as they are and no longer.

So there is in the *number of the trials*. Blessed be God—

"If He ordains the number ten,
They never can be eleven."

If He intends His servants to pass through the fire and not through the water, Satan himself cannot make them go through the water! God counts the drops of bitter tonic that He administers to His ailing saints and not one drop more shall they possibly have than He measures out to them. So, dear tried children of God, you shall not be tempted above what you are able so far as the number of your temptations and trials is concerned.

It is the same, also, *in the stress with which the temptation comes*. Have you ever seen a great tree in the full blast of a tremendous tempest? It sways to and fro and seems scarcely able to recover itself from the powerful blows of the storm, yet the roots hold it. But now comes another tornado and it seems as if the tree must be torn up out of the earth, but the strain ceases just in time for the old oak to rock back into its place, again. But if there were a pound or two more force in that tre-

mendous blast, the tree would be laid prone upon the grass! But God, in His people's case, at any rate, stops just at the right point. You may be tried till you have not an ounce of strength left. Sometimes, the Lord tests His people till it seems as if one more breath from Him would assuredly cause them to sink. Then it is that He puts under them the everlasting arms and no further trial is laid upon them. This is a blessed thing, for all of you have troubles of one sort or another, and you who are the people of God may take this text and rely implicitly upon it—"God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted beyond what you are able."

As for you who are *not* His people, I am very sorry for you. I am holding up these precious things, but they are not for you. God's Word declares, "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked." If you have not God to flee to, what will you do when the storms beat upon your boat? To whom or where can you flee? As for the Christian, he can sing—

"Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to Your bosom fly,
While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high!
Hide me, O my Savior, hide,
Till the storm of life is past
Safe into the haven guide.
Oh receive my soul at last!

But, poor dear souls who love not Christ, where can you find comfort in your seasons of sorrow and trial? You who have lost wife and children—you who are pinched with poverty—you who are racked with sickness and yet have no Savior, what can you do? Poor houseless people in a snowstorm—what can they do without even a bush to shelter them? That is your state and I grieve for you, and plead with you not to remain in such a pitiful condition a moment longer!—

"Come, guilty souls, and flee away
Like doves to Jesus' wounds.
This is the welcome Gospel-day,
Wherein free Grace abounds!

Oh, that your sense of need might drive you to accept Christ as your Savior this very hour! As for His believing people, there is this solid comfort for them—they shall never be tempted above what they are able.

IV. The next comfort we gather from our text relates to THE PROVISION WHICH THE LORD MAKES FOR THE TEMPTED "God is faithful, who…will with the temptation also make a way to escape."

The Greek has it, "who will with the temptation also make *the* way to escape," for *there is a proper way to escape from a temptation.* There are 20 improper ways and woe to the man who makes use of any of them! But there is only one proper way out of a trial and that is the straight way, the way that God has made for His people to travel. God has made *through* all trials the way by which His servants may rightly come out of them. When the brave young Jews were tried by Nebuchadnezzar, there was one way by which they might have kept out of the burning fiery fur-

nace. They had only to bow their knees before the great image when the flute, harp, sackbut and psaltery sounded. That way of escape would never have answered, for it was not the right one! The way for them was to be thrown into the furnace and there to have the Son of God walking with them in the midst of the fire that could not hurt them! In like manner, whenever you are exposed to any trial, mind that you do not try to escape from it in a wrong way.

Notice especially that *the right way is always of God's making* and, therefore, any of you who are now exposed to temptation or trial have not to make your own way of escape out of it. God, and God alone, has to make it for you, so do not attempt to make it for yourselves. I knew a man who was in trouble because he was short of money—and the way he made for himself was to use somebody else's money with which he had been entrusted. That was not God's way of escape for him, so he only plunged himself into a worse trial than he was in before! I have known a man of business in great trouble and things were going wrong with him, so he speculated, gambled and ruined both his business and his personal character. That was not God's way for him to escape from his troubles! Sometimes the best thing a man in trouble can do is to do nothing at all—but to leave all in the hands of God. "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord."

When the Israelites came out of Egypt, God led them in a way at which men might well have quibbled. There was nothing before them but the sea and behind them came Pharaoh in all his rage, crying, "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." Now, then, what was God's way of escape for them? Right through the Red Sea! And on the other side they sang, when the Egyptians were drowned, "Sing you to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea." It would have been a great pity if they had tried to escape by any way of their own, or had attempted to turn around and fight Pharaoh—that would not have done at all—but the Lord made for His people the very best way of escape that could possibly have been devised.

Notice, also, that *the Lord makes the way of escape "with the temptation."* He suffered the trial to come and, at the same time He made the way of escape from it. God has planned it all, my Brothers and Sisters, how you, His champion, shall go forth and fight valiantly in His strength—and how He will be your shield and your exceedingly great reward. He will lead you into the dangerous situation, but He can see the way out of it as well as the way into it, and He will take you safely through. Did not the Psalmist sing, "To Him which led His people through the wilderness: for His mercy endures forever"? He not only led them *into* the wilderness, but He led them *through* it, blessed be His holy name! And if He has brought you into the wilderness of trouble and af-

fliction, He made the way out of it at the same time that He made the trouble. "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed. Delight yourself, also, in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass. And He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noonday. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him: fret not yourself because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked devices to pass." "Seek you first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness," and all else that you need shall be added unto you. Keep clear of the sin of the temptation and you need not fear the sorrow of the temptation. If the trials do not drive you to your own devices, but drive you to your knees, they will, after all, be blessings to you.

That is the fourth comfort, that God has made the way of escape for His people out of their trials. "Well, then," says someone, "I shall escape from this trial." Wait a moment, my Friend, and listen to the closing words of the text, with which I will conclude my discourse.

V. This is the last point of comfort, THE SUPPORT WHICH GOD SUPPLIES IN THE TRIAL—"that you may be able to bear it."

God's way of escape from trial is not for His people to avoid it, so as not to pass through it, but such an escape as leads them *through* the trouble and out at the other end—not an escape *from* the Red Sea, but an escape *through* the Red Sea from a still greater trial! If you, Beloved, are exposed to trial or temptation, you are to be made able to bear it. Now, pray, before you leave this building, that this last word, upon which I have not time to enlarge, may be fulfilled in your experience—"that you may be able to bear it."

Suppose you are to be poor. Well, if God has so appointed it, you *will* be poor, therefore pray that you may be able to bear it. With honest industry and stern integrity, struggle to attain to a better position, but, if all your efforts fail, then say to the Lord, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." Perhaps your dear child is dying, or your wife is sickening. You dread the thought of losing them and you would willingly give your life, if you could, for them. Well, do all you can for their recovery, for life is precious, and any money spent to save it will be well spent. But, if health is not to be granted to them, pray that you may be able to bear even that heavy trial. It is wonderful how God helps His people to bear troubles which they thought would crush them. I have seen poor feeble women that I thought would die under their bereavement, become brave and strong! And I have seen men who were faint-hearted in the prospect of trouble, nevertheless bless the Lord for it when the blow has actually fallen! And you may do the same.

Suppose you are to be sick. Well, that is a sore trial and I know that, personally, I would do anything I could to escape from the affliction that often besets me, but if it must not be, then I must change my note and

pray that I may be able to bear it. I had a letter from a man of God, this morning, which sustained me very much. He said, "My dear Brother, I was sorry to hear that you were again in pain and depressed in spirit, and so forth, but, as I remembered how God had blessed you in so many ways, I thought to myself, 'Perhaps Mr. Spurgeon would not have kept to preaching the Doctrines of Grace, and would not have been so able to comfort God's poor people if he did not get these smart touches sometimes.' So," he said, "I congratulate you upon these trials!" And I accepted the congratulations. Will not you do the same, my afflicted Brother or Sister? Pray, "Lord, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me," but, if it must not, then here comes that other form of comfort, "that I may be able to bear it."

And remember, dear Friends, while I tell you to make this passage into a prayer, it is really a *promise*, and there is no prayer like a promise that is turned, as it were, roundabout, and cut prayer-wise! God Himself has said, by His inspired Apostle, that He "will not suffer you to be tempted beyond what you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it." Up with the banners, then! Forward, whatever obstructs the way! Let us sing, with good old John Ryland—

"Through floods and flames, if Jesus leads,
I'll follow where He goes!
'Hinder me not,' shall be my cry,
Though earth and Hell oppose!"

The immortal life within us can never be destroyed! The Divine Nature, which God, the Holy Spirit, has implanted, shall never be trodden under foot! "Rejoice not against me, O my enemy. When I fall, I shall arise. When I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me."

But, oh, sorry, sorry, sorry, sorry am I, from the bottom of my soul, for you who know not the Lord, for this comfort is not for you! Seek Him, I pray you! Seek Him as your Savior. Look to Him and trust in Him—and then all the blessings of the Everlasting Covenant shall be yours, for the Father has given Him to be a Leader and Commander unto the people, and they that look to Him, and follow Him, shall live forever and ever! God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK—675, 750, 745.

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

OPEN PRAISE AND PUBLIC CONFESSION
NO. 2604

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 8, 1899.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 11, 1883.

"I will praise You with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto You. I will worship toward Your holy Temple, and praise Your name for Your loving kindness and for Your Truth: for You have magnified Your Word above all Your name. In the day when I cried, You answered me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul."
Psalm 138:1-3.

IT is a very grievous thing, to one who worships the only living and true God, to see others engaged in idolatrous worship. It stirs one's indignation to see a man worship—not his own hands, but what is even worse than that—the thing which he has made with his own hands and which must, therefore, be inferior to himself. As the righteous soul of Lot in Sodom was vexed with the filthy conversation of the inhabitants of that guilty city, so the righteous soul of David was vexed when he saw the many lords and gods before whom his neighbors were bowing down and, in like manner, as long as we are in this world, we shall often be troubled through seeing how others turn aside from the living God, how they forget His Truth, set up thoughts of their own in the place of the thoughts of God and dishonor the Holy Scripture by thinking that their own vain ideas can equal, if not even excel, the Revelation of God!

David, in this matter, becomes a guide to us. What he did in the presence of the idols of the heathen is, to a great extent, what we should do in the presence of the false systems of religion and the errors which are all around us! You, dear Friends, cannot love the right if you do not hate the wrong! I would not give a penny for your love to the Truth of God if it is not accompanied with a hearty hatred of error. I have taken this text as an instruction to myself as well as to you. What David did with all his heart, as a man who loved Jehovah, the only true God, we also should do if, indeed, we love the Lord Jesus Christ and all the glorious Truths which cluster around His glorious Deity and His atoning Sacrifice.

I. How, then, will we act? We will try to act exactly as David did, and if we do so, we shall, first of all, SING WITH WHOLE-HEARTED PRAISE. "I will praise You with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto You." This seems a very singular thing to do. Here is a man indignant with these false gods—one would suppose that he would begin to argue on behalf of the true God, that he would raise a controversy on behalf of Jehovah—but he does nothing of the kind. At least, this is not the

first thing that he does. He begins to praise God and to sing that praise aloud! "I will praise You with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto You."

This was a very singular method of procedure, yet a very wise one, for, first, *his song would openly show his contempt for the false gods*. What does it matter to him what these idols really are? Men call them gods, so, for the moment, he calls them gods, too. And he begins to sing, not to them, but to his own God, the only living and true God! He pitches the tune, he lifts up the strain, he sings a Psalm—and this is the theme of his music—"Glorious are You, O Jehovah!" And he does this in the very presence of the idol gods and their worshippers, as much as to say, "I take so little notice of them all that I will not even be disturbed about them. I was singing the praises of Jehovah and I shall go on singing them. I was full of holy joy and I intend, still, to be so. Those gods of the heathen are nothing, but our God made the heavens! Therefore, I will not rob Him of His Glory, or deprive Him of His full revenue of praise, by turning aside even for a single moment to pay any attention to these mere blocks of wood and stone." It was a wise way of acting on the part of David, and it was also a generous way, because he did not in words pour contempt upon the idols, but he showed his contempt for them by presenting his praise to Jehovah alone.

Let us do the same, Beloved. Do not worry yourself about those who turn aside from the Truth of God and run in their own crooked ways. Warn them as best you can, but remember David's advice on another occasion—"Fret not yourself because of evildoers." You have better work to do than to fret about them! Begin to praise your God and go on praising Him! Sing as many songs unto Him as ever you did and let your heart be just as glad as ever it can be. "Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." And if the Lord laughs, let us not cry! If He treats them with such calm contempt, let us do the same and lift up our voices again and again unto Him whose mercy endures forever, and whose throne is so established that all the leaguered hosts of earth and Hell cannot shake it for a single moment! "Say among the heathen that the Lord reigns." "The Lord sits upon the flood; yes, the Lord sits King forever." Therefore, let no man's heart fail him, but let all who love the Lord show their contempt for His adversaries by pouring out their joyful adoration unto the Most High!

I like David's plan of dealing with the idols, by continuing his wholehearted praise to God, because, next, *it would show his strong faith in the true God*. I cannot tell any better way by which he could have shown his confidence in Jehovah. He had already poured contempt upon the false gods, but now his calm, happy singing proves his reverence for the Most High and makes men see that if they doubt, he does not! If they rail, he knows how vain their railing is. It proves to them that there is at least

one man who has true faith in God, for he stands like a solid rock amid the surging sea. He is not moved. No, he is not affected enough to postpone his music, but he keeps on singing and singing the more loudly, as the more the sea roars and the fullness thereof. The more shrill the noise of the tumultuous idolaters, the more does he proclaim aloud his holy joy and his unshaken confidence in his God! True faith is one of the best of sermons. He who is—

"Calm 'mid the bewildering cry,
Confident of victory,"

has, by that trustful calmness, done more to inspire the timid with confidence than if he were the most eloquent of men who had, with great vehemence, urged them to trust in God. Thank God, faith, as well as unbelief, is contagious! And if—

"One sickly sheep infects the flock,
And poisons all the rest"—

there is another side to that Truth—one true Believer tends to strengthen all the rest and to make them "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." He who can sing as he goes to battle, if he is a leader, is likely to lead a tribe of heroes in his train! He who can sing in the time of shipwreck is likely to put courage into everyone of the crew, so that they do their best for the laboring vessel and, if it is possible, bring her safely into the haven. Sing, then, Brother! Sing, my Sister, for this will prove your child-like confidence in God, your implicit reliance upon Him!

That is a second commendation of David's mode of action.

The next is that by continuing to praise Jehovah in the presence of the idols, *he declared his all-absorbing zeal for God's Glory*. He did not need to stand up and say, "I love the Lord with all my heart." Hear him sing, "I will praise You with my whole heart." See what force he puts into every note! Listen to his jubilant song—you can tell by the very sound of his voice that his praise of Jehovah comes up from his heart—and from his whole heart. He is enthusiastic, he is full of confidence! If he had a doubt concerning Jehovah, he could not sing like that. And if he were lukewarm, he would not sing like that. But, as he is singing with his whole heart, those who are opposed to him say to themselves, "It is no use to trouble ourselves about *that* man—we shall never turn him from the faith." They will sheer off, one by one, knowing that it is no use to attack such a firm Believer. He who praises God with his whole heart is like a man on fire—he is terrible to the adversaries of the Most High. When the great Spanish Armada was ready to swoop down upon the English coast, our brave Admiral Drake took some of his small ships and placed them where the wind would carry them right among the Spanish fleet. He filled the vessels with combustible material and set them afire. Then he had no need to go, himself, for the wind just took the fire-ships and drifted them up against the Spanish galleons that floated high out of the water—and exposed a vast surface to the air—and one and another of the big unwieldy monsters were soon on fire—and a great victory was won without a blow being struck!

So, I like to get a red-hot Christian full of music and praise unto Jehovah and just let him go, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, right into the

middle of the adversaries of the Truth of God! They cannot make him out! They do not know how to handle a man on fire! If he would try to argue with them, they might overwhelm him with their logic. If he would fire a shot at them, they could shoot back at him. But he does nothing of the kind. He simply blazes and burns to the Glory of God—and that is a most effective mode of warfare with the Lord's enemies. Suppose, my Brothers and Sisters, that you were to have your hearts all on fire, burning and glowing with the intense conviction that the Gospel is true and that the God of Heaven and earth is the one living and true God—and that the atoning blood of the Divine Savior is the one hope of guilty sinners? Then you might do grand work for God! Tolerate no doubt in your spirit! Believe right up to the hilt with unstaggering confidence and then sing out your praises of Jehovah with a joyful confidence! Those who hate the Truth of God will not know what to make of you. They will probably get out of your way as quickly as possible, but, if they do not, then perhaps you will set *them* on fire and it may be, by the Grace of God, that you will burn up some of their errors and put them into a terrible state of confusion and anxiety if they still resolve to fight against the Lord of Hosts!

It was a wise plan, this of David, of getting in among the heathen gods and singing to the praise of Jehovah! They could not understand him, but they were affected by his singing all the same. If he could have walked through any temple where all the idol gods could have been gathered together, and if he could have sung, there, the words of our grand Doxology—

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him all creatures here below,
Praise Him above, you heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost"—

I would not have wondered if old Dagon had come tumbling down to the ground and if Chemosh, and Milcom, and Baal, and Ashtaroth and all those other abominations of the heathen had fallen prone upon the earth at the sound of this glorious song of praise unto Jehovah! Therefore, if we would overthrow the idols of our own day, let us imitate this wise mode of action on the part of the Psalmist.

I believe, also, that David was quite right in singing with all his heart before the idol gods because *it would shield him from all danger wherever he went*. To walk among the wicked is a dangerous exercise. It is as though a man had to go into infected air, or traverse the wards of a leper hospital—he is, himself, apt to become affected by the poisonous atmosphere and to become infected with some deadly malady. But, oh, if you keep on, with all your heart, praising God all the day, you may go with confidence wherever duty calls you! Ah, you might go between the jaws of death, itself, and yet suffer no injury, for an atmosphere of praise would be the best deodorizer and disinfectant wherever you might be bid by the Lord to go. As long as you kept on praising God and magnifying His holy name, no adversary could do you any harm. Remember how the hosts of Jehoshaphat triumphed in the valley of Berachah when they began to sing praises unto God—then were their adversaries routed! Remember,

also, how Paul and Silas could not be held in bonds when, at midnight, they sang praises unto God! Then the prison rocked, the chains were broken and the doors flew open, for there must be liberty where men can sing unto Jehovah! Where wholehearted songsters continually adore the Most High, the prisoners' fetters snap and the foundations of dungeons are moved! Therefore, dear Friends, mind that you keep up the spirit of praise.

I used to know, years ago, a poor old laboring man. He was a Methodist of the good old-fashioned school. I never met him, or spoke with him without finding that, wherever he was, he was always singing. He was up in the morning at half-past five to get out to his farm work and he sang while he was dressing. He sang as he pulled on his corduroys. He sang as he put on his smock. He sang as he walked downstairs, he sang as he tramped off down the street and he sang all day as he was at his work. He did not keep on singing while I was preaching, but he seemed almost as if he wanted to do that. And, every now and then, he would burst out with, "Hallelujah!" or, "Praise the Lord!" He was so full of thanksgiving to God that sometimes he was obliged to give expression to his feelings even when it would have been more proper if he had kept quiet! He was one of the holiest men I ever knew and I used to account very much for his simple gentleness, integrity and happiness by the habit he had acquired of constantly singing the praises of God. He worked with some men who were in the habit of swearing, but he kept on singing and, after a time, they began to think that it was not the right thing for them to swear. He went among men who drank, but he never left off singing and, somehow, even among such men, there was a kind of respect for him. It was so with all who knew him. His employer tried to put him where he would have easier tasks than others as he grew old. And everybody loved him.

I always wished that he had been a Baptist—that would have been just the finishing touch to make him perfect—and then we would have lost him, for all perfect people go to Heaven at once! But if I mentioned that subject to him—and sometimes I did—it was not long before he began to sing and he would ask me to join him, which I gladly did. His was a happy way of living. I wish that I and all of you could rise to it. Perhaps somebody says, "That good man was a very happy, gracious soul, but still he was very childish." Perhaps so, but I would like to be just as he was. I do not speak of him as having been child-*ish*, but child-*like*, always praising God like a happy child who is always singing. You know, dear Friends, you can keep on praising the Lord whatever else you may be doing. You can sit down in your house with the needle in your hand, or go abroad into the garden with the hoe and still be praising God. We do not have half enough of praise, Brothers and Sisters—I am sure the devil would be more angry with us it we would begin to praise God more—and since we certainly are under no obligations to Satan to keep from irritating his temper, let us sing unto the Lord as long as we live—and defy the devil to do his worst! As he likes neither music nor song in praise of Jehovah, let him have plenty of them both! Let us continually do as David declared that he would—"I will praise You with my whole

heart: before the gods (or before the devils, before the kings or before the beggars, before the drunks, before the swearers, before anybody and everybody) will I sing praise unto You."

That, then, was the first part of David's action—singing unto Jehovah with whole-hearted praise.

II. The second thing that David did was to WORSHIP BY THE DESPISED RULE. Even in the presence of those who set up their idol gods, and their false systems, he declared to Jehovah, "I will worship toward Your holy Temple."

Some said, "Worship this way." Others said, "Worship that way." In the present day some say that the Old Testament is not Inspired, that there is much that is very doubtful in the five Books of Moses. Some are going to worship in one way, some in another way of their own inventing. But if we are of David's mind, we shall say to the Lord, "I will worship toward Your holy Temple." Let every other man have his own way of worshipping if he will, but, Brothers and Sisters, as for me, I say to the Lord, with David, "I will worship toward Your holy Temple."

I admire this declaration, first, because *it is a quiet way of ignoring all will-worship*. "Oh," says one, "I am resolved to worship God with all kinds of show, ceremony, flowers and millinery." Another says, "I intend to worship God out in the fields and never to mingle with His people at all." Very well, you go your own ways, but I ignore both of your ways, for my way is to worship toward God's holy Temple—that is the way in which the Apostles and the early Christians worshipped Christ, not forsaking the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is—the way in which they cheered their own hearts and the hearts of their fellow Believers, with Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs—the way in which they spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance—the way in which they gathered around the Table of their Lord to remember His great love to them. You may go and set up whatever novelty you like, but I shall keep to that—

"Good old way, by our fathers trod"—

and I trust that every true child of God will make this personal declaration to the Lord, "I will worship toward Your holy Temple."

What did David mean by that expression, "Your holy Temple"? Well, the Temple, like the Tabernacle in the wilderness, was *typical of the adorable Person of our Lord Jesus Christ*. It was not that the tent in the wilderness or the Temple on Mount Zion was anything of itself—these were the places where God was especially pleased to reveal Himself. Now, today the Temple of Jehovah is the body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ which He, Himself, expressly called "the Temple." Let others worship saints and angels, if they will, but we will worship the Incarnate Christ and Him, alone! Let others worship the man and think him nothing more than man, but we shall worship Christ as God. I was delighted to sing with you, a little while ago—

"Jesus, my God! I know His name,
His name is all my trust!
Nor will He put my soul to shame,
Nor let my hope be lost."

Jesus is not only my Savior, but He is also my God! And my prayers are to be presented to the Father through Him and to come up unto the Most High through the Person of the God-Man, the Mediator between God and men, Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior! I will worship toward that shrine, the Person of the Son of God and God the Son!

But the Temple was also *the place of sacrifice* and we shall only praise God aright as we trust to the one great Sacrifice. Oh, how many, nowadays, deny the great Truth of vicarious suffering, the substitutionary Sacrifice of Christ on Calvary, saying that He is our Exemplar, but not the Maker of propitiation and reconciliation by His blood. Well, do not trouble your head about these people and begin to argue with them, but say, "As for me, 'I will worship toward Your holy Temple.' I have not any hope of my prayers speeding except through the Sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross. I can have no assurance of being accepted by God unless I am 'accepted in the Beloved.' So I will offer no prayer but that which goes to God by the crimson road of the substitutionary death of Christ. 'I will worship toward Your holy Temple.'" Keep to that declaration with unshaken firmness of resolve and it will be the best answer that you can give to the idols, or to the devils, or to anyone else who may oppose the Most High.

III. Now notice, thirdly, what David did. He went on from singing and worshipping to PRAISE THE QUESTIONED ATTRIBUTES—the very attributes which are being questioned in this present age. "I will praise Your name for Your loving kindness and for Your Truth."

The true Believer should praise God, first, for His loving kindness and for that loving kindness in its universality. Some say that the God whom we preach cannot be a God of Love because He banishes unbelievers into endless misery. If they refuse His Son, He gives them no hope that there can be any hereafter for them except that of eternal banishment from His Presence and from the glory of His power. "The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God." And there are some preachers who cover up and try to hide this solemn Truth of God, or speak as if they had velvet in their mouths when they come to deal with it. I shall not do so! By God's Grace, I shall never do so! There is enough love in God to satisfy me and I shall not need to make another god in order that I may believe in his loving kindness! My heart delights to praise the very Jehovah of whom the Psalmist sings, "To Him that smote Egypt in their first-born: for His mercy endures forever: and brought out Israel from among them: for His mercy endures forever: with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm: for His mercy endures forever. To Him which divided the Red Sea into parts: for His mercy endures forever: and made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for His mercy endures forever: but overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea: for His mercy endures forever."

I am quite certain that He never executes judgment with a severity which will be questioned by right minds. And in the Last Great Day, when the whole of this dispensation is wound up, it will be seen that "God is Love." We may not be able to see it now—He may seem to be, as

David says in another Psalm, "terrible out of His holy places." Jehovah Himself declares that He is a jealous God who will by no means clear the guilty—and there are many who quibble at that, but the Day shall declare it. When the veil is rolled up, to the astonishment of all God's creatures, it will be seen that He did the best, the wisest and the kindest thing which, all things considered, could have been done and, therefore, though I cannot yet understand all His dealings with the sons of men, yet I believe that they are right and I will praise His name for His loving kindness!

There is a special note, here, which bids us think of *God's loving kindness in its specialty*. Many quibble at this great Truth of God which seems to me to be self-evident—that Christ should choose His own spouse. They want to have entrusted to them the selection of a bride for Him! They want God to be lackey to the free will of man and that none of His purposes should be carried out unless man permits it! Their notion is that the great Creator must sit and wait till He gets His creature's permission to be gracious. But as for us, Beloved, we adore the glorious Truth of His electing love. We admire the sovereignty of His Grace and we delight to know that He does as He wills among the inhabitants of this lower world and deals out His mercy, as Paul puts it, "according to the good pleasure of His will." Instead of disputing with idols, or devils, we begin to sing with all our heart concerning the special love of God to His chosen and the favor which He bears towards them that put their trust in Him! We cannot employ our time to better purpose—to argue and debate might be a waste of effort and might depress our own spirit. But to bless the name of the Lord will do us good and will also be to His honor and Glory!

I find that the original bears another meaning—"I will praise Your name *for Your Grace*, and for Your Truth." Is it not a blessed thing to have that word, "*Grace*," always in the mouth? "*Grace*." Is it not one of the sweetest words that God ever permitted human lips to utter? And we often say, "*Free Grace,*" even if some tell us that is tautology. If one tap of the hammer will not suffice, we will give two. If men do not understand what, "*Grace*," means, we will call it, "Free Grace" and we will bless and praise the name of the Lord that we have two such words in the language as, "Free Grace!"

The other attribute for which David said that he would praise the name of the Lord is, *God's Truth*. Our heart may well be sad as we see how men are pecking at God's Truth. One part of the Bible is given up by one and another part is rejected by another. One of our wise men says, "I have given up all the Old Testament and a large part of the New." Well, Sir, you might just as well give it all up, because you evidently have no part nor lot in it, or else you would not talk like that! Those gentlemen who want to mend the Bible really need mending themselves! That is where the mischief lies in most cases. If they were savingly converted by the Grace of God, they would love every letter of the Book, from Genesis to Revelation, and find it food to their souls. But they do not know the inner meaning of it and, therefore, they despise the Scripture as being

but husks to them. And I greatly fear that is all that it is to many of them. But as for us, we shall glory in God's Truth—in the historic accuracy of every Word of this blessed old Bible! In the absolute Truth of God of everything that is recorded here! In the certainty of the fulfillment of every promise and every threat that is in this Book! And, what is more, in the absolute correctness of every unfulfilled prophecy as being just as certain as certainty itself! There is where we mean to stand!

We believe in plenary verbal Inspiration, with all its difficulties, for there are not half as many difficulties in that Doctrine as there are in any other kind of inspiration that men may imagine. If this Book is not the real solid foundation of our religion, what have we to build upon? If God has spoken a lie, where are we, Brothers and Sisters? And if this Book, for which the martyrs bled, and which sustained our sires in prison and on their deathbeds—if this precious Book which is today hugged to the heart of many a dying saint—is to be torn away from us, it shall not go without a struggle in which we will, if necessary, sacrifice even our lives! We will never give up the Bible! We will love it in life and in death, and we will still believe that it is the glorious and perfect Revelation, as far as our imperfect minds can discern it, of the loving kindness and Truth of God! And for it we will praise and bless His holy name!

This is what David said he would do, and I recommend all tried saints to do the same.

IV. Now, fourthly, there was another thing which David meant to do and that was to REVERENCE GOD'S WORD TO THE HIGHEST DEGREE. He puts it thus. "You have magnified Your Word above all Your name." My text is such a great one that I need half-a-dozen nights to discuss it, so I can only give you hints of what I would say if I had the time.

God's name, dear Friends, is revealed in a measure in Nature. In Providence that name may be spelt out, but David tells us, here, that the Lord has magnified His Word above all His name. That is to say that Revelation is made by God to be infinitely superior to Creation and to Providence as a revealing of Himself, for, first, *it is more clear*. If a man paints grand pictures, even if I never saw the man, I know a little about him when I see his paintings. Yes, but if he writes me a letter and in that letter tells me what is in his very heart, I know more about him by his words than I do by his works! And there is more of God in some passages of the Bible than in the whole universe besides! If science could be all known, it would not contain as much real Light of God as there is in a single verse of Scripture, for the best Light of God is in the Word! There is other light, too, but it is only moonlight as compared with the sunlight. God has magnified His Word, for its clearness, above every other method of revealing His name or Character.

It is not only more clear, but it is also *more sure*. If we look into God's works, one man sees one thing and another man sees another. But if you look into God's Word and you have a childlike spirit, you will see what another childlike-spirited man sees. If you are God's child, you will see what others of God's children see there. And in the great fundamental Truths discoverable in His Word, the saints are almost entirely agreed.

The whole universe is not big enough to mirror God in all His Glory. If He looks into the great and wide sea that He has made, the glass is too small to reflect more than a part of His Glory. Suppose that God should reveal Himself fully in Nature? It would soon be seen that the axles of the wheel would be all too weak to sustain the weight of Deity! It is only Revelation that can truly manifest Him to us.

Think again—God's Word is *more lasting* than His other works. The Revelation of God in Nature is not unique. If He has made one world, He can make another. If He has made one universe, He can make 50 universes! But after having given us one complete Revelation of His will, He will never give another—that one stands alone. What God has made known in the book of Nature will all pass away—there will come a day when the elements, themselves, shall be dissolved with fervent heat and, like a worn-out vesture, all this material creation shall be put away. But, "the Word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you," so that God magnifies His Word by making it everlasting. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Words shall not pass away."

Does not God magnify His Word in your hearts, dear Friends? You have sometimes been in the fields on the Sabbath and a sweet sense of rest has stolen over you. In the time of harvest, or on a bright morning when the sun has risen, you have been overwhelmed with a sense of the Glory of God. But, still, that sweet feeling never comes to the heart so as to affect its secret springs like a passage out of Scripture! A promise from God will cast more light into your soul than all the beauties of sea and land! I do not for a moment depreciate the wondrous Glory of God in all His works, but, still, I do say God is seen better in His Word than in all His works besides—and He has magnified His Word above all His name! They say that we ought to alter Scripture because scientists have found out something or other. Yes, I know all about that kind of talk! Scientists found out many things years ago and within 10 years somebody else rose up and found out that they were all wrong! The history of so-called philosophy is the history of fools! And the philosophers of this day are no more right than those of 50 years ago. The men are coming to the front who will confute the positive assertions of the present and, when they have made their own assertions, and made their bow, another set of wise men will be coming after them to confound them! They are all as the grass that withers, but, "the Word of the Lord endures forever." It has been tried in the furnace of earth, purified seven times and here it remains— still the pure refined metal—and in this will we glory and not be ashamed!

V. Lastly, David was going to PROVE ALL BY HIS OWN EXPERIENCE. A bit of experience is the best thing with which to close up my discourse. "In the day when I cried, You answered me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul."

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, men say that facts are stubborn things, and so they are. And when a man once gets a fact with regard to the religion of Jesus Christ, he becomes a stubborn man. The man who is in the

habit of praying to God and who is in the habit of having answers to his prayers—the man who lives a life of prayer and consequently who is enriched by innumerable mercies, says to those who deny the efficacy of prayer—"You may say what you like, but you cannot trouble us about this matter, because I am daily testing and daily proving in my own experience what prayer can accomplish." "Well," they say, "you did not get out of the trouble. You prayed, but you did not escape from it." That is quite true, I did not. But God strengthened me with strength in my soul and it is a grand thing when the mind becomes calm, when the soul grows strong, when courage increases, when confidence comes, when deep peace and quiet restfulness flow into the soul! All that is a blessed answer to prayer and as long as God gives us that, we cannot desert His standard, or deny His faithfulness and His Truth! Let those who will, go and leave the snows of Lebanon, and the pure flowing river of God for the broken cisterns that can hold no water, or for the muddy waters of Egypt—but we cannot, we dare not, we will not! God helping us, we will stand fast in our belief in the power of prayer! We have tried it, we have proved it and we are not to be shaken from our confidence in its efficacy!

The Lord give to everyone of you who do not, at present know it, to prove it yourselves, to try it to your heart's joy and satisfaction—and you, also, shall stand fast in your confidence in Him even to the end! The Lord bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 138.

Verse 1. *I will praise You with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto You.* "Gods or no gods, whatever they may be, 'I will praise You with my whole heart.' I will not be ashamed to declare my confidence in Jehovah, whoever may listen to me."

2. *I will worship toward Your holy Temple, and praise Your name for Your loving kindness and for Your Truth: for You have magnified Your Word above all Your name.* Now was his time to speak. The gods of the heathen had their worshippers. Then should Jehovah be deserted by His loyal subjects? "No," says David, "I will worship You, and I will praise You, whoever may oppose me."

3. *In the day when I cried, You answered me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul.* What worshipper of idols could ever say that of *his* god? "Ears have they," but they hear not the cries of their worshippers. "Hands have they," but they cannot deliver those who cry to them. "Feet have they," but they cannot come to the help of their votaries. But David declares that God had heard him in the day of his trouble and strengthened him with strength in his soul.

4. *All the kings of the earth shall praise You, O Lord, when they hear the Words of Your mouth.* He felt that he had had such good things to say concerning God, such blessed Words of God to make known, that even the kings of the earth, when they began to listen to him, would become

attentive and would even become converts—and begin to praise Jehovah with him.

5. *Yes, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord: for great is the Glory of the Lord.* Think of that—kings singing in the ways of the Lord! Crowned princes becoming choristers in God's service. Someone has said that there are few in Heaven who wore crowns on earth. And I am afraid it is true that of all who are crowned on earth, few ever get to that land where all are kings and priests unto God. To have a crown on earth and a crown above is a rare thing! But David says that these kings "shall sing in the ways of Jehovah: for great is the Glory of Jehovah," and they shall be overpowered by that Glory—melted, subdued, wooed, won, converted by its power!

6, 7. *Though the Lord is high, yet has He respect unto the lowly: but the proud He knows afar off. Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me.* He was a king, yet he expected trouble. And do you complain when it comes to your cottage, after it had been to David's palace? "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me."

7. *You shall stretch forth Your hand against the wrath of my enemies, and Your right hand shall save me.* He expected, first, to be revived, and afterwards to be protected. He believed that God would stretch out His hand, as men do when they make a supreme effort, and put forth all their force—"You shall stretch forth Your hand against the wrath of my enemies." David also expected ultimate preservation—"'Your right hand shall save me.' You will do it dexterously, readily, gladly, will You do it. 'Your right hand shall save me.'"

8. *The LORD will perfect that which concerns me.* "All that has to do with me—my business, my family, my work, my temporal and my eternal interests—'that which concerns me,' and that which troubles me, moves my heart with the deepest concern, Jehovah will perfect."

8. *Your mercy, O LORD, endures forever: forsake not the works of Your own hands.* And He will not do it! He will carry on unto completion the work which He has begun, blessed be His holy name!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—138, 670, 324.

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

DEATH AND ITS SENTENCE ABOLISHED
NO. 2605

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 15, 1899.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 14, 1883.

"And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, has He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His Cross."
Colossians 2:13, 14.

IT tends to excite gratitude in our hearts if we remember what the Lord has done for us. It is not wrong for us to think of all that we still need from God, but it would be exceedingly ungrateful if we were to forget what we have already received. By far the greater part of salvation is already ours and though, in some respects, we have not yet attained, neither are already perfect, yet in other respects we are complete in Christ Jesus. If we are truly believers in Christ, we are already saved—we are not merely in a salvable state, but we have really obtained salvation. In Christ we are delivered from the curse of the Law of God and we have an eternal inheritance already secured to us. I must not dwell on that blessed theme. I only mention it, in passing, to remind you that it encourages our gratitude if we remember what the Lord has done for us.

It also stimulates us to hope for more blessings in the future. It puts a keener edge upon our prayers and helps us to plead with greater confidence, for we feel that, inasmuch as God has already given us so much and done so much for us, He will perfect that which concerns us, and will not forget the work of His own hands. The remembrance of what the Lord has done for us is also quite sure to inflame our love. We cannot be cold-hearted if we continue to remember God's goodness to us. We must be glad in the Lord and, with that gladness, there must come fervent love to Him who has worked all these things on our behalf and brought us into the blessed estate of those who are saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation!

This morning, [Sermon #1744, Volume 39—*Where the "If" Lies"*——read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org] I talked to those who were seeking the Savior. They had their turn, then, so now I am going to speak to those who have found the Lord. Ah, dear Friends, how precious He is to you! I want you to see what He has done for you—what God the everlasting Father has done for you through Jesus Christ His Son—that you may come and sit at His feet in adoring love and feel your hearts burn within you as you meditate upon the riches of His amazing Grace. Our text speaks of two things which God has done for us through Christ Jesus. First, there is *the removal of the death within us*: "And you,

being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, has He quickened together with Christ, having forgiven you all trespasses." The second thing is *the removal of the handwriting which was against us*. This we have in the 14th verse. "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His Cross."

Before I come to the subject of my discourse, I want every child of God whom I am addressing to feel, "The preacher's talk is to be about *me* and about what Christ has done for *me,*" for, remember, dear Friends, that the work of Christ is as distinctly on behalf of each Believer as if he were the only object of Divine Love in the whole universe! And while it is true that Christ's work concerns all His people—and it is a very great comfort that it is so—yet it is also true that it concerns each one of His people and it is all the property of each one. I want you, just now, to eat your own morsel, to claim your own portion and to take home to your own heart what God has given to you by a Covenant of salt, and so given it to you that it can never be taken from you!

I. First, then, the Lord has done this for all of us who believe in Him—HE HAS REMOVED OUR INWARD SPIRITUAL DEATH.

Turn to the text to see *what this death was.* "You being dead in your sins." We were all, then—the regenerate as well as the rest of mankind—"dead in trespasses and sins." What kind of death was this? Certainly it was not *physical* death. We lived, moved and had our being. We exercised our wills and did as we pleased in our enmity and opposition to God. The Lord does not treat men as if they were sticks and stones, nor does He ever regard them as such. They are alive, and when they sin, they sin most sadly of their own accord.

Neither was our death a *mental* death, for the ungodly can think as well as others, and they have all the powers of reason unless, indeed, they have dulled and destroyed them by certain forms of sin which produce that result. Alas, there are some of the most acute minds in the world that are not reconciled to God. The men are alive enough as to their minds, yet they are truly said to be dead! I could almost wish, for some people, that it *was* a mental death rather than the kind of death they have, since now the quickness of their intellect only helps them to increase their guilt and to multiply the reasons for their condemnation.

And yet again, as it is not a physical death, nor a mental death, so neither is it a *moral* death. Man is not so dead that he sins without guilt, or lives without responsibility. No man who remains out of Christ is without guilt on that account. He who continues an unbeliever may not say that he cannot help it—it is his fault and his sin that he does not believe. Indeed, our Lord told His disciples that the Comforter would convince the world of sin for this very reason—"Because," He said, "they believe not on Me." To Nicodemus, our Lord also said, "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believes on Him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." O dear Hearers, if I could believe that you were mere machines, or that you had drifted along the stream of time like some stray timber on a Canadian river. If I believed

that you could not in any way help yourselves, but were the mere creatures of your circumstances, then I might be comfortable concerning you, for you would be exempt from criminality. But it is not so—you are men and women living before the living God and you are responsible to Him for your actions and your words—and even for the thoughts and imaginations of your heart! For every rejection of His Gospel you will have to give account at the Last Great Day. And if you remain out of Christ, that account will seal your doom forever.

The kind of death here spoken of is *spiritual* death—death as to higher things than can be grasped by the hands, or seen with the eyes, or comprehended by the natural mind. Only the spiritual man knows what spiritual things are, for they have to be spiritually discerned. You would not think of teaching a horse the wonders of astronomy because there is no mind in the horse that could learn that science! Neither can we, of ourselves, teach spiritual things to our fellow men, because, until they are born again, born from above, they do not possess the faculty with which they can grasp spiritual things. Our Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh"—and therefore can only lay hold of the things that are fleshly. "And that which is born of the Spirit is spirit"—and until a man is born of the Spirit, he is without the faculty of understanding and enjoying spiritual things.

As far as spiritual things are concerned, man's understanding is dead. He can comprehend the highest and most wonderful of sciences, but he cannot—or, what is tantamount to it, he *will* not—understand the things of God. He turns on his heels and says, "I cannot make out what you mean." No, we know that you cannot, and we are not surprised at your lack of apprehension, for it is just what the Bible leads us to expect. We even find those who consider themselves to be learned divines rejecting the Gospel and saying that it is not consistent with their philosophy. We never thought that it was—and we never imagined that they could receive the Gospel until they are converted and become as little children. The great reason why men reject the Gospel is because they are not born again. Because they have not received the life of God into their souls. If they had, they would understand it so as to delight in it. But the understanding, spiritually, is under a cloud of night which the Word of God calls "death."

So also is the human will dead to spiritual things. When a person is literally dead, he cannot will to come to life. Neither does any man ever will to come to Christ till the Spirit of God gives him that will, for his natural will is exerted in quite another direction, as our Lord said to the Jews, "You will not come to Me that you might have life." The will is a slave, it is held in chains, it is set on mischief and resolved not to subject itself to the will of the Most High. Not morally, nor mentally, but spiritually, the will of man is dead!

So, too, is it true of the affections that they are dead to spiritual things. Men, in their unregenerate state, will not love that which is good. Alas, they will not love Christ. He is altogether lovely, yet unrenewed men see nothing in Him that they should love. Holiness, purity, the will of God—all these things are worthy of being loved, yet men do not love

them. No, they love the very opposite until the Grace of God comes and quickens them.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, is not all this a true description of what we were before the Spirit of God begin to deal with us in His regenerating power? Were we not dead to all spiritual things? Some of you used to come to the House of God, but you were here just as so many corpses might have been. You used to visit where there were Christian people, but you could not understand what they said about their experience. You had no enjoyment in their joys, neither did you sorrow in their sorrows. There was a deep gulf between you and them—and the secret was that you were *natural* men and they were *spiritual* men! You loved not the things which they loved, even as they took no delight in the things which charmed you, for you were in a condition of spiritual death.

Consider, next, dear Friends, *what that spiritual death involved.* The text puts it thus—"You being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh."

First, we were dead in sin. No, I quoted the text wrongly, for we were dead in our *sins*—the word is in the *plural.* They were our own sins, not the sins of our fate or destiny, or of our circumstances and surroundings, but *our own sins.* We willingly committed them. As the result of our death to everything that was holy, good and spiritual, we sinned and we took pleasure in sin. We repeated our old sins and we devised and invented new sins! They were, with an emphasis, our sins, our own actual, real, personal sins!

These sins were very varied according to our condition and temperament. Some went after one sin, others after another. Some were quiet and gentle sinners, so that many persons thought that they were holy. Others were noisy outrageous sinners who were a nuisance to the parish in which they lived. Some were sinners under some sort of fear, but they would have sinned more if they had dared to do so. Others had cast off all fear, both of God and man, and plunged headlong into rioting, wantonness and all manner of unmentionable crimes. All these sins were accompaniments of spiritual death—they were just what winding-sheets are to dead men. There, then, is the picture of what we were and of what the unregenerate are—"dead in trespasses and sins"—lying there wrapped in the cerements of sin. We were surrounded, covered with sin, getting ready in that condition to soon be carried out to the eternal burial, to the place "where their worm dies not, and where the fire is not quenched." That is how I was by nature! That is how you were, Brothers and Sisters, who are now alive unto God. You may, perhaps, have seen an Egyptian mummy, bound from head to foot with the wrappings appertaining to death—so it was with you. Your sins were about your head, your heart, your hands, your feet! Sins surrounded you everywhere—and there you lay, as the text says—"dead in your sins."

Now let us see *how we were delivered.* And as we lay our hands on our hearts and think of what God has done for us, let us prepare to bless and magnify His name. "You, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, has He quickened"—He has made you to live—"you has He quickened together with Him." God, by His Grace, has made you to live in Christ. Do you not feel the difference between what you were

and what you now are? Can you imagine what a change there would be if a dead man who had been lying in his grave clothes could suddenly sit upright, or rise out of the shell in which the undertaker had placed him? What a contrast between the state of death and the state of life! That is a very faint figure of the difference between what we now are and what we used to be. Do you not realize it, Brothers and Sisters? The things you once despised, you now value. And the things you then passed by with a sneer, you would now live for and die for! You used to hear about these things and it often seemed dull work to listen to a sermon. But now there is music in it from the first word to the last. That Bible of yours used to be like an old will to you, and old wills are very dry reading, but now you have found the record of a great legacy left to yourself and, oh, it is blessed work to read the will now—you could sit and study it all day long!

Praying, also, used to be hard work. You managed to mutter, in a dead way, a few dead words, but prayer is now quite another thing with you—your whole spirit is alive when you draw near to God in supplication. In fact, you are a changed man altogether! I suppose that if you were to meet your old self, he would hardly know you, for you are so greatly altered. I daresay he would say to you, "Come, old fellow, let us go to the theater, or turn into this beer-shop, or let us go home and find some way of amusing ourselves." You would reply, "No, Sir. I cut your acquaintance a long time ago and I do not mean to have anything to do with you, so you may go about your business as soon as you like. I am not what I was, for I have been crucified with Christ—and I am dead, and my life is hid with Christ in God." There was one of the old saints who used to keep company with a woman in his ungodly days, and when he was converted, she met him in the street, and said to him, "Austin, you know me." "Well," he said, "yes, I do. But I am not Austin any longer. At least I am not the person that I used to be." Oh, it is a blessed thing when we can feel that we are not what we once were! True, we are not yet what we want to be and we are not what we shall be, but we are not what we used to be—and we shall never again be what we used to be! The Grace of God will prevent that, now that we have been quickened.

But how are we quickened? Paul says that God has quickened us together with Christ. And by this he means, first, that we have been quickened mystically by Christ's Resurrection. That morning when Christ Jesus rose from the dead, all His people rose in Him! The sun was not yet up, but the Prince of Life and Glory had lingered long enough in the sepulcher, so, awaking into life through Divine power, He began to unwrap Himself from the cerements of the tomb. He laid the napkin by itself for your use and mine, that we may wipe our eyes when our dear friends are taken away. But He took the grave clothes and put them together, that He might leave the house ready furnished against the time when we should be carried there—our last bed being thus supplied by Him with all the furniture we shall need when our time comes to sleep in it. Then He waited a while till the sheriff's officer came down to set the hostage free, for the angel descended from Heaven, the stone was rolled away and Jesus breathed the sweet morning air again. He that had been dead arose and left the tomb, no more to die! And, in that hour, everyone who

is in Him was virtually made to rise. The resurrection of all whom He represented was guaranteed by His Resurrection, as He said to His disciples, "Because I live, you shall live also." That is the result of the mystical union between Christ and His people.

But, as a matter of fact, and practically, you and I began to live, spiritually, *when we became united to Christ by faith*. Do you remember that glad hour when you first believed in Him, trusted Him, put your soul into His hands? Ah, then it was that you began to really live! Oh, what a difference that saving faith makes in us! In our Savior's parable about the two builders, there is one expression that seems to me very significant. Luke's account of it runs thus—"Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings, and does them, I will show you to whom he is like: he is like a man which built an house, and dug deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream bent vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. 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."

Did you notice, as I quoted the words, that in the second instance Christ left out all about coming to Him? Yet that coming to Him is the essential thing. If you come to Him and hear His Words, and do them, you will have a rock for the foundation of your eternal building, and it will stand any storm that may beat upon it. But if you do not come to Christ, even though you hear His Words, that hearing can be of no permanent profit to you. Indeed, it will really increase your condemnation! It is the coming to Him, the getting into union with Him which settles and decides the all-important point in connection with our new life. So, then, it was when we became one with Christ by an act of living faith that we were quickened, blessed be His holy name forever and ever! If we do, indeed, possess this new life, let us show it! Let us prove, by our conduct and conversation, that we are no longer numbered among the dead, that we have risen with Christ and cannot go back to the tomb! We will have nothing to do with whitewashing the outside of our old sepulcher. We have left the outside and the inside, too, and now we live unto God and have done forever with the old state of death. I have set forth all too feebly the great work of God in removing the death that was within us, but if you feel that my words are true concerning you, your heart will beat high with devout thanksgiving to the quickening Spirit who has worked this great miracle in you!

II. Now I come, secondly, to notice the great deed of Christ in THE REMOVAL OF THE HANDWRITING THAT WAS AGAINST US.

Consider, dear Friends, *what this handwriting was*. When a man has some charge or insinuation against him merely whispered about and floating in the air, he hardly knows what it is. And, perhaps, if he is a sensible man, he does not care much what it is, but he lets it fly about till it flies away. But when he has an accusation made against him in black and white—when there is a handwriting against him, a charge written down and laid before the court, an indictment upon which he is to be tried—that is a most serious matter. Handwriting, especially in legal matters, is generally more accurate than mere speech, and there is,

against every ungodly man, something written with the finger of God which he cannot deny, for it is absolutely true. Handwriting also abides. The old Latin proverb says, *"Litera scripta manet,"* that which is written remains. Be very careful as to what you put into black and white because it may be brought against you many years after you have written it—when you may think very differently concerning it. There is, against every unconverted man, a handwriting which will remain and which will be brought up against him at the great Day of Judgment. It is not a mere baseless rumor floating about, but something tangible which will last and which cannot be removed except by the almighty power of God.

What is meant, in our text, by "*he handwriting of ordinances that was against us*"? I cannot give all the meaning in a word, but, does it not mean, first, that the moral law, which we have broken, has written out a curse against us? Each of the Ten Commandments has, as it were, united with the rest to draw up an indictment against us. The First Commandment says, "He has broken me." The Second cries, "He has broken me." The Third, "He has broken me," and the whole 10 together have laid the same charge against each one of us! That is the handwriting of the Law of God condemning every man of woman born while he remains in a state of nature. The Jews, you remember, came under another law—the Ceremonial Law. Did that Ceremonial Law draw up an indictment against them? Was it not intended to rid them of sin? I answer, No! There was a lamb slain every morning and that sacrifice must have reminded at least some of them that a perpetual atonement was provided, but, as with an undertone of thunder, it also reminded them all that such an atonement was still needed, that, after a thousand years of the offering of lambs, sacrifices were still required! There was ordained a Day of Atonement with specially solemn ceremonies, but what did that day say to the Jews? That an atonement was provided? No, but that an atonement was still needed, for, as soon as ever that year was up, the atonement had not been made and they must have *another* Day of Atonement!

The Apostle Paul expressly says, "But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." There was a perpetual remembrance of sin in every one of the offerings under the Ceremonial Law. I need not stay to speak of them in detail, but they were intended—the most of them, at any rate—to continually remind men that sin was *not* washed away. Thus all the ceremonies drew up a handwriting and said to the Jews, and to us, too, "You need an atonement by blood. You are guilty and there is no hope of your ever coming to God except by a sacrifice which these rams and bullocks represent, but the place of which they cannot possibly fill."

Then there is another "handwriting of ordinances that was against us." I think there is written across the very face of Nature the great Truth of God that man has sinned. Sin has so marred the world which God made perfect that none can go through it without feeling inconvenience and often sorrow and pain. There are some men who pass through the world as though it were a burning fiery furnace threatening their destruction. Why howls the blast upon the sea and dashes the galleon

upon the rocks? Why have we earthquake, tornado, cyclone, and the like? Why, because man is a sinner! And there is a handwriting in the very ordinances of Nature written, as it were, mystically upon the wall, as it was at Belshazzar's feast—and this is what it says, "You are weighed in the balances, and are found lacking." There is also another handwriting to the same effect—for God's works always sing the same tune—that is, the handwriting of conscience within the heart. Conscience writes, "You have sinned. You have done the things which you ought not to have done, and you have left undone the things which you ought to have done." And if conscience is permitted to write in its own bold and, it sets down this terrible message, "You are lost, ruined and undone! The wrath of God has gone out against you." This is "the handwriting of ordinances" which is in every part of God's creation, though, alas, many are unable or unwilling to read it!

Now let us ask, concerning this "handwriting of ordinances," *what is to become of it?* It will certainly be impossible for us to answer it, for "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." There may be some men here who know of little pieces of handwriting that have cost them a great deal of trouble. A so-called friend came to see you—it would have been a good thing for you if it had been your worst enemy, for you might have been more on your guard against him. Your friend wanted just a little help for a time—he could not meet a certain liability just then, so he asked you merely to put your name on the back of a piece of paper. You would never see that document again—he would be quite able to meet it in three months—there was really no risk in the matter. The plausible man said, "You have only to put your name there. You will never be called upon in the least degree. I have plenty of money and have only to call it in when I need any, so it will be all right." You were persuaded by him and, like a fool, put your name at the back of his bill. You knew that you had not the money guaranteed by that paper, yet you promised to pay it! You did not believe that text in the Bible which tells you that, "He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it; and he that hates suretyship is sure."

I do not know when that bill will come due. Perhaps it will be next week, but I know that you are feeling uncommonly uncomfortable about it as you sit there in your pew—and well you may! You say that you will never do such a thing again—it is not likely that you will have the opportunity to do so, but you will find that it is sufficient to have that one piece of handwriting against you—your own handwriting, too! It will be brought home to you sooner or later, you will see it again! Do not comfort yourself with the foolish idea that you will get off Scot free, for you will not. Such a case as that rarely or never occurs. You have given the bond and the man who holds it will, like Shylock, demand his pound of flesh! And the worst of it is that the bond is one of your own making and you voluntarily incurred the debt. I wish I could tell you how to get clear of it, but I am glad that I can tell you how to get free from a worse bond even than that—one into which you have entered through your sin—the bond of your own indebtedness to the infinite Justice of God for all your rebellions against His Law, all your breaches of His Divine Covenant! You

have sinned against Him and it is all down in black and white in the handwriting that is against you.

Now listen, dear Friends. The Lord Jesus Christ has done this for all of us who are believers in Him. First, He has taken that handwriting and He has blotted it out, as our text says, "blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us." The Greek original has the meaning of smearing over or expunging the handwriting so as to make it illegible as a document to be produced against us. With His own atoning blood, the Lord Jesus Christ has discharged all our debt! As believers in Him, there is nothing whatever due from us to the justice of Almighty God, for Christ has paid it all. We cannot, therefore, be punished for our sin, for that would be unjust, since God will not and cannot punish, first the Substitute, and then the sinners for whom that Substitute bled and died. God's justice cannot demand the payment twice—

"First my bleeding Surety's hand,
And then again at mine."

Christ became the Surety of all who believe in Him and He was made to smart for it. But, by the carrying out of His suretyship, He discharged all your liabilities at the bar of God if you are a Believer and, therefore, He smeared over, expunged, erased, obliterated the handwriting of ordinances that was against you—and it can never again be laid to your charge. This was the Truth that inspired that brave challenge of the Apostle Paul, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"

Christ has done something more than this for us. Look at the text again—"blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way." First it is blotted out. Then it is taken away, lest the blotting out should not prevent it from being read—for you can sometimes trace through an erasure what was written there, and you say, "Oh, yes, I see what the entry was—'So-and-so, so many pounds in debt.'" Yes, but Christ says, "You need not worry yourselves about that handwriting, for I will take it away." So He removes the document, itself, out of sight! It lay in the court against you, but Christ first obliterated it and then took the accusation itself—the indictment, the charge upon which you were to be tried—and put it out of the way!

Perhaps someone says, "But, possibly, after all, He may bring the accusation up again. He may only have hidden it for a while and laid it by that He may bring it out against me some other day. And when it is produced, some expert will examine it with his glass and through all the blotting he will make out the original charge and say, 'This man was guilty of such-and-such crimes.'" "No," says Christ, "He shall not do that, for I will let you see where I put the handwriting. I will take it quite out of the way, but I will fasten it up where you can see it"—"nailing it to His Cross." Ah, that is glorious! Just as Christ was fastened to the tree by those dreadful Roman nails, so has He nailed up all the sins of His people! And all that could be laid to their charge! I have heard that they used to drive a nail through the Bank of England notes when they were cashed—a hole was made right through the center and they could never be used again. And our blessed Lord has driven the nails right through

the accusation that was against His people—and there you can see the handwriting hanging up upon His Cross!

First He blotted it out. Then He took it out of the way and, finally, He nailed it up to His Cross and there it still is, its accusing and condemning power forever gone! Now, child of God, sit down and say to yourself, "As to all the sins I have ever committed, whatever they may have been, inasmuch as I believe in Jesus, the record is crossed out and, consequently, the very parchment upon which it was written (to use that figure) has been taken out of the way. And of that I may be quite sure that an end has been made of it, once and for all—my Lord has nailed it, as a crucified thing which He has put to death with Himself upon the tree of Sacrifice, and now it has no power to alarm or annoy me."

What better way can there be of abolishing a debt than by paying it? And Christ has paid your debts and mine. What better way can there be of putting an end to sin than by bearing the punishment which was due to sin? The punishment which was due to sin was for us to lie forever under the wrath of God, but, owing to the majesty of Christ's Divine Person, the suffering which He endured upon the Cross was accepted as an equivalent for all that suffering which we deserved to endure forever! All the wrath due to Christ's people was condensed into that one cup of which He began to drink in Gethsemane. As He put His lips to it, and tasted it, so terrible was it that it covered Him with a bloody sweat! But He never ceased to drink until He turned the chalice upside down and not one black drop was found lingering there. At that one tremendous draught of love, the Lord had drunk damnation dry for all His people! And "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." How could there be any when Christ endured it all?

O Beloved Friends, go in thought to Calvary, and with joyful hearts trust in the Crucified! The great transaction is done, and done forever! He has blotted out the handwriting that was against you and put it away, "nailing it to His Cross." All this is true of everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. Then, trust yourself with Him, now, and my text shall be true of you at this moment and true forever! "You, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, has He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His Cross." God bless you all, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK—307, 430, 406.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
COLOSSIANS 2:6-23; 3:1-3.

Colossians 2:6. *As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk you in Him.* That is, keep on as you began. Christ was enough for you when, as poor, guilty sinners, you came and trusted Him, so keep on trusting Him in the same way as you did at the first. Do not try to live by feeling, after having lived by faith. Do not begin to live upon outward forms and ceremonies after having found salvation by Grace through

faith. "As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk you in Him."

7. *Rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.* Christians are to make progress in the heavenward road, but they are not to have any other foundation for their faith than they had at the beginning of their Christian career. We are still to stand fast as we stood at the first. We are to be rooted, grounded, "established in the faith," keeping to the old Truth of God that saved our souls, and laying hold upon the same Savior with greater tenacity every hour of our lives. We are not to be like chaff driven before the wind—forever moving—but to be like the cedars of Lebanon, firmly rooted and withstanding the heaviest storms.

8. *Beware lest any man spoil you.* Or, "rob you."

8. *Through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.* Cleave to Christ, Beloved! Go no further than He leads you and turn not away from Him either to the right hand or to the left. In Him are contained all the riches of Grace and all the treasures of knowledge. If you would become truly wise, seek to know more of the wisdom of God in Christ Jesus.

9, 10. *For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And you are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power.* You have everything in Christ that you ought to need. You are fully furnished, completely supplied and equipped for all future service. You need not go to Christ for the supply of some of your needs and then go elsewhere for the supply of other needs, but, "you are complete in Him."

11. *In whom also you are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.* Anything good that there was in Judaism, you have secured to you in Christ. Whatever there was of blessing and privilege in the Covenant mark in the flesh of those whom God made to be His people in the olden time, you have handed on to you by the death of Christ.

12-15. *Buried with Him in Baptism, wherein also you are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who has raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, has He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His Cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.* The Lord Jesus Christ has done everything for His people—fought their battle, won their victory and, on their behalf, celebrated the triumph in the streets of Heaven, "leading captivity captive." What more, then, do we need? Surely Christ is enough for us!

16. *Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days.* Do not put yourself under the bondage of any rules and regulations that may be made by men. If you choose to do anything, or to abstain from something else because you judge it to be right and beneficial, do so. Christ is your only Ruler and Leader—and if He does not command anything, let it not matter to you who does command it.

17. *Which are a shadow of things to come.* All this regard for meats, drinks, holy days and new moons is but a shadow—what is the great substance that is all-important?

17, 18. *But the body is of Christ. Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels.* Do not be beguiled by those who tell you that you ought to pay reverence to angels, saints and I know not what besides. One day is called St. Matthew's and another is St. Michael's. And one, I suppose, is St. Judas's day—there are all sorts of supposed saints, some of whom are never mentioned in the Bible and about whom nobody ought to care at all! "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels."

18-20. *Intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increases with the increase of God. Therefore if you are dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are you subject to ordinances?* Such ordinances as these—

21, 22. *(Touch not; taste not; handle not; which all are to perish with the using) after the commandments and doctrines of men?* I have actually seen this text quoted as though it stood as a matter of teaching—"Touch not; taste not; handle not"—whereas the Apostle here means, "Why are you subject to such ordinances of men when Christ has set you free from them all? If, with a view to the good of your fellow men, you choose not to touch, or taste, or handle, you will act very wisely. But, as far as your own conscience is concerned, do not submit to any merely human regulations as to your manner of life."

23. *Which things have, indeed, a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honor to the satisfying of the flesh.*

Colossians 3:1 *If you then are risen with Christ.* Leave all these outward rituals, formalities and ordinances of men.

1-3. *Seek those things which are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.*

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

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

CHOICE TEACHING FOR THE CHOSEN
NO. 2606

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 22, 1899.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 21, 1883.

"It is written in the Prophets, 'And they shall be all taught of God.' Every man, therefore, that has heard and has learned of the Father, comes unto Me." John 6:45.

I SUPPOSE that you never noticed any great literary excellence in Bradshaw's Railway Guide. "No," you say, "one writing would be very much out of place in such a book as that—it is meant to be a plain direction to travelers. When we consult it, we do not wish to be entertained, we want to be guided as to the best and quickest route to our desired destination." Well, that is the sort of sermon I am going to try to preach—one which, I trust, shall be a guide to Heaven to some who hear it, or who may afterwards read it—I long, above all things, that through my words many may find rest and peace in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Notice, dear Friends, what our Savior was aiming at in this discourse. The Jews had been murmuring at Him. Certain followers of the scribes and Pharisees, who always opposed Him, had been whispering among themselves and finding fault with Him. Our Lord did not condescend to come down to their level and parley with them. They pretended that their difficulty was that He was well known among them, that He was the son of Joseph, the carpenter, and that they knew His mother and His brothers and sisters. Our Lord does not appear directly to answer them, but He takes quite a different tack. He says, "Murmur not among yourselves about this matter. Do not imagine for a moment that I am disappointed because you do not believe in Me, and do not suppose that your unbelief will at all frustrate My Father's purpose or surprise Him. You may reject Me if you are determined to do so, but your folly and sin will make no difference to anybody except yourselves. On your own head shall be the guilt of your own blood. I knew that you would not believe in Me. I quite expected that you would not receive Me, for, 'No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.'" And, Beloved, in a similar manner, when we are pleading with you that you should believe in Christ, we must weep over you as Jesus wept over Jerusalem! And we may say, as Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, "We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherishes her children," but when you come to this terrible decision—that you reject Christ

and will not have Him reign over you, then we fall back upon the eternal purposes of God—and we tell you that you have not received either the electing love of God or the effectual working of the Holy Spirit. And you are left to perish in your sins!

To the ungodly and the unspiritual this may sound like rather harsh language, but should not men be treated with some measure of harshness if they spurn the Christ who is set before them and, in their unbelief, wickedly reject Him? True love is all the more loving because it is outspoken and sometimes seems even severe. There is a spurious sort of love current, nowadays, which consists in saying, "Ah, yes, you are all right and I am all right! You say, 'No,' and I say, 'Yes,' but, no doubt, we are both equally correct. You are black and I am white—or I am black and you are white—but, in these days, black *is* white, and white is no color at all! Let us make things smooth and pleasant all round. You praise me and I will praise you! It does not really matter what you believe, or what you think—we shall all get right at last." That kind of talk, or the preaching which comes practically to the same point, is infernal cruelty to immortal souls! I dare not use a milder term to describe it. It may be cried up as charity, but there is no charity in it! It is a shameful selfishness which, for the sake of ease and popular favor, cries, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace, and seduces men to their own destruction—playing merry tunes to them when, all the while, they are dancing down to death and to Hell!

Our Lord Jesus Christ was not a preacher of that order. When men refused Him, He flashed the red light of the Truth of God in their faces and made them know that if they rejected Him, they rejected their only hope of mercy—and if they turned against His Grace, it was because they did not know its power and were not under its influence. He taught these people, who murmured at Him, that they never would believe in Him unless the Father taught them. He plainly declared that the Father would teach all His own and that if those who were listening to Him did not come to Him, it would prove that the Father had not taught them, that they were not God's chosen and, therefore, they would perish in their carnal and guilty ignorance of Him!

Now coming to the text, I shall ask you to notice, first, *the promise of the Father's teaching of His own people.* "It is written in the Prophets, 'And they shall be all taught of God.'" Then, secondly, we shall examine the teaching itself. "They shall be all taught of God." And, thirdly, we shall consider *the grand result of the teaching.* "Every man, therefore, that has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto Me."

I. To begin, then, there is in the text, THE PROMISE OF THE FATHER'S TEACHING OF HIS OWN PEOPLE.

Christ says, concerning this promise, "It is written in the Prophets." I greatly admire that sentence because if there was ever anyone in this world who might have spoken on His *own* authority, without quoting Scripture, it was our Lord Jesus Christ! "In Him dwells all the fullness of

the Godhead bodily" and, therefore, all His sayings are the utterances of Omnipotence and He often, when upon the earth, made use of that great double Amen, "Verily, verily, I say unto you." Yet this Divine Teacher, who spoke as never man spoke, continually quoted from the Old Testament and supported His own teachings by quotations from "the Law and the Prophets," and the Psalmists and other Inspired writers. In this case, addressing Himself to the Jews, He says, "It is written in the Prophets." The tendency, nowadays, even among preachers, is to depreciate and dishonor Holy Scripture. I am often saddened as I find how many are quibbling at one part or another of the Sacred Word. To my heart, there is nothing more authoritative or more conclusive than this little sentence, "It is written." If God's message to men is written, that is enough for me—and my great concern shall be to find out what that message is! Every man must have Infallibility somewhere. Some find it in the Pope, but I frankly confess that I have never seen the slightest sign of it there! Some find it in what they call, "the church." I am sure I do not know in which church to look for it, for all of them seem to me to be very, very fallible. I find Infallibility only in the Inspired Word of God! Here is a harbor where I can drop down my anchor feeling certain that it will hold. Here is a place where I can find sure footing and, by the Grace of God, from this confidence I shall never be moved. "It is written in the Prophets," is quite enough for me! I trust, Beloved, that it is also sufficient for all of you.

That we may learn the lesson that our Lord intended to teach, let us look at the Words which He quoted. He said, "It is written in the Prophets." And, truly, the passage or its equivalent may be found in more places than I shall be able to refer to, now, but will you kindly look, first, at the 54th Chapter of Isaiah, at the 13th verse? Ah, I see the eyes of you Bible-lovers flash and I think I hear you say, "Fifty-fourth of Isaiah? Why, of course, that follows just after the 53rd of Isaiah!" Precisely so and, that 53rd of Isaiah, as you well know, is *all about Christ's Substitutionary Sacrifice*. There we have the full-length portrait of the bleeding Substitute—"But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." Many of you know by heart that blessed chapter, so full of the doctrine of God laying upon Christ the sin of His people, and of Christ bearing all their iniquities that they might be forever free. Well, immediately after that great central Truth of the Christian faith, comes this 54th Chapter—"Sing, O barren, you that did not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, you that did not travail with child," There is no better place for any to sing than at the foot of the Cross, gazing by faith upon the crucified Savior! O Earth, with all your barrenness! O heart of steel, with all your hardness! "Break forth into singing," for there is heavenly joy and there is the promise of Heaven, itself, in the death of Him who lived, and loved, and died for us!

Further on in the 54th Chapter comes this 13th verse, from which our Savior quoted, "And all your children shall be taught of the Lord; and

great shall be the peace of your children." This is *a promise to the Lord's own people*. The teaching of Scripture is that Christ died for His chosen. "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it." God's promise, "All your children shall be taught of the Lord," is made to His own Church and to all who are the children of that Church, namely, all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life! All God's chosen, all whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life, all whom Christ has redeemed by His blood, shall be, each according to his measure, in due time taught of the Lord.

That is the meaning of the promise as we get it in Isaiah's prophecy. First, it follows the Doctrine of Substitution and, next, it is made to God's chosen people.

Now will you turn over a few pages in your Bible, and read what is written in the 31st Chapter of the prophecy of Jeremiah, beginning at the 31st verse? "Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will make a new Covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the Covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My Covenant they broke, although I was an husband unto them, says the Lord: but this shall be the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. After those days, says the Lord, I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

So, you see, *this promise is joined with other blessings of the New Covenant*. Notice that when our Savior quoted the prophecy, He commenced with the word, "and." Now, as a general rule, when you make a quotation, you do not begin with, "and." That is a copulative conjunction which joins one sentence to another, yet our Lord begins with an, "and," as if to hint that there was a great deal going before it of which He could not speak fully, just then. There is "an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure," which God has made with Christ Jesus, His Son, on our behalf. And all who were represented by Christ became, by virtue of their union with Him, partakers in all the blessings of that Covenant. Our side of it has been fulfilled by Christ, our Representative. He has done the Father's will perfectly and He has been able to say, concerning the part entrusted to Him, "It is finished." The side of the Covenant which has yet to be fulfilled is God the Father's portion—and that runs thus, "I will, and they shall"—"I will be their God, and they shall be My people. I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me. I will instruct them so that they shall not need to have anyone to say to them, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them." What a wonderful promise this is! It is

perfectly unconditional and freely made by the Father concerning all His chosen!

As it stands in these two prophecies, as our Savior quotes it, *it is a promise made to each individual of the chosen seed.* "They shall be *all* taught of God." Then there shall not be one true child of God who shall not be taken into the Lord's school and be taught and trained by the Divine Father! Perhaps someone asks the very important question, "Do I belong to that blessed number?" Let me reply by making another enquiry, Have *you* been truly taught of the Lord? If so, you belong to the chosen company. If you have not been taught of the Lord, I cannot tell whether you are His or not. None of us can climb to Heaven and unroll the eternal parchments, to tell whose name is written there. And until there is some open and overt evidence of your being the Lord's, I cannot declare that you are. But by this test shall you know—if you have been taught of the Lord, you are one of His children, you are in the Covenant of Grace, and you shall have your full share of every good thing which the Lord has there laid up for His own.

That, then, is the promise of the Father's teaching.

II. Now, in the second place, let us briefly examine THE TEACHING ITSELF. "They shall be all taught of God."

I want you to notice, first, that *this teaching is practically the same thing as God's drawing*. Let me read the previous verse. "No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him. And they shall be all taught of God." The way in which God draws men to Christ is not merely by persuasion, but by *instruction*. The Father does not draw us to Christ by a force which is contrary to our nature and will—we are not sticks and stones—and He does not treat us as if we were. We are rational, responsible, free agents and He deals with us as such, never snapping even the finest strings in the instrument of human nature, so far as it is human nature. So, when He draws men, He draws them by *teaching* them!

I will show you how the Lord does this. He first teaches the poor soul what a great sinner he is—and that makes him look for a great Savior. He teaches that poor sinner the impossibility of his being saved by his own works—and that makes him look for the works of somebody else. He teaches that poor sinner that He has authorized Christ to stand in his place and, by His life and death, to meet all the Law's demands on that sinner's behalf—and the poor sinner says, "Why, that is exactly what I need!" So, while the Lord teaches him, He is really drawing him and, in like manner, there ought to be a great deal of teaching in all our attempts to draw men to Christ—I mean, in our efforts to *be the instruments* of drawing them. If I stand here and simply shout, "Believe, Believe, Believe," I cannot expect that any good and lasting result will come of my shouting. I must tell people what they are to believe! I may try to persuade men to do this and to do that—and there may be great force in the persuasion, but, unless they understand the reason for my pleading, lit-

tle will come of it. God's way of working should be our way of working and He draws men by teaching them! Observe that very carefully.

Now notice what kind of teaching is here promised. *It is Divine teaching.* "All your children shall be taught of the Lord." "They shall be all taught of God." There is no teaching but that which will ever save the soul. My dear Hearer, you may listen to the best preacher who ever lived, but unless God shall apply the Truth of God to your heart, you will not receive it. You may study the best books on theology as long as you like, but unless God the Holy Spirit shall give you the keys of this treasure house, you will never get at its precious things and secure them as your own. Means are to be used—as I will show you in a minute or two—but you must not *trust* in the means—you must not even rely on the best study that you can give to the Word of God, itself, as the sure means of your knowing the Truth. Over and above all that, you need the instruction and illumination of the Holy Spirit! "He shall teach you all things." But unless you have His teaching, you cannot and you will not know the Truth of God. I would like, if I could, to unlearn everything concerning the things of God that I have taught myself. I desire with all my heart that all I know may be what I have learned of the Spirit of God and, dear Soul, if ever you are to come to Christ, you will have to unlearn a great deal that you have been teaching yourself, for nothing will be of any real worth to you in the matter of your eternal salvation but what the Holy Spirit, Himself, shall write on your heart and teach you. So, the promise of the text concerns Divine teaching.

Yet notice, also, that it *is teaching through the usual means.* "Every man, therefore, that has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto Me." "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Though my hearing will not save me, yet, ordinarily, it is the channel by which God's Spirit works to the saving of the soul. Though my reading of the Scripture will not, of itself, save me, yet it is the usual way by which God enlightens the understanding through the Holy Spirit. Never neglect the means of Grace, I pray you, but, at the same time, never get into the condition that some are in who feel quite happy so long as they have been to a place of worship on Sunday, who return home and go to bed, just as if they had done all their duty for the day and had no need of anything further. They are like men who go to market, but do not buy anything. Or like persons who go into a field, but do not work in it. They are quite satisfied with having been to the market or the field. It must not be so with you, dear Hearers. If you want to find Christ—if you want to go to Heaven when you die—never be satisfied with mere hearing of the Word, but pray God the Holy Spirit that through the hearing you may be taught of the Lord.

The most blessed thing about this Divine teaching is that *it is effectual teaching.* If you are taught by the ablest divine, you may yet learn nothing. But if you are taught of God, you will really know what you learn. If He teaches you what your sin really is, you will know it—perhaps even to

despair. If He teaches you the meaning of His Law, you will know it as you lie at the foot of Sinai trembling. And if He teaches you the fullness of Christ, you will know that, and you will rejoice that He is just such a Christ as you need! Men are sure to learn whatever God teaches them by His Holy Spirit. There shall not be one who shall pass through His school and yet remain a fool. Though they were all fools when they entered it, yet, before they leave it, they shall be so instructed as to the way of holiness that they shall not err therein. My heart continues praying even while I am preaching, "Lord, teach me," and then it adds, "and, Lord, teach these people, too. Come and be their Instructor, for what can they know except that which You teach them ?"

III. So I shall conclude with this last point—THE GRAND RESULT OF THIS TEACHING. We have read the promise of the teaching. We have thought over what kind of teaching it is. Now let us enquire—What is the result of it? "Every man, therefore, that has heard and has learned of the Father, comes unto Me."

Some men say that they have been taught of God and then they go on to prove that what they know is of their own inventing. Our Lord's test concerning His disciples is, "By their fruits you shall know them." And this is the fruit—every man who has heard the Word, and who has been taught of the Father, comes to Christ! Therefore, if any man preaches that which does not lead you to Christ, do not listen to it, for evidently he has not been taught of God. And, if you find in any book, teaching which makes you think less of Christ than you did before, burn the book! It will do you no good, and it may do you a great deal of mischief. All sound teaching leads to Christ, for if, when the Father, Himself, is the Teacher, the consummation of our scholarship is that we come to Christ. Surely, when we poor creatures are the teachers, we must be even more bound to begin and end with Christ Crucified. You were asking me, just now, whether you had been taught of the Father. You wanted to know whether you were one of His children. Well, here is the test—have you come to Christ? If so, you have been taught of God!

Coming to Christ is a very simple thing. It is the easiest thing in all the world, yet no man ever performed it until God the Father instructed him and taught him that sacred art. To wash in Jordan was a very simple thing, yet at first proud Naaman would not do it—he turned away in a rage! To believe in Jesus is a very simple thing—little children have believed in Him, persons who have scarcely been intellectually above an idiot have, nevertheless, been able to believe in Jesus! And yet, with all its simplicity, men never exercise it until they have been taught of the Father. I suppose it is because faith is so easy that they despise it. Naaman's servants said to him, "If the Prophet had bid you do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much rather, then, when he says to you, Wash, and be clean?" And it is only when the Divine Spirit humbles the heart and makes the man feel that he must stoop to anything so long as he may but be saved, that, at last, he goes down to

wash in Jordan according to the saying of the man of God, or to believe in Jesus Christ according to the command of the Gospel.

You are taught of the Lord, my dear Hearer, if you believe in Jesus Christ, that is, *if you come and trust Him.* And, if you do not trust Christ, you may be a Doctor of Divinity, but you have never been taught of the Lord. He is not to you "very God of very God," your sole and only Savior. It you do not trust Christ, you are a stranger to the Divine Light of God—that assuredly must be the case. You cannot be right in the rest unless you are trusting in Him. But, if you are truly believing in Him, then you are taught of the Lord. It is very wonderful how God brings His people to this point of trusting Jesus. I heard a little story which might have fitted very well into my morning sermon [Sermon #1745, Volume 29—*Abijah—Or Some Good Thing Towards the Lord*—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org] but it was told to me after I had finished my discourse, so I will repeat it to you now. In a London court there was a little girl who had been to Sunday school and who had found Christ as her Savior. She heard that there was a poor woman lying very ill and all alone, up two flight of stairs, so the child went up to the room and pushed the door open. She did not show herself, but said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." A nurse came in the afternoon, to attend to the poor creature, and she fetched in a city missionary to see the woman, for she talked so strangely, the nurse thought. When the good man came in, the woman said, "I am so happy, I am believing in the Lord Jesus Christ and I am saved! An angel came to the door and I heard him speak, and he said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved,' and I did believe on Him, and I am saved!"

It was not an angel at all, it was that little girl! But it did not matter in the least who said it, for it was just as true whether an angel or a child spoke the words. I long that God should lead you, my dear Friend, to feel, "It does not matter how the Gospel comes to me, for if it is true, I believe it and I accept the Christ whom it makes known to me." Some of you probably think that if an angel were to come flying through the Tabernacle and were to alight just against your seat and say to you, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved," you would believe at once. But it would not make any difference in your believing, would it? It is the same message as I, who am, indeed, in the Scriptural sense, one of the angels or the Churches, put before you. You do not mind who brings the letter that is full of good news! I never trouble to send out to enquire the color of the postman's hair if he brings me a letter—I take it and read its contents—and you need not stop to ask whether the message comes to you by an angel, or a babe, or a minister, or whoever it is! "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved"! And, if you do believe on Him, then I know that the Father taught you, I am persuaded that you are one of God's elect and I can turn and say to you, "Yes, though I have not read the secret roll of the redeemed, if you believe in Christ, your name is there," for there never was a soul yet that came to Christ except

the Father drew him. And the Father never drew one by mistake and He never will! This is the blessed consummation of all God's teaching—that the taught ones come to Christ!

But notice, before I close, that the Lord says, "Every man, therefore, that has heard and has learned of the Father, comes unto Me." He does not merely come once, but *he keeps on coming*. Do not make any mistake about faith in Christ, as if it were one single act and then were done with. The faith that saves the soul is an all-the-day faith and an everyday faith. If you believe in Christ, your faith must be of the kind that believes today, tomorrow and forever. If you say, "I believe that I believed in Christ 20 years ago and, therefore, I am saved," I do not believe anything of the kind! Unless you *still* believe, you never truly believed in Christ Jesus, for the faith that God works in the soul is a continual faith! It has its ups and downs and, sometimes, like the moon, it is eclipsed, but it comes out of the darkness, again, and shines as brightly as ever! And, further, if you did ever really believe in Christ, you believe in Him now. "To whom coming," says the Apostle—not, "having once come to Christ, we now run from Him." But, "to whom coming," always coming, always trusting, always believing!

And why is this? Because we are always being taught of the Father! I trusted Christ when I knew comparatively little of God's Word. And I confess that I still know but very little of its boundless height, depth, length and breadth, but I believe that as I grow to know more and more, I shall trust more. If that is not the result of your knowledge, it is not the knowledge that the Holy Spirit gives you! It is the knowledge that puffs up. If it were the Holy Spirit's teaching, you would rely more and more upon Christ and rest more entirely on Him. I pray for you, my dearly-beloved fellow Church members, that you and I may be taught of God till we grow less and less, and come to be nothing at all in our own esteem—till we vanish away into Christ and Christ becomes more than our necessary food, our life, our joy, our All-in-All!

Everyone who is taught of the Father, in proportion as he is so taught, comes nearer and nearer to Christ until *he comes perfectly to Christ in the Glory yet to be revealed*. O blessed Master, we are still coming to You. We are, everyday, coming nearer to You. Your Spirit is making us more like You and making us long more for You! Your Father is creating in us more and more of a hungering and thirsting after You. Though we are very lame and do sadly limp, yet still we are coming to You. We can only feebly fly, yet still we are flying towards You and we expect that when You shall appear, and sit upon the Great White Throne, You will recognize that we are coming to You and You, Yourself will say to us, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." We are coming, Lord, to You! Come to us! Yes, come quickly, even so, come, Lord Jesus! Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

JOHN 6:25-51.

These people had crossed the Sea of Galilee and gone to Capernaum, "seeking for Jesus." It seemed a very hopeful sign that they should be willing to make such efforts to find Christ, but see how the Lord Jesus, Himself, regarded it.

Verses 25, 26. *And when they had found Him on the other side of the sea, they said unto Him, Rabbi, when did You come here? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, You seek Me, not because you saw the miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves, and were filled.* What very plain talk this is! Our Lord does not try to gain popularity by the concealment of truth, but He tells these people to their faces, "You are only following Me because of what you get out of Me." "Oh," some worldly-wise man would have said, "that is a very imprudent speech—it will drive the people away." Just so and Christ seemed to say, on more than one occasion, "If people will be driven away by the Truth of God, let them be driven away." John the Baptist had declared that Christ had His fan in His hand and that He would thoroughly purge His floor. And if that floor is to be purged, there must be a driving away of the chaff! Our Lord's example should teach us to speak in His name nothing less and nothing more than the Truth of God in all love and kindness. After thus pointing out the true motive which made the people seek Him, our Savior uttered a very singular paradox.

27. *Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that meat which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you: for Him has God the Father sealed.* Is it not strange that Christ says, "Labor not for the very thing which you cannot get without laboring for it"? And then He says, "Labor for that which you cannot get by laboring for it"? He virtually tells us that it is so, by adding the words, "which the Son of Man shall give unto you," plainly proving that it does not come as the result of human labor, but as the *free gift of the Son of God.* He that is wise will discover the meaning of the paradox, but he that is blind will stumble over the letter of it and not discern the spiritual interpretation.

28. *Then said they unto Him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?* "We want to do the best works, the noblest works, the most acceptable works in all the world! Tell us what we should do in order to perform a God-like work."

29. *Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God.* "The highest and best work which you can accomplish is"—

29. *That you believe on Him whom He has sent.* Faith is the noblest of the Graces! It is the very essence of true worship! It contains within itself the germs of all excellence—and the man who believes in Christ has done that which is more pleasing to God than anything else in all the world!

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

eat. Do you see the drift of their talk? They are still looking for the loaves and fishes and, therefore, whatever Christ may say, they turn the discourse round that way. If they can get from Christ something to eat, they will believe in Him—what groveling, earth-bound creatures they were!

32, 33. *Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from Heaven; but My Father gives you the free Bread from Heaven. For the Bread of God is He which comes down from Heaven, and gives life unto the world.* "The best and noblest bread—the bread which has Deity in it—the bread which can feed your souls, and sustain you with everlasting life, 'the Bread of God' is He which comes down from Heaven and gives life unto the world.'"

34. *Then said they unto Him, Lord, give us this bread.* They said this not knowing what they said, and not understanding what He meant. Bread for the body was all that they wanted. Their cry was, "Give us bread, and we are content." They had no spiritual appetite for Christ, "the Bread of God."

35, 36. *And Jesus said unto them, I am the Bread of Life. He that comes to Me shall never hunger; and He that believes on Me shall never thirst. But I said to you, that you have seen Me, and believe not.* These were the very people whom He had fed on the other side of the sea—yet they were craving for more. That kind of bread cannot stay their hunger for long. They had not received Him as their Savior, otherwise they would have been well content with Him and would have asked for nothing more.

37-39. *All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from Heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. And this is the Father's will which has sent Me, that of all which He has given Me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.* Christ will not lose one whom the Father gave Him, no nor any part of one. He will not lose the body of any of His people any more than He will lose the soul of any.

40. *And this is the will of Him that Me, that everyone which sees the Son, and believes on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise Him up at the last day.* Christ will never have finished His work upon Believers till He has raised their bodies from the grave and glorified them like His own resurrection body. He will never cease from the work which He has commenced on any of His people till He has laid the top stone in the glorious perfections of Heaven! And this Truth of God is the joy of our hearts even now.

41. *The Jews then murmured at Him, because He said, I am the Bread which came down from Heaven.* They muttered, murmured, whispered, growled among themselves at this saying of Christ.

42. *And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it, then, that He says, I came down from Heaven?* This is just the way with men—they judge by outward appearances and if the Gospel comes to them as a thing beloved of poor men, if it is preached without much eloquence, if the service is without the at-

tractions of sweet music or of gaudy attire—straightway they say there can be nothing in it! O blind bats, when God veils Himself in human flesh, can it be otherwise?

43. *Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves.* "I never thought you would believe in Me. I never imagined that I should win your confidence."

44. *No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him.* "You are not drawn unto Me, therefore it is clear that you are not the subjects of Divine Grace. You think you are judging Me, but in so doing you are really judging and condemning yourselves." Whenever men sit in judgment on the Gospel, they soon let us know what kind of spirit possesses them. It is not Christ who is on trial—it is they, themselves—and when they rail at Him, they do but prove that the Grace of the Father has never drawn them to Him. "No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him."

44-46. *And I will raise Him up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets, "And they shall be all taught of God." Every man, therefore, that has heard and has learned of the Father, comes unto Me. Not that any man has seen the Father, save he which is of God, He has seen the Father.* "Do not suppose that even when you are taught of God, you will know the Father as I know Him, or see Him as I have seen Him." That Divine glance at Deity is not for us.

47. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believes on Me has everlasting life.* This was how our Lord spoke straight to the faces of those who had derided Him and said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?" With the strongest Words which He was in the habit of using, He says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believes on Me has everlasting life."

48-51. *I am that Bread of life. Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from Heaven, that a man may eat, thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from Heaven: if any man eats of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.*

HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK—369, 459, 235.

—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.

FORETASTES OF THE HEAVENLY LIFE
NO. 2607

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 29, 1899,
(C. H. SPURGEON MEMORIAL SABBATH).
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
EARLY IN THE YEAR 1857.

"And they took of the fruit of the land in their hands, and brought it down unto us, and brought us word again, and said, It is a good land which the Lord our God does give us."
Deuteronomy 1:25.

You remember the occasion concerning which these words were written. The children of Israel sent 12 men as spies into the land of Canaan and they brought back with them the fruit of the land, among which was a bunch of grapes from Eshcol too heavy to be borne by one man, and which, therefore, two of them carried on a staff between them. I shall not say much, at this time, concerning the Israelites, but I want to show you that as they learned something of what Canaan was like by the fruit of the land brought to them by the spies, so you and I, even while we are on earth, if we are the Lord's chosen people, may learn something of what Heaven is—the state to which we are to attain hereafter—by certain blessings which are brought to us even while we are here.

The Israelites were sure that Canaan was a fertile land when they saw the fruit of it which was brought by their brothers and when they ate some. Perhaps there was but little for so many and yet those who did eat were made at once to understand that it must have been a goodly soil that produced such fruit. In like manner, Beloved, we who love the Lord Jesus Christ have had clusters of the grapes of a bettor Eshcol—we have had some of the fruits of Heaven even while we have been on earth and by them we are able to judge of the richness of the soil of Paradise which brings forth such rare and choice delights.

I shall, therefore, present to you a series of views of Heaven in order to give you some idea how it is that the Christian on earth enjoys a foretaste of the blessings that are yet to be revealed. Possibly there are scarcely two Christians who have exactly the same ideas concerning Heaven, though they all expect the same Heaven, yet the most prominent feature in it is different to each mind according to its constitution.

I. Now, I will confess to you what is, to me, the most prominent feature of Heaven, judging at the present moment. At another time, I may

love Heaven better for another thing, but, just lately, I have learned to love Heaven as A PLACE OF SECURITY.

We have been greatly saddened as we have seen some professors dishonoring their profession—yes, and worse, still, some of the Lord's own beloved committing grievous faults and slips which have brought disgrace upon their character and injury to their souls. And we have learned to look up to Heaven as a place where we shall never, never sin—where our feet shall be fixed firmly upon the Rock—where there is neither tripping nor slipping—where faults shall be unknown—where we shall have no need to keep watch against an indefatigable enemy because there is no foe that shall annoy us—where we shall not be on our guard day or night watching against the incursion of foes, for, "there the wicked cease from troubling and there the weary are at rest." We have looked upon Heaven as the land of complete security, where the garment shall be always white, where the face shall be always anointed with fresh oil, where there is no fear of our turning away from our Lord, for there we shall stand fast forever! And I ask you, if that is a true view of Heaven—and I am sure it is one feature of it—do not the saints, even on earth, in this sense, enjoy some fruits of Paradise? Do we not, even in these huts and villages below, sometimes taste the joys of blissful security? The Doctrine of God's Word is that all who are in union with the Lamb are safe, that all Believers must hold on their way, that those who have committed their souls to the keeping of Christ shall find Him a faithful and Immutable Keeper. Believing this Doctrine, we enjoy security even on earth—not that high and glorious security which renders us free from every slip and trip, but, nevertheless, a security well-nigh as great because it secures us against ultimate ruin and renders us certain that we shall attain to eternal happiness!

And, Beloved, have you ever sat down and reflected on the Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints? I am sure you have and God has brought home to you a sense of your security in the Person of Christ. He has told you that your name is engraved on His hand. He has whispered in your ear the promise, "Fear you not, for I am with you." You have been led to look upon the great Surety of the Covenant as faithful and true and, therefore, bound and engaged to present you, the weakest of the family, with all the chosen race, before the Throne of God! And in such a sweet contemplation I am sure you have been drinking some of the juice of His spiced pomegranates, you have had some of the choice fruits of Paradise, you have had some of the enjoyments which the perfect saints above have in a sense of your complete and eternal security in Christ Jesus. Oh, how I love that Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints! I shall at once renounce the pulpit when I cannot preach it, for any other form of teaching seems to me to be a black desert and a howling wilderness, as unworthy of God as it would be beneath even my acceptance, frail worm as I am! I could never either believe or preach a Gospel which saves me today and rejects me tomorrow—a Gospel which puts me in Christ's fam-

ily one hour, and makes me a child of the devil the next—a Gospel which first justifies and then condemns me—a Gospel which pardons me and afterwards casts me down to Hell. Such a Gospel is abhorrent to reason, itself! Much more is it contrary to the mind of the God whom we delight to serve. Every true Believer in Jesus can sing, with Toplady—

"My name from the palms of His hand
Eternity will not erase!
Impressed on His heart it remains
In marks of indelible Grace.
Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given,
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in Heaven."

Yes, Beloved, we enjoy a sense of perfect security even as we dwell in this land of wars and fighting. As the spies brought to their brethren in the wilderness bunches of the grapes of Canaan, so, in the security we enjoy, we have a foretaste and earnest of the bliss of Paradise!

II. In the next place, most probably the greater part of you love to think of Heaven under another aspect, as A PLACE OF PERFECT REST.

Son of toil, you love the sanctuary because it is there you sit to hear God's Word and rest your wearied limbs. When you have wiped the hot sweat from your burning brow, you have often thought of Heaven as the place where your labors shall be over and you have sung with sweet emphasis—

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

Rest, rest, rest—this is what you need—and to me, also, this idea of Heaven is exceedingly beautiful. Rest I know I never shall have beneath this sky while Christ's servants continue to be so unreasonable as they are. I have served them to the utmost of my power, yet I am well-nigh hounded to my grave by Christian ministers perpetually wanting me to do impossibilities that they know no mortal strength can accomplish! Willing am I to labor till I drop, but I cannot do more than I am doing. Yet I am perpetually assailed on this side and the other, till, go where I may, there seems no rest for me till I slumber in my grave—and I look forward to Heaven, with great happiness, because there I shall rest from labors constant and arduous, though much loved.

And you, too, dear Christian Friends who have been toiling long to gain an object you have eagerly sought—you will be glad when you get to Heaven. You have said that if you could attain your desire, you would gladly lie down and rest. You have longed to lay up a certain amount of riches. You have said that if you could once gain a pension, you would then make yourself at ease. Or you have been laboring long to secure a certain position and you have said that if you could only reach it, you would rest. Yes, but you have not reached it yet—and you love to think of

Heaven because it is the goal to the racer, the target of the arrow of existence, the couch of repose for time's tired toilers! Yes, an eternal rest for the poor weary struggler upon earth. You love it because it is a place of rest—and do we ever enjoy a foretaste of Heaven upon earth in that sense? Oh, yes, Beloved! Blessed be God, "we who have believed do enter into rest." Our peace is like a river and our righteousness like the waves of the sea. God does give rest to His people even here—"there remains, therefore, a rest to the people of God." We have stormy trials and bitter troubles in the world, but we have learned to say, "Return unto your rest, O my Soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you." Did you ever, in times of great distress, climb up to your closet and there, on your knees, pour out your heart before God? Did you ever feel, after you had so done, that you had, as it were, bathed yourself in rest, so that—

"Let cares like a wild deluge come,
And storms of sorrow fall,"

you cared not one whit for them? Though wars and tumults were raging around you, you were kept in perfect peace, for you had found a great protecting shield in Christ. You were able to remain restful and calm, for you had looked upon the face of God's Anointed!

Ah, Christian, that rest, so placid and serene, without a billow of disturbance, which in your deepest troubles you have been enabled to enjoy upon the bosom of Christ, is to you like a bunch from the vintage of Heaven, one grape of the heavenly cluster of which you shall soon partake in the land of the hereafter! Thus, again, you see, we can have a foretaste of Heaven and realize what it is even while we are here upon earth.

III. That idea of Heaven as a place of rest will just suit some indolent professors, so I will turn the subject around and show you that the very opposite idea is also true, and may be more useful to certain people. I believe that one of the worst sins of which a man can be guilty is to be idle. I could almost forgive a drunk, rather than a lazy man. He who is idle has as good reason to be penitent before God as David had when he was an adulterer. Indeed, David's adultery probably resulted from his idleness. It is an abominable thing to let the grass grow up to your knees and do nothing towards making it into hay. God never sent a man into the world to be idle—but there are some who make a profession of being Christians who do nothing to serve the Lord from one year's end to the other.

A true idea of Heaven is that it is A PLACE OF UNINTERRUPTED SERVICE. It is a land where they serve God day and night in His Temple and never know weariness, and never require slumber. Do you know, dear Friends, the deliciousness of work? Although I must complain when people expect impossibilities of me, it is the highest enjoyment of my life to be busily engaged for Christ. Tell me the day when I do not preach—I will tell you the day in which I am not happy! And the day in which it is my privilege to preach the Gospel and labor for God is generally the day

of my peaceful and quiet enjoyment after all. Service is delight! Praising God is pleasure. Laboring for Him is the highest bliss a mortal can know. Oh, how sweet it must be to sing His praises and never feel that the throat is dry! Oh, how blessed to flap the wings forever and never feel them tire! Oh, what sweet enjoyment to fly upon His errands forevermore, to circle round the Throne of God in Heaven while eternity shall last and never once lay the head on the pillow, never once feel the throbbing of fatigue, never once the pangs that admonish us that we need to cease, but to keep on forever like eternity's own self—a broad river rolling on with perpetual floods of labor! Oh, that must be enjoyment! That must be Heaven, to serve God day and night in His Temple! Many of you have served God on earth and have had foretastes of that bliss.

I wish some of you knew more of the sweets of labor, for although labor breeds sweat, it breeds sweets, too—more especially labor for Christ. There is a satisfaction *before* the work. There is a satisfaction *in* the work. There is a satisfaction *after* the work and there is a satisfaction in looking for the fruits of the work! And a great satisfaction when we get the fruits! Labor for Christ is, indeed, the dressing room of Heaven. If it is not Heaven, itself, it is one of the most blissful foretastes of it. Thank God, Christian, if you can do anything for your Master! Thank Him if it is your privilege to do the least thing for Him! But remember, in so doing, He is giving you a taste of the grapes of Eshcol! But you lazy people do not get the grapes of Eshcol because you are too lazy to carry the big bunches. You would like them to come into your mouths without the trouble of gathering them! You do not care to go forth and serve God. You sit still and look after yourselves, but what do you do for other people? You go to your place of worship—you talk about your Sunday school and Sick Visitation Society, yet you never teach in the Sunday school and you never visit a sick person—you take a great deal of credit to yourself while you do nothing at all! You cannot expect to know much of the enjoyments of heavenly Glory until you have experienced a little of the delight of working in the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

IV. Another view of Heaven is that it is A PLACE OF COMPLETE VICTORY AND GLORIOUS TRIUMPH. This is the battlefield—there is the triumphal procession. This is the land of the sword and the spear—there is the land of the wreath and the crown. This is the land of the garment rolled in blood and of the dust of the fight—there is the land of the trumpet's joyful sound, there is the place of the white robe and of the shout of conquest! Oh, what a thrill of joy shall shoot through the hearts of all the blessed when their conquests shall be complete in Heaven, when death, itself, the last of foes, shall be slain, when Satan shall be dragged captive at the chariot wheels of Christ, when Jesus shall have overthrown sin and trampled corruption as the mire of the streets, when the great song of universal victory shall rise from the hearts of all the redeemed! What a moment of pleasure shall that be!

But, dear Brothers and Sisters, you and I have foretastes of even that joy. We know what conflicts, what soul-battles we have even here—did you never struggle against unbelief and at last overcome it? Oh, with what joy did you lift your eyes to Heaven, the tears flowing down your cheeks, and say, "Lord, I bless You that I have been able to vanquish that sin." Did you ever meet a strong temptation and wrestle hard with it, and know what it was to sing with great joy, "My feet well-nigh slipped; but Your mercy held me up"? Have you, like Bunyan's Christian, fought with old Apollyon and have you seen him flap his dragon wings and fly away? There you had a foretaste of Heaven! There you had just a hint of what the ultimate victory will be! In the death of that one Philistine, you saw the destruction of the whole army. That Goliath who fell through your sling and stone was but one out of the multitude who must yield their bodies to the fowls of Heaven. God gives you partial triumphs that they may be the earnest of ultimate and complete victory! Go on and conquer, and let each conquest, though a harder one and more strenuously contested, be to you as a grape of Eshcol, a foretaste of the joys of Heaven!

V. Furthermore, without doubt, one of the best views we can ever give of Heaven is that it is A STATE OF COMPLETE ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD recognized and felt in the conscience. I suppose that a great part of the joy of the blessed saints consists in a knowledge that there is nothing in them to which God is hostile—that their peace with God has not anything to mar it—that they are so completely in union with the principles and thoughts of the Most High that His love is set on them, that their love is set on Him, and they are one with Him in every respect. Well, Beloved, and have we not enjoyed a sense of acceptance here below? Blotted and blurred by many doubts and fears, yet there have been moments when we have known ourselves as truly accepted as we shall know ourselves to be even when we stand before the Throne of God! There have been bright days with some of us, when we could set to our seal that God was true and when, afterwards, feeling that "the Lord knows them that are His," we could say, "And we know that we are His, too." Then have we known the meaning of Dr. Watts when he sang—

"When I can say, 'My God is mine,'
When I can feel Your glories shine,
I tread the world beneath my feet
And all that earth calls good or great.
While such a scene of sacred joys
Our raptured eyes and souls employ,
Here we could sit and gaze sway
A long, an everlasting day."

We had such a clear view of the perfection of Christ's righteousness that we felt that God had accepted us and we could not be otherwise than happy! We had such a sense of the efficacy of the blood of Christ that we felt sure our sins were all pardoned and could never be mentioned against us forever!

And, Beloved, though I have spoken of other joys, let me say this is the cream of all of them—to know ourselves accepted in God's sight. Oh, to feel that I, a guilty worm, am now at rest in my Father's bosom! That I, a lost prodigal, am now feasting at His table with delight! That I, who once heard the voice of His anger, now listen to the notes of His love! This is a joy that is worth more than all worlds! What more can they know up there than that? And were it not that our sense of it is so imperfect, we might bring Heaven down to earth and might at least dwell in the suburbs of the celestial city if we could not be privileged to go within the gates!

So you see, again, we can have, in that sense, bunches of the grapes of Eshcol. Seeing that Heaven is a state of acceptance, we, too, can know and feel that acceptance and rejoice in it.

VI. And again, Heaven is A STATE OF GREAT AND GLORIOUS MANIFESTATIONS. As you look forward to your experience in Heaven, you sing—

"Then shall I see, and hear, and know
All I desired or wished below.
And every power find sweet employ
In that eternal world of joy."

You are now looking at it darkly, through a glass, but there you shall see face to face. Christ looks down on the Bible, and the Bible is His looking glass. You look into it and see the face of Christ as in a mirror, darkly. But soon you shall look upon Him face to face. You expect Heaven to be a place of peculiar manifestations. You believe that there Jesus will unveil His face to you, that—

"Millions of years your wondering eyes
Shall over your Savior's beauties rove."

You are expecting to see His face and never, never sin. You are longing to know the secrets of His heart. You believe that, in that day you shall see Him as He is, and shall be like He in the world of spirits. Well, Beloved, though Christ does not manifest Himself to us as He does to the bright ones there, have we not had blessed manifestations even while we have been in this vale of tears ? Speak, Believer! Let your heart speak—have you not had visions of Calvary? Has not your Master sometimes touched your eyes with eye salve and let you see Him on His Cross? Have you not said—

"Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
Which before the Cross I spend,
Life, and health, and peace possessing,
From the sinner's dying Friend.
Here I'll sit forever viewing
Mercy's streams, in streams of blood—
Precious drops! My soul bedewing,
Plead and claim my peace with God"?

Have you not wept both for joy and for grief when you beheld Him nailed to the tree for your sakes and saw Him bleeding out His life for you ? Oh, yes! I know you have had such manifestations of Him! And

have you not seen Him in His risen glories? Have you not beheld Him exalted on His Throne? Have you not, by faith, beheld Him as the Judge of the quick and the dead? And as the Prince of the kings of the earth? Have you not looked through the dim future and seen Him with the crown of all kingdoms on His head, with the diadems of all monarchs beneath His feet, and the scepters of all thrones in His hand? Have you not anticipated the moment of His most glorious triumphs, when—

"He shall reign from pole to pole,
With illimitable sway?"

Yes, you have, and therein you have had foretastes of Heaven. When Christ has thus revealed Himself to you, you have looked within the veil and, therefore, you have seen what is there. You have had some glimpses of Jesus while here—those glimpses of Jesus are but the beginning of what shall never end! Those joyous melodies of praise and thanksgiving are but the preludes of the songs of Paradise!

VII. Lastly, the highest idea of Heaven is that it is A PLACE OF MOST HALLOWED AND BLISSFUL COMMUNION. I have not given you even half that I might have told you of the various characteristics of Heaven as described in God's Word, but communion is the best. Communion! That word so little spoken of, so seldom understood. Blessed word, communion! Dearly-Beloved, you hear us say, "And the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all," but there are many of you who do not know the meaning of that sweet Heaven in a word—communion! It is the flower of language! It is the honeycomb of words—communion! You like to talk of corruption best, do you not? Well, if you like that ugly word, you are very willing to meditate upon it. I do so when I am forced to do it, but communion seems to me to be a far sweeter word than that! You like to talk a great deal about affliction, do you not? Well, if you love that black word—you may have reason to love it—and if you care to be happy about it, you may do so. But give me for my constant text and for my constant joy, communion, and I will not choose which kind of communion it shall be!

Sweet Master, if You give me communion with You in Your sufferings. If I have to bear reproach and shame for Your name's sake, I will thank You if I may have fellowship with You in it! And if You will privilege me to suffer for Your sake, I will call it an honor, so that I can be a partaker of Your sufferings! And if You give me sweet enjoyments, if You raise me up and allow me to sit with You in heavenly places in Christ, I will bless You! I will bless God for ascension-communion—communion with Christ in His glories! Do you not say the same? And for communion with Christ in death—have you died unto the world, as Christ died unto it? Then have you had communion with Him in resurrection? Have you been raised to newness of life, even as He was raised from the grave? And have you had communion with Him in His ascension, so that you know yourself to be an heir to a throne in Glory? If so, you have had the best earnest you can receive of the joys of Paradise! To be in Heaven is to lean

one's head upon the breast of Jesus—have you not done that on earth? Then you know what Heaven is! To be in Heaven is to talk to Jesus, to sit at His feet, to let our heart beat against His heart. If you have had that bliss on earth, you have already tasted some of the grapes of Heaven!

Cherish, then, these foretastes of whatever kind they may have been in your individual case. Differently constituted, you will all look at Heaven in a different light. Keep your foretaste just as God gave it to you. He has given each of you a separate experience of it which is most suitable to your own condition. Treasure it up! Think much of it, but think more of your Master, for, remember, it is, "Christ in you, the hope of glory," that is your best foretaste of Heaven! And the more you realize that blessed Truth of God, the more fully prepared shall you be for the bliss of the joyous ones in the land of the happy!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
GENESIS 49.

Verses 1-3. *And Jacob called unto his sons and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days. Gather yourselves together and hear, you sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father. Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power.* All this was to Reuben's advantage, yet he was spoiled through one fault.

4. *Unstable as water, you shall not excel.* So it is clear that the greatest strength and dignity and power will not serve a man so as to make him excel if he is unstable. There are many such persons still remaining in the world. Their doctrine changes like the moon and we never know what it is. Their spirit and temper constantly change. Their pursuits are sometimes in one direction and sometimes in another. They are, "everything by starts, and nothing long," and to each of them it may be said, "Unstable as water, you shall not excel."

4-7. *Because you went up to your father's bed, then defiled it: he went up to my couch. Simeon and Levi are brothers; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not into their secret; into their assembly, my honor, be not united: for in their anger they slew a man and in their self-will they dug down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for if was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.* It is a very remarkable circumstance, well worthy of notice, that this curse was turned into a real blessing, especially in the case of the tribe of Levi. It is true that they were divided and scattered, like handfuls of salt, throughout the whole of Israel, for they were attendants upon the Lord's priests and they had cities appointed to them so that while they dwelled here, and there, and everywhere, it was in order that they might reach the whole of the people and prove a blessing to them. Are any of you laboring under a very serious disadvantage? Does it look

to you like a curse? Then pray to God to make it into a blessing! I believe that often the worst thing that can happen to Christian men is really the best thing, for, while Nature would cry out, "The clouds are to be dreaded," Grace can reply—

"The clouds you so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head."

8. *Judah, you are he whom your brethren shall praise.* His name was praise and such was his history to be, for David came of that tribe, and great David's greater Son, whom it is our joy to praise!

8. *Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's children shall bow down before you.* While that was true of Judah, it is still more true of Him who sprang out of Judah, even our Lord and King, the Lion of the tribe of Judah!

9. *Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, you are gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion, who shall rouse him?* Our Lord overcame His enemies even in the thicket of this world. And all power is given unto Him now that He has "gone up" again into His Glory. Let that man beware who would attack this Lion of the tribe of Judah—"Who shall rouse Him?" If you persecute His followers, you will rouse Him. If you deny His Truth, trample on the Doctrine of Atonement and reject His love, you will rouse Him! But beware in that day, for terrible is the King of Judah when He is once aroused! Therefore, submit yourselves to Him—"Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little."

10. *The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.* When did the dominion depart from Judah till the Lord Jesus came as the Sent One? And unto Him, to this very day, the people gather and more and more shall gather in the latter days.

11, 12. *Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice wine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes: his eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.* It was literally so with Judah, but it is gloriously so with our Lord to this day. It was His blood which yielded the juice of those rare clusters of the choice vine and now, with garments dyed with His own blood, He comes from Edom, for He has trodden down His foes, and He cries, "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with Me."

13. *Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he shall be for an haven of ships; and his border shall be unto Sidon.* So did Zebulun dwell even until the day when our Lord came, for Matthew writes concerning Him, "Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, He departed into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zebulun and Nephthalim: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the Prophet, saying, The land of Zebulun, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of

the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up."

14, 15. *Issachar is a strong ass couching down between two burdens: and he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute.* This was a poor character for Issachar to possess. It was s tame-spirited tribe that loved rest and ease and, therefore, did not fight with the common foe. Issachar crouched down between the burdens instead of taking them up and bearing them! God grant that none of us may be of that lazy tribe! I think that I know some who are—they could do a great deal, but they see that rest is good and the land is pleasant—so they idle away their days.

16, 17. *Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that bites the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward.* Dan is noted among the tribes for its famous leap, capturing that distant part of the country for itself. Here good old Jacob, worn out by what he had already said, exhausted by the ecstasy into which as a Prophet he had been cast, paused awhile and panted.

18. *I have waited for Your salvation, O LORD.* But He soon resumed His prophecy—

19. *Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last.* Many of God's servants belong to this tribe, for their life is spent in conflict. They do not seek it, but it comes to them and, for a time, they seem to be overcome, yet let them clutch at the promise given to Gad.

20. *Out of Asher his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties.* Well fed and then yielding correspondingly. There are some people who like to have their bread to be fat, but they yield to the King no dainties. Let it not be so with us, but let us both feed well and yield well.

21. *Naphtali is a hind let loose.* The type of what a Christian minister should be—indeed, what every Christian worker should be—"a hind let loose," one who can say with David, "O Lord, truly I am Your servant. I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid. You have loosed my bonds."

21. *He gives goodly words.* He has liberty in speech, freedom of utterance. He is not in bonds, he is as "a hind let loose."

22. *Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well.* Where he can suck up abundant nutriment—

22. *Whose branches run over the wall.* He does more than he is expected to do. Nothing seems to content him, his "branches run over the wall."

23, 24. *The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: but his bow abode in strength.* You know how sorely Joseph was persecuted by his brothers, yet how the Lord was with him in all his troubles. It appears from these words that he was, himself, an archer, and that he was not in a hurry to shoot his arrows—his bow remained

still. It is the strong who can afford to be quiet. As you go across the village green, a goose will hiss at you, while the strong ox lies down calmly and takes no notice of you—"His bow abode in strength."

24. *And the arms of his hands.* Not only his hands, but the arms of his hands—

24-27. *Were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob (from there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel) even by the God of your father, who shall help you; and by the Almighty, who shall bless you with blessings of Heaven above, blessings of the deep that lie under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: the blessings of your father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors into the utmost bound of the everlasting hills; they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren. Benjamin is a ravenous wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.* Little Benjamin is the last of the tribes.

28-33. *All these are the twelve tribes of Israel: and this is it that their father spoke onto them, and blessed them; everyone according to his blessing he blessed them. And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a burying place. There they buried Abraham and Sarah, his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebecca, his wife; and there I buried Leah. The purchase of the field and of the cave that is therein was from the children of Heth. And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.* It is a very sweet thing to die with a blessing on your lips. And it is equally good to live in the same spirit. Our Lord Jesus was blessing His disciples when He was taken from them—and since we do not know when we shall be taken away from our relatives, let us be always blessing them. May the Lord, who has blessed us, make us a blessing to others!

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

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

"THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE"
NO. 2608

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 5, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 28, 1883.

"The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."
Romans 3:22, 23.

THE Apostle here says that "there is no difference," yet he does not mean that all men are alike in all respects. There are very many and important variations among men. It would be quite untrue and unjust to say that there are no differences of character even among unregenerate men, for there certainly are many varieties and gradations of sinners. There are some who have, as it were, sold themselves to work iniquity, and there are others who have, apparently, kept the Commandments of God from their youth up. There are some who delight in all manner of evil and there are others who, though they are not converted, hate the very mention of all the grosser vices and steer clear of such impurity. There are some people, not yet on the Lord's side, who are like that rich young man of whom it is said that when Christ looked upon him, He loved him, for He saw much in him that was admirable. But, on the other hand, there are some who are manifestly sons of perdition, like Judas, of whom our Lord said that he was a devil. All men are not demons, or demoniacal. All are not equally hardened in heart. All do not go to the same excess of evil. So when Paul said, "There is no difference," he did not mean that there are no differences of outward character.

Let us not be carried away with the idea that it does not matter what our outward character is—it matters a great deal! It shall be found, at the last, that the greatly guilty shall be greatly punished. "That servant who knew his lord's will and prepared not himself, neither did according to His will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes." God is not unjust! Even in taking vengeance upon His adversaries, He strictly observes justice at all times. It is for your good and for the good of those about you that you should be moral, temperate, chaste and honest—and God grant that you may be all that!

There are, then, differences of character among men, and there are, no doubt, differences of disposition which show themselves very early. Some children appear from the very first to be tender and docile, while others manifest a passionate and rebellious disposition. All of us probably know

some friends who are not yet converted, but they are amiable, loving, considerate, kind—they have almost everything we could wish except the one thing necessary—God grant that they may soon have that, also! Though as yet they are not brought to Christ's feet, they seem to have had a religious tendency from their very childhood and they delight to be found in the House of God and, at least *externally*, in the ways of God. even if their hearts are not, at present, renewed by Grace. There are, alas, others whose dispositions are the very reverse of all this—they seem disposed to everything that is bad. We have met with cases in godly families where young men, from the first moment in which they could have their liberty, have delighted to do that which at last broke their parents' hearts. They have seemed to be, from the very first, fickle, vain, fond of pleasure, proud, willful and wicked. Beyond all question, there are differences of disposition in different persons. And when Paul says, "There is no difference," he does not refer either to character or to disposition.

There are also in men who, as yet, are not saved, differences as to their readiness to receive the Word of God. There are some who are like the "honest and good ground" which is already plowed and harrowed—all that is needed is the handful of good Seed—and as soon as it is sown, they will take it in and, in due time, yield a harvest in return. Others are like the stony-ground hearers—apparently ready and prepared for the good Seed. They seem to receive the Word with joy, but, as the hard rock underneath has never been broken up and there has been no subsoil plowing, nothing permanent results from their hearing the Gospel message. There are others, again, who are like the hard-trodden highway—you may sow upon them as much seed as you like, but the only result will be to feed the birds. The fowls of the air will devour whatever is scattered upon them. May none of us be hearers of that sort!

So you see, dear Friends, that there are great differences among men in certain respects. The Apostle is speaking in this passage about one thing—and you must not stretch his meaning beyond that. There is one point in which there is no difference and that is that, "all have sinned." All have forfeited every claim to personal righteousness! All must be made righteous by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to them—and all who would have that righteousness must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, for there is one way of salvation, and only one—and whatever other differences there may be, there is no difference about this matter! If we are saved at all, we must all be saved in one way. My discourse is to run upon these lines. First, *let us enlarge upon the doctrine* that, in the matter of the Gospel and of salvation, "There is no difference." Secondly, *let us show its practical bearing upon ourselves.* And then, thirdly, *let us rejoice in the doctrine*—let our hearts sing over it—for there is the raw material of many a holy song and Psalm within these few words, "There is no difference."

I. First, then, LET US ENLARGE UPON THIS DOCTRINE and, in so doing, we will make four observations.

The first is this—*there is no difference as to the message of salvation which is to be delivered to men.* It may be my privilege, at one time, to

speak to a convocation of highly-intelligent well-educated men. If so, I am to preach to them the Gospel of salvation by faith in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. On the other hand, it has often been a great joy to me to preach to assemblies which certainly were not composed of the learned and great, but were gathered from the lowest classes of the people. How glad I have been to preach to them! And I had exactly the same message to deliver to them as to the other congregation—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." If the true preacher of Christ were called to preach before a pit full of kings—as Napoleon once said to a noted singer, "If you will come to me, you shall sing before a pit full of kings"—if it were the preacher's business to address such an audience as that, he must preach nothing but, "Believe and live!" And if he were called to speak before an assembly of murderers about to die—the very scum of the earth—he could have no more suitable or appropriate message than this, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Go where you may, my dear Brothers, you need not puzzle your head about the sort of Gospel you are bound to preach. To the jailor at Philippi, to the Areopagites on Mars' Hill, to the Sanhedrim at Jerusalem, to Nero at Rome, to barbarian, Scythian, bond, or free—to the very chief of sinners, to the greatest or the least of mankind, you have to deliver but one message—"God has set forth His Son, Jesus Christ, to be the propitiation for sin, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but should have everlasting life." This is the essence of the one message we have to deliver to all men! "There is no difference."

And, next, *there is no difference as to man's need of this Gospel*. There are some, as we have already admitted, who have been preserved from gross vice, whose lives have been moral and upright, yet they have as much need of the Gospel as those who are confined in our jails, or those who flaunt their unchastity in our public streets. The Gospel comes to deal with sin—and if a man has but one sin, he cannot get rid of that one sin apart from the Atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ. But all men have not merely one sin, but many sins—they may not all be equally clear and manifest—some of them may be secret sins, but the secrecy of sin does not render it less sinful in the sight of God. There are no secrets from Him, He sees everything. And whether sin is open or covert, whether it is less or more than that of other men, it needs the atoning Sacrifice of Christ to remove it! The putting away of the sin of the most moral person who ever lived requires the propitiation of the Son of God. There is no bath that can take away a single stain of guilt except that—

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

All men have evil hearts, albeit their hearts may not all be equally inclined to the coarser vices in which some indulge, yet there is in every sinner the black spot of alienation from God, forgetfulness of God, love of sin and dislike to God when He is thoroughly known. And, to get this out of the heart requires a Divine operation in every case. No man can make his own heart clean. If it were possible for a man to change his arm or his foot, yet it would be clearly impossible for him to change his heart—

that is so vital to himself that there cannot be a change there unless He that made all hearts should make that heart anew! To change the heart of the most amiable maiden requires the work of the Spirit of God as truly as to change the heart of the most debauched wretch that lives! It is no more possible for the honest man than for the practiced thief to make his heart right in the sight of God—it is equally impossible to either of them. Both cases are beyond human power and, therefore, the need of the work of the Spirit of God is the same. All of us, at this moment, either stand stripped naked before God, without a rag to cover us, or else we are wrapped in the glorious and resplendent righteousness of Jesus Christ. The need of the Gospel is the same to every individual in the world! Those who are elevated above their fellow creatures do not stand on high before God—the Queen needs the Grace of God to save her just as much as the poorest of her subjects. "There is no difference" as to the need of salvation.

Next, *this declaration is equally true as to the method of salvation*. The way in which men are saved is the same in every case. "There is no difference." They do not all feel the same terrors, they do not all experience, to the same extent, the common joys. Each path is peculiar in some respects, yet there is but one road, and that is the narrow way that leads to eternal life. The plan of salvation is this—that we confess and acknowledge that our own righteousness is but filthy rags, that there is nothing in us that can merit anything of God. And, next, that we apprehend that the Lord has put His dear Son into our place, has laid on Him our sin and struck Him with the strokes that ought to have fallen upon us. He, on His part, willingly became our Surety and Substitute. We must believe this if we would be saved. That being done, we must accept what Christ has endured as being borne for us—and trust in it with our whole hearts. We must, in fact, change places with Christ—let Him stand, as He did stand, and be reckoned as the sinner, that we might stand here and be looked upon by God as if *we* had been like His Son—perfectly righteous and without sin. He clothes Himself in our rags and He puts on us His royal robes! Faith appropriates to itself the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ and so is clothed with what is called in our text, "the righteousness of God."

God's plan of salvation is a grand one and there is no other that can be of use to anybody in the whole world. This is the one way of life—that you acknowledge yourself to be nothing and take Christ to be your All-in-All—that you, with your sin and misery, by a simple act of faith, take to yourself Christ to be your righteousness and your strength—and, this being done, you are accepted in the Beloved, for now is it true of you that the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Jesus Christ, is unto you and upon you seeing that you have believed in Him. "There is no difference," then, about the method of salvation.

Once more, *there is no difference as to the efficacy of the plan of salvation*. This man believed in Jesus Christ and was saved. So shall that other man be if he believes in Jesus Christ. All who believe in Christ are justified from all things. All who trust in Christ have eternal life and shall

never perish. The blood of Jesus was never yet applied to a conscience without giving it peace. A persecutor is washed and his crimson stains are gone. A thief believes and he is, that day, with Christ in Paradise! Mary Magdalene believes and seven devils are cast out of her. A rough Philippian jailor believes and that night he is baptized, rejoicing in God with all his house. Never sinner yet did try this blessed remedy and find it fail! And none ever shall, for "there is no difference."

II. Now, in the second place, I want to TURN THIS TRUTH TO PRACTICAL ACCOUNT by showing its bearing upon us.

My first observation is *what a leveler this doctrine is for pride!* There is self-righteousness up there as a crown upon your forehead—it will have to come down, my Friend. You are covered with the beautiful garments of your own good deeds—take them off, Brothers and Sisters—take them off! They are all without merit in the sight of God until you have trusted His Son. All that you have done and all that you think you have done are only as so many cobwebs that must be swept away. There stands the gate through which the most fallen may enter—and you must go through the same gate. There is no private path made for a gentleman like you. There is no royal road to Heaven save only that one royal road which is opened for the very chief of sinners. Down, Mr. Pride! Here is a man who is born of Christian parents and, perhaps, he has listened to the lying logic of the present age which says, "Children born of godly parents do not need conversion—there is something good in them by nature." I tell you, Sirs, that I begin to tremble for the children of pious parents, for I think that they are more likely to be deceived than any others! They often fancy that they are converted when they are not and they get admitted into churches while they are unconverted. They are not like those who can see a great change in themselves through being taken right out of gross sin—they are very apt to be deceived and have need to be very careful lest they should make a fatal and eternal mistake. Instead of boasting of their godly ancestry, high privilege as it is, let them remember that regeneration is not of blood, nor of birth, nor of the will of man, but of God. And to them, as to all others, Christ's words apply, "You must be born again."

There are some who imagine that they can get to Heaven by some special staircase because they are people of rank. Oh, believe me, Sir John, you will have to be saved in the same way as your groom, or not at all! Ah, my lord, everybody bows to you, but you must bow to Christ! You must be saved in the same way as the carpenter, the blacksmith and the chimney-sweep, or not at all. There are no two ways to Heaven! Jesus says, "I am the Way." There is no other way for your lordship, or your ladyship, in spite of your rank. There is a wealthy man who thinks that everything is to be bought, if he can find the price—but you cannot buy Heaven, Sir. The very stones of the street are of pure gold—you could not buy one of them, you have not enough money! Your wealth goes for nothing in the matter of salvation. You must be saved in the same way as the poorest of the poor. The pauper who was born in a workhouse and has

never left it, has the same way of salvation as you have, for, "there is no difference" of any sort, whatever, with regard to birth, or rank, or wealth.

But someone says, "I am a man of great abilities, a man of education, culture and learning." I am very glad to hear of it, my dear Sir. But do you expect the Lord is going to make a way of salvation by competitive examination as when people enter the Civil Service? Is there to be a special way of salvation for you Masters of Arts or Doctors of Divinity? It is not so! The Lord knew that the great bulk of people would be nothing of this sort, so He made a Gospel which is adapted to the poor—but is just as suitable for all. Those who are illiterate can, nevertheless, understand the way of salvation by *faith* in Christ and so they are saved and, my dear Sir, you will have to be saved in the same way, or else you will never get to Heaven. I have heard of a king of Sweden who, when he lay dying, had a bishop to pray with him. And when the bishop had finished his prayer, the king said, "Somehow I have derived no comfort from that prayer. I remember once hearing a shepherd pray in a hut when I had lost my way—will you send for him?" They did so, and when the shepherd poured out his heart in his own simple language, then the king saw the Light of God and died rejoicing! "There is no difference"—the king and the shepherd need the same Savior—and must go to Heaven by the same royal road. This doctrine dethrones pride, but that is not all that it does.

Further, *it is a great uplifter of those who are troubled with fears*. "Oh," says one, "I am such a great sinner! I feel that I am the greatest sinner who ever lived." Ah, my dear Friend, but "there is no difference." You will enter Heaven at the same gate through which great *saints* go in if you do but trust the Lord Jesus Christ, for that is what they have to do and so they are saved, and so shall you be! I think that I hear another say, "But I find such evil in my very nature. I have such a hard heart. I cannot feel, I cannot love the Lord as I want to." Yes, I know all about it and I am very sorry for you, but, my dear Friend, "there is no difference." You believe that there are some Christians who are very tender of spirit, but the Lord had to *make* them tender—and He can make you tender. The same Lord that saves little children and that brought a young Josiah and an open-hearted Lydia to His feet, can bring you, also, for there is really no difference. It needed a Divine work in their case and it needs the same in yours. "I am very poor," says one. Yes, but, "there is no difference," blessed be God! You hardly know where you are going to sleep tonight, but I can tell you where you may rest, not only tonight, but all your days—that is, in Christ Jesus—if you come and put your trust in Him! He does not look to see whether you have a suit of broadcloth or a suit of fustian! "There is no difference" with regard to that matter.

"But I am so ignorant," says one, "I cannot even read." I am very sorry for you and I think that you ought to try and learn. At the same time, there is many a man who can read his title clear to a mansion in the skies who does not know A from B! It does not need that you be a scholar in the schools of men to become a scholar in the school of Christ, but, just as you are, trust your soul in His hands and He will teach you all that is essential to be known, for in this matter, "there is no difference." I

thought I heard someone say, very indistinctly, "Ah, Sir, but I am so old!" Yes, yes, and I think I hear a little boy or girl over yonder say, "But, Sir, I am so young!" Well, come along, both of you! Give me your hand, old Friend, and give me yours, dear child, for "there is no difference" between the oldest and the youngest as to this way of salvation! The child believes and is saved! And the old man believes with a childlike faith and is saved, too!

My text also has a practical bearing in another direction, *it helps to meet singularity of disposition*. There are many persons in the world who believe that they are different from everybody else. I always sympathize very heartily with them because I know that I am, myself, a very odd body, a lot out of all catalogs, I often say, and so are you. You think there never was another like you! Perhaps you think it is a pity that there should be and very likely that is true. You are all by yourself, you say. Well, just listen to me, for my text can set you right—God grant that it may! After all, "there is no difference." Come, you strange Jack—you singular Mary—you that seem to be the odd bird in the nest—there is, after all, no difference! Your heart is evil, your life has been sinful—so has my life been, and so is it with all those round about you! And there is only one way of salvation for you odd people and for all you even people as well! There is not anybody that is so cut on the cross, so strange and so altogether out of harmony with the rest of mankind that he may say, "God left me out of His calculations." No, there is really no difference whatever between you and others in this matter of salvation!

I must make yet one more practical use of my text and that is, *to encourage you who labor for Christ*. Where are you going to serve the Master, my Brother? "Oh," you reply, "I have a very tough bit of ground to till. I teach in a Ragged School on Stint Street and I visit the lodging houses." Another says, "I am trying to do something for Christ in Bethnal Green." Well, Friend, I reckon that I have about as hard a field of labor as you have. "Oh," you say, "but these look like very respectable people." Yes, they look so, but if you could read their hearts, you would see that they are uncommonly like those people on Stint Street and Bethnal Green among whom you are working. "As in water, face answers to face, so the heart of man to man." We all belong to the same race. There is but one blood in all of us. There is the same tendency to sin and the same need of a Savior for these respectable-looking folk as there is for the very roughest and the very dirtiest of mankind!

I think I hear another say, "I am going to Africa as a missionary and I am sometimes afraid as to how I shall get on with the unenlightened people there." Another says, "I am going to India and I do not know how I shall succeed with those learned Brahmins." Another says, "I am going to China. I cannot hope to see many converted among those who are so devoted to Confucianism." Why not? "There is no difference." After all, it is the same sort of soil which we all have to plow either at home or abroad. There may be a slight contrast on the surface, but it all needs the same kind of plowing, the same sort of sowing and the same Divine power to cause the seed to grow! The gate of salvation is just as widely open to

men in China as it is to you who have long been sitting under the sound of the Word. At bottom, "there is no difference" between man and man—they are all sinners, they are all depraved. "They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one." I believe that it takes as much Grace to save an Englishman as it does to save a Hottentot. The Grace operates, too, in much the same way. The experience of the two men, when it is related, may sound different because of the varying measure of knowledge of the parties concerned, yet the essential items of all true Christian experience will be found to be the same in every case. Do not, therefore, say, dear Brother, "I shall not go to that place! It is such a difficult place." I have a notion that such a spot as that is the very best place to which anyone can go. "But there are such crowds of people there." All the better! It is good fishing where there are plenty of fish. "But, oh, they are so wild!" Just so. But if I were ever to go hunting, I would not hunt poor timid hares, I would like to go after lions, tigers, bears and wolves—there is excitement in such sport as that!

And if you go in for soul-winning, do not be picking and choosing which souls you will try to win. The worse the region is, the more it needs the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I think that if I were a lamp and I could have my choice as to where I would be hung, I should not wish to be in one of the fine streets where there were plenty of other lamps, but I should like to go down some wretched court where there was no lamp at all, where the people break one another's heads and steal one another's goods in the dark, for I should be of more use there! So, dear Friends, be willing to go where you can be of most use! And wherever your sphere of service is, do not be discouraged, for over all men there hangs this motto, "There is no difference." They have all to be saved in the same way and the Omnipotence that can save one will abundantly suffice for the salvation of another!

III. Now, in closing my discourse, I want to spend a minute or two in bidding you REJOICE OVER THIS GREAT TRUTH.

I rejoice over the fact that there is no difference, in the matters of which I have been speaking, *concerning the whole human race*. I saw a picture of the Tower of Babel by an eminent painter. All the various races of mankind were represented as going off in different directions, some to the North, others to the South, to the West, or to the East, all being scattered over the face of the whole earth. It was a painful sight to see the great family broken up, never, as far as we could see, to be reunited again. But, dear Friends, hear how this text collects the whole family of mankind into one and gathers all these scattered ears of corn and makes one sheaf of them—"There is no difference." All men are fallen through sin, but whoever, out of them all, believes in Jesus Christ, shall have eternal life! There is one blessed bath of salvation in which all may be washed whiter than snow! There is one remedy, and only one, for the disease of sin—and all who apply to the great Physician are healed forever. I love to see the human race thus reunited.

But there is something better than that. *What glory it is to the Lord Jesus Christ that He should be the only Savior* and that faith in Him should be the only way of salvation! I feel sure that we do not wish the Lord Jesus Christ to be put into competition with someone else in His work as our Savior. No, we want our Lord to have the monopoly in this matter and He has it! None can be saved except by faith in Him, by the application of His precious blood, glory be to His holy name! I feel a very peculiar joy over this Truth of God. I was thinking, as I came along to this service, "Suppose I had to preach a different gospel for every man?" There is a little book entitled, *Every man his own lawyer*. Well, nowadays, according to some people, it seems as if every man is to be his own savior! But if I had, say, a dozen gospels, and I had to sort them out and give the right gospel to the right man, what a fix I would be in! I believe that, oftentimes, I should be giving your gospel to someone else and someone else's gospel to you—and what a muddle it would all be! But now we have one universal cure! We have a Divine *catholicon*. The blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ will save every man who trusts Him, for "there is no difference."

Wherever Christ is received, there shall be salvation. This makes it easy work for the preacher and what a blessing it is to you who are Believers, for, suppose you had to say, "Well, I have believed in such-and-such a salvation," but somebody might say, "That will not save you! You are a No. 2 man and you need No. 2 gospel, not No. 1." Suppose you should lay hold of that and one of these days your conscience should say to you, "No. 2 is not the medicine that you need, you ought to have No. 6." Suppose that it ran up to No. 14, No. 17, or No. 20? Why, when you lay dying, you might say, "I have taken the remedy No. 1, but I am afraid that I am a No.20 man. I took this one and it did give me some kind of relief, but I am afraid that I took the wrong medicine." But now it is one medicine for every disease—one Christ for every sinner—one blood with which to wash us—one salvation with which to rescue us—one righteousness with which to cover us! Therefore, such doubts as I have just mentioned can never come into the minds of those who believe in Jesus—blessed be God for that!

And so to you, dear Hearers, who are seeking after Christ, is it not a great mercy that there is but one name whereby you can be saved? Otherwise the same awkward occurrence might happen to you and you would be saying, "At which door am I to go in?" You might get to the wrong entrance and the man in charge of it might say, "This is not the door for you. You have come to the wrong one, you must go to No. 6, or 7, or 8." How puzzled we are when we go to Clapham Junction, or some such railway station, to know which staircase we are to go up—and a poor sinner would be much in the same kind of worry to know which way he was to be saved. But when it is just this, "Believe and be saved; look and live; trust yourself to Christ, rest in His atoning Sacrifice and you are saved"—all can understand it!

When God gives us, by His Spirit, a simple faith in Jesus, we at once receive eternal life—and every soul that believes in Jesus Christ has that

life. I pray God to bless this message to you who are still unsaved. Quarrel not with your only hope of salvation! Accept what God provides! Yield yourselves to the Divine decree, for God has decreed that no soul shall enter Heaven but by His Son, "the Way, the Truth and the Life." This name—this *one name*—you must rely on if you would be saved! This way—this *one way*—you must run in if you would enter Heaven! God help you to enter it at once, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 3.

Verses 1, 2. *What advantage, then, has the Jew? Or what profit is there in circumcision? Much every way; chief, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.* If it is so that, after all, no outward rite or birth privileges can bestow Grace, what advantage did the Jews possess? "Why," says Paul, "they had this very great privilege, 'that unto them were committed the oracles of God!'" It is no small blessing to have a Revelation from Jehovah and to have the means of knowing what that Revelation really is.

3. *For what if some did not believe?* Many of the seed of Israel did not believe the Revelation that was made to them. Yet the privilege of hearing it was just as great, even though they slighted it.

3-5. *Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid! Yes, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That You might be justified in Your sayings, and might overcome when You are judged. But if our unrighteousness commends the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who takes vengeance?* Vengeance on a sin which is nevertheless made to turn to His glory?

5-7. *(I speak as a man) God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world? For if the Truth of God has more abounded through my lie unto His glory, why yet am I also judged as a sinner?* Yet I shall be. If God shall overrule my sin to His own glory, that will mate no difference to my responsibility. If I have lied, if I have done wrong in any way, I must be judged and condemned on that account, whatever may be the ultimate result of my sin.

8. *And not rather, (as we are slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say), Let us do evil, that good may come? Whose damnation is just.* If any man dares to say that, "Since God turns even evil into good, and by the forgiveness of sin brings glory to Himself, 'Let us do evil that good may come,'" he is twisting the Truth of God to his own destruction—and his "damnation is just."

9. *What then? Are we better than they?* Are Jews better than Gentiles? Or, are Gentiles better than Jews?

9. *No, in no way, for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin.* Nobody can read the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans and follow it by reading the second, without seeing how completely Paul has proved "that they are all under sin."

10. *As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one.* There is not, and there never has been, one of the human race, save our Lord, who also is God, who ever continued to live a righteous life! Adam began righteously, but how soon he fell! And all his descendants have both began and continued to be sinners. "There is none righteous, no, not one."

11. *There is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God.* That is, none do so by nature—those who seek after God are *led* to do so by a work of Grace upon their hearts. Otherwise, men are blind. They do not see the right path. They are willful and do not seek after God.

12. *They are all gone out of the way, they are all together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one.* This is God's verdict upon the whole human race! He has the best opportunity of seeing them and He has the best capacity for judging them. And this is what He says of all men as they are by nature, "There is none that does good, no, not one."

13. *Their throat is an open sepulcher.* A reeking mass of corruption!

13. *With their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips.* They are pleased to say a bad word about their neighbor. They are eager to repeat any slander that they hear and they are not unwilling, even, to invent it, themselves!

14, 15. *Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood.* And when, by fear of the laws of the land, they are prevented from carrying out their evil purposes, yet their anger is, itself, murder in intent—and into what human heart has not that sin glanced?

16-19. *Destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that whatever the Law says, it says to them who are under the Law.* All these passages, which Paul has put together in this dreadful mosaic, are taken from the Old Testament, so they apply to the Jews. And he had already proven, in the first Chapter, the intolerable vice of the Gentiles, so that now he has shown that both Jews and Gentiles are guilty.

19. *That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.* The 19th Century world, as well as the world of the 1st Century—all the world, in all time, has "become guilty before God."

20. *Therefore by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight.* Talk not, therefore, of righteousness by your own works! Dream not of meriting eternal life by any attempt to keep the Law of God, for this is the declaration of God's Holy Spirit, "By the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight."

20. *For by the Law is the knowledge of sin.* The Law is a mirror—you see your spots as you gaze into it. But no man ever washed his face in a mirror—it shows the spots, but it cannot remove them! The Law of God is the indicator and the revealer of sin, but it has no power whatever to put away sin.

21-24. *But now the righteousness of God without the Law is manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets; even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the*

glory of God; being justified freely by His Grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. That is a very wonderful verse, every word of it is full of meaning. "Justified"—that is, accounted just, made to be righteous in the sight of God. "Justified freely"—without any merit or purchase money. "Freely by His Grace"—not an act of justice, but an act of mercy has made sinners just in the sight of God! *"Through the redemption"*—there is the foundation of it all—we are redeemed by precious blood. *"Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."*

25-27. *Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believes in Jesus. Where is boasting, then?* Boasting is sure to be somewhere handy, ready to creep in if it can, for we are all prone to it—it is the common sin of our race! "Where is boasting, then?"

27. *It is excluded. By what law?* It is shut out! But by what law is it shut out?

27. *Of works?* No, for whenever we think that we have been performing any good works, we at once begin to boast.

27. *No, but by the law of faith.* For if we are saved by believing, if we are justified freely by God's Grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, then there is no room for boasting.

28. *Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the Law.* "We conclude"—we are shut up to this belief, "that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the Law."

29. *Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also.* He saved Abraham by faith, and he saves us by faith. The same saving principle is applicable to all parts of the human race.

30, 31. *Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the Law through faith?* Some will be sure to say so, but it is not true.

31. *God forbid! Yes, we establish the Law.* There is no one who so much loves the Law of God and delights in it after the inward man, as the one who is justified by faith! There is nothing that so honors the Law of God as "the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ." It establishes forever the Law, even as Christ said to His disciples, "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till Heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all is fulfilled."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—397, 534, 549.

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

OUR THOUGHTS ABOUT GOD'S THOUGHTS
NO. 2609

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 12, 1899.

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

"How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with You."
Psalm 139:17, 18.

This Psalm dilates upon the Omniscience of God. In the most forcible manner, it shows that God's eyes have always rested upon us and are resting upon us now. We are here made to see that God knew all about us before we were born, that He now reads our most secret thoughts and that our unspoken words are all known to Him. And I want you to notice that the Psalm is not at all in that mournful strain in which we sometimes speak of the Omniscience of God. It is a very solemn thing that God should be everywhere. "You God see me," is a note of the most serious kind when sounded in the sinner's ear, but, to those who are the people of God, there is nothing dreadful in the thought that God sees us. There is nothing to cause us to despond or to make us feel gloomy in the fact that God compasses our path and our lying down. In fact, in proportion as we are fully reconciled to God, love Him and rejoice in Him, it will become a cause of joy to reflect that our best Friend is never away from us—that our Protector's hand is never removed, that the great observant eyes of Divine Love are never closed!

Oh, dear Friends, could we ever go to any place where God is not to be found, that would be the Hell of hells to His people! And if there could be a period in which the Lord did not look upon us, we might say, "Let that day be blotted out from the calendar." It is a joy, a bliss, a foretaste of Heaven to know that—

"Wherever we seek Him, He is found"

and even when we are not seeking Him, yet still He is above, beneath and all around us! He is never far from any of us. May we all have the Grace that will enable us to rejoice in a present God! We may judge as to our position before God by this test—is the thought of His constant observation of us a subject of joy or of dread? If we dread it, surely we have the old spirit of bondage still upon us! But if we rejoice in it, then we may know that we have received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, "Abba, Father."

I am going to try to speak, as God shall help me, first, upon *God's thoughts of us.* "How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!" Then, secondly, I want to say a little upon

our thoughts about God's thoughts. His thoughts become precious to us as we think about them. Then, thirdly, I wish to speak at somewhat greater length concerning *our thoughts upon God Himself.* "When I awake, I am still with You."

I. First, then, let us meditate for a little while upon GOD'S THOUGHTS OF US.

That the infinite Jehovah thinks of us is *absolutely certain*. He thinks about all the inhabitants of the whole world. There is a general Providence which has a superintendence over all that happens in all parts of the earth. I know that the notion of some men is that the world is like a watch and that God has done with it as we do with our watches—that is, wound it up, put it under His pillow and gone to sleep. But it is not so, for in this great world-watch—to keep up the figure—God is present with every wheel and every cog of every wheel—there is no action in it apart from His present putting forth of power to make it move. There is nothing that happens merely as the result of, "law," as some people seem to dream, for a law is nothing without a *force* at the back of it! When we speak of certain things as being governed by law, we simply mean that as far as we have discerned, that is the general way in which this particular thing moves, or is acted upon, or acts upon some other thing. But, then, where is the force that enables it to act so, or that makes it to be so acted upon? "That is gravitation," says one. Yes, that is your name for that force, but it is really God who is everywhere at work! Though the law of gravitation may be said to be abiding, yet the force of gravity is but the force which proceeds from God. It is God still putting forth His power and operating after His own manner upon material substances.

God, therefore, thinks upon the whole world—and I am glad that it is so! I do not like the idea of being put out to nurse, as it were, and left without my Heavenly Father's personal supervision. I like to be in a world that is really God's garden, a part of His own homestead in which He dwells and where I am always directly under the glance of His eyes. Rivers unknown to song, far distant from civilization, are nevertheless homely places to one who has learned to be at home with God.

Now, as God thinks and must think of the whole material universe which He has created, much more does He think of men and most of all of us who are His own chosen people, to whom He stands in a very peculiar relationship as our Father, who has "begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." God must think of us—the blood would not flow in our veins, nor would the breath make our lungs to heave, nor would our various bodily processes go on without the perpetual exercise of His power. God must think of us especially in all the higher departments of our being, for they would speedily come to nothing apart from His constant care. There would be none of the spirit of prayer if He did not work it in us. There would be no spirit of sonship if the Holy Spirit did not teach us continually to cry, "Abba, Father." Faith and hope and love are plants that only live in the sunlight of God. And if the great Father of Lights withdrew, all these would die. "Without Me you can do nothing," is as certainly true of us who are His people, as of those who are far from Him by wicked worlds. We must be united to God, or else we shall perish and, therefore, as we know that we shall

never perish, we are quite sure that our Heavenly Father thinks of us. Think of all the gracious influences that meet in your person to perpetuate your life—I mean, your *spiritual* life—your holiness, your comfort, your joy. Think of all the purposes of God that center in you in order that, by them, you may be made perfect and so be fit to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. Think of these things, I say, and you will at once see that for the grand design which God has concerning you, it is absolutely essential that He should think of you—and He does think of you!

Next, God's thoughts of us must be *very numerous*. According to our text the sum of them is very great—how great, the Psalmist does not say. The number of God's thoughts is so vast that even if you could count the sand on the seashores, you could not count the thoughts of God concerning you! Oh, how important this makes us poor creatures, when we remember that God thinks of us! I would like you to sit still a minute and think over this wonderful Truth of God. You know that people are very proud if a king has merely looked at them. I have heard of a man who used to boast, all his life, that King George IV— such a beauty as he was!—once spoke to him. He only said, "Get out of the road," but it was a *king* who said it, so the man felt greatly gratified thereby. But you and I, Beloved, can rejoice that God, before whom kings are as grasshoppers, actually thinks of us and thinks of us often. One or two thoughts would not suffice for our many needs—if He only thought of us now and then, what would we do in the meantime? But he thinks of us constantly! He says that He has engraved our names upon the palms of His hands, as if to show how continually we are before Him. David said, "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon me." And our Savior said to His disciples, "Your Father knows what things you have need of before you ask Him," proving that He had thought about them and had looked upon them with careful eyes and observed all their necessities. Yes, God does in very deed and of a truth think upon His people—and His thoughts concerning them are very numerous!

And they are also *very tender*. God never thinks of His people in a harsh way. He never has an unkind thought concerning even the most erring of those who are His own children. He looks upon them as a father looks upon his child, with intense affection, pitying them when they stray from Him. And if, sometimes, He chides them for their wrongdoing, even then He does but veil the purpose of His love that He may accomplish it the better. He is always aiming at that which will promote our best health, our truest wealth and our ultimate perfection. At times, clouds come between our souls and our God, but His love is always shining. O Beloved, if the Lord had not thought very tenderly of us, He would have cut some of us down long ago as cumberers to the ground. "He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." How often He has screened us from trouble! How frequently He has prepared us for a trial, so that, when it came, it did not crush us! How often He has rescued us out of sore perils! How often He has visited us in the night and given us songs amid our sorrow! "Your gentleness has made me great," said David, and many another child of God has said the same!

There is nothing that can equal the tenderness of God towards us, His poor, frail and erring children.

But while God's thoughts concerning us have been thus tender, they have also been *very wise*. To make a glass that should reflect without any color the object placed before it, was long the desire of those who made certain kinds of optical instruments. They worked a long time to no purpose, but, at last, someone discovered how to form an achromatic lens and then, lo and behold, when this man had thought out his plan perfectly in all its details, he was able to make a glass which was exactly like the eyes of an insect which I have often seen. So, when the man thought aright, he thought just as God thought and, after going a long way round about, when he did come to the right conclusion, he came just where God was. And, in like manner, if you and I were to try to work out the problem of our lives, and if we were wise enough to discover the best way in which we could get to Heaven, we would come exactly to the route which God has marked out for us and we would do with ourselves precisely what God does with us! Were we always wise, we would never murmur. Were we to be endowed with infinite wisdom, we would rejoice in the very things which now distress us—and the clouds and darkness which we now seek to avoid, we would willingly pass through if we did but see, as God sees, the end as well as the beginning! His thoughts are wise for the whole of our lives. He does not simply think how He shall make us happiest today, or how He should give us the most enjoyment for a week—that is how fond and foolish mothers think and plan for their boys. They make ducks of them—and they grow up geese. They indulge them and spoil them, but it is never so with God in His thoughts concerning the happiness of His children. He looks far ahead. He takes *eternity* into the compass of His thoughts and He judges what is best to do for us, not merely under the aspect of an hour, or a week, or a month, or even of a whole life below, but He puts eternity into the scale and orders all things well for everlasting ages!

You and I could not think like that, could we? We soon get puzzled with our little calculations and it is unwise for us to look too far ahead. If we begin considering 50 cares at once, they will prove to be too many for us. Our best way is to take them one by one and live by the day, or, better still, moment by moment. Such a course as that would not be wise for us if it were not that there is Another who, not living by the day, Himself, but filling all eternity, judges for us according to that blessed stanza of the Psalmist, "His mercy endures forever."

These, then, are the thoughts of God concerning us—certain, numerous, tender and infinitely wise.

And God's thoughts, too, are *very practical*. He does not think of us and let it end with thinking, but God's thoughts are really His acts, for, with Him, to will is to do. He utters His thought and, lo, it is accomplished! His fiat has achieved it. God might have thought much of us and the thought would have had no comfort in it if it had not moved His hand to succor and to help us. Think awhile of the practical thoughts of God for us in the eternity when He chose us before the daystar knew its place. Think of the Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure, made before the sun had shed a single ray of light upon the earth. Think

especially of that part of the Covenant in which the Father made His Son to be our Covenant Head and gave Him to stand in our place as our Surety and Substitute. Oh, what a thought was that—how wonderfully practical—that God should take His Beloved Son from His bosom and give Him up to die that we might live! And, ever since, all along our history, God has thought of us. He thought of us when we were babes and we were nourished and cherished. He thought of us when we were children and we learned to lisp His name. He thought of us—

"When, in the slippery paths of youth,
With heedless haste we ran."

He has thought of us since we have come to manhood. Yes, and in the case of many of us, He has thought of our children and of our children's children, too. And He is still thinking of us and He will continue to do so when our last thoughts die out in insensibility. Remember His ancient promise to His people—"Even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry and will deliver you." And we shall find it to be so! And each Believer may say, with David, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." These, then, are God's thoughts concerning us—constant, kind, wise, tender, gracious, perfect, Divine—like He in whose infinite mind they are found!

II. Now let us meditate for just a few minutes upon OUR THOUGHTS ABOUT GOD'S THOUGHTS.

What do you say, my Heart, to this wondrous Truth of God—that the Lord thinks upon you? I have been ready to say what would be a very fair translation of the Hebrew—"how *rare* are Your thoughts!" You know that the word, "rare," was used in a different sense in olden times from what it is now. In Westminster Abbey there is s stone with these words upon it, "O rare Ben Jonson!"—meaning strange, special, peculiar, marked. So the thoughts of God are rare thoughts, the like of which cannot be found anywhere else! The thoughts of angels, or the thoughts of perfect spirits above must be something very wonderful, but, oh, the thoughts of God! If I were told that some bright angel was sent to think of me all day and all night long, that he was my Master's servant to watch over me, I would feel pleasure in the thought, yet that would be a poor, poor thing compared with the fact that *God* thinks upon us and watches over us! The Lord told Moses that His angel would go before the people through the wilderness, but you may have noticed how Moses pleaded against such a decision—"If Your Presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." We do not need angelic presence one hundredth as much as we need the Divine Presence! Here, then, in God's thoughts concerning us, is something rare and wonderful, indeed! And this is our thought about it, that there is no other thought that can, for a moment, be compared with it!

How *delightful*, too, it is to be thought upon by God! I have already said that to some people, the Truth that God is looking upon them wears an aspect of awe and dread. "Oh," says one, "is it not terrible to think that God's eyes are always upon me?" It is not terrible to me—I am right glad that it should be so, and I pray, with David, "'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.' You will see

much that will grieve You and much that You will have to amend, but still, I would not wish to hide anything from You, my Lord. Lies not all my hope, my very Heaven, that way? The glances of Your eyes, are they not the very medicine that shall cure my soul-sickness, or, at least, the means by which I shall get the medicine that will heal me of the dire disease of sin?"

It is even so, and the true child of God wishes to always get more and more closely under the inspection of his Heavenly Father—and the thoughts of God towards him charm and delight him. Does God in very deed think of me, from the moment when I wake in the morning, and all through the day, till I lock up my heart at night and give Him the key? Does He keep on thinking of me while I lie asleep, unable to think of anything except poor wandering thoughts that come in my dreams? If so, blessed be His name that He condescends to do anything of the kind! "How precious are Your thoughts unto me, O God!" How delightful is it to be thus thought of by You! And how consoling it is, also!

We all like to be thought of and remembered. I went to call on one who was sorely sick. The doctor had said that he must see no one, but when his friends told him I was there, he exclaimed, "Oh, let him come up!" "No," they replied, "he must not, for it might excite you, and do you harm." "Give him my love, then," he said, "and tell him that it does me good to know that he is downstairs." We like to be thought of, I am sure that we do. Even the thoughts of a little child towards us have comfort in them. There is many a mother who is made a widow and she sits down to weep as if her heart must break. But when her little one plucks her skirt, ignorant of the sorrow which it will one day have to feel with the mother, and the mother hears the child's merry little note, it is often the best form of consolation that God sends to her bereaved spirit!

We all like to be kindly remembered, but, oh, what is it to be thought of by *God*? "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." And if men misrepresent us, and misinterpret us, and speak evil of us, and put us out of their company, what does it matter, as long as the Lord draws nearer to us than He did before? God's servants in Scotland had brave times among the heather when they had to watch for Claverhouse's dragoons and stood in jeopardy of their lives. The Lord was especially present among the lone crags and they heard His voice in the Psalm and then from above in the thunder! So near was the Lord to them in the dark days of persecution that afterwards, when peaceable times came and they could go to the kirk in quiet, there were some who looked with regret on those other days when they met at the peril of their lives and God was their Leader! So, God's thoughts are precious to us by way of consolation.

They also have other effects upon us, for the thoughts of God often move the souls of Christians, *strengthening them in faith, awakening them to love and stirring them to zeal*. There is many a man who has done, under a sense of God's Presence, what he would never have dreamed of doing if he had not realized that the Lord was there. As the Highland chieftain, when he fell and was dying, said to the men of his clan, "I shall watch you, my children, as you rush to the fight," and so made them brave—when we think of God's watching us and of His eyes

being upon us, we also become valiant and do exploits in His sight! And each one of us sings—

"I can do all things, or can bear
All sufferings, if my Lord is there!
Sweet pleasures mingle with the pains,
While His left hand my head sustains."

His Presence is all that our heart requires. Indeed, Beloved, when we really drink in the thoughts of God towards us, our spirit is filled with all that it needs and is borne onward as with a mighty rush—a full tide of Grace—up to the Throne of Heaven!

III. Now I come to the last part of my discourse, OUR THOUGHTS UPON GOD HIMSELF. David says, here, "When I awake, I am still with You."

I want you to notice, first, that he seems to imply that *our thoughts bring us near to God*. Thinking of Him, we realize that we are in His immediate Presence. I cannot describe the feeling of a spirit consciously present with God, but, though I cannot describe it, I am sure that many of you know what it is, and I am equally sure that I, also, know what it is. There have been times with us when we did not actually walk by sight but, still, we had a very joyful experience of God's Presence with us. We not only believed in God's existence, but our spirits seemed enveloped in and encompassed with His Spirit and appeared to be, as it were, set on fire, as when the bush in the desert was all aglow with the indwelling God. It is not always so with us, but we have had times of extremely conscious nearness to God. After prayer, as we rose from our knees and looked at the clock, we perceived that a full half-hour had gone, whereas we thought that it was only a minute or two that we had been at our devotions. In our chamber, alone, as we have read the Word, the sacred page has seemed to glow with unusual brilliance. We do not remember noticing such glory in those words, before, but God has spoken to us through the Word and that has made the difference.

Sometimes, as we have been sitting in the sanctuary, a solemn awe has manifestly been on every heart. And when we went away, we said to one another, "Surely God was in that place, and we knew it." You know how Paul says about his rapturous experience, "Whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knows." Such things have happened to many of God's people and I believe that the more we live in Him, and walk with Him, the more often will this be our experience till it may even come to be perpetual, and our soul shall be as certain of the Presence of God as we are of the presence of our body. We shall get to have as keen a sense and recognition of the Presence of God with us as we have of the atmosphere which surrounds us. David's declaration, "When I awake, I am still with You," implies that holy thoughts of the precious thoughts of God place us near to God!

And, next, it implies that these thoughts *help to keep us near to God.* "When I awake, I am still with You," said David, as if he meant, "I have a long time been in Your company. I have been now by the week, the month, the year, abiding in the light of Your Countenance, enjoying Your sweet society. Your Grace has kept me near You."

Still further, such thoughts *help to restore God's Presence to us* if, for a while, we have lost it. "When I awake"—that means, "I have been asleep and so have lost the consciousness of God's Presence." Have you ever known what it is, at night, to be quite sorry to go to sleep because you have been so full of holy joy that you were afraid you might lose it while you were unconscious? Have you never lain awake thinking and meditating upon your God, enjoying His Presence so much that you have said, "This is better than sleep. I wish that my eyes might be kept wide awake that they might forget their need of rest, that I might continue this hallowed communion"? But with our poor frail frames we must sleep, so, is it not sweet that when you awake, you should be where you left off, that, as your soul was holding fellowship with God as you fell asleep, when you opened your eyes, again, He was still there? You were ready to take up the happy employment where you left off, for you had not broken the thread—and you went on still communing with your God!

This text evidently refers in part to natural slumber. When our thoughts are much with God, then it will happen that our sleep will make no break in our communion with Him. Were you ever pained by a dream? I will hold no man responsible for his dreams, but, if there were no sin in us, we would have no sin even in our dreams. If we were perfectly pure—as some think that they are—we would be perfectly pure even in our dreams. Take off the bridles from the horses, remove the bits from their mouths and let them go where they will, yet, if they are thoroughly trained, they will not rush wildly about and they will still obey your call. If a house is perfectly clean, it will be just as clean if you take all the locks off and leave the doors open. If a man is perfectly pure, he would be pure in any case and in any condition. Therefore, even a dream may sometimes set us watching to know how such mischief could get into our thoughts. It could not have come there if sin had not been dwelling in us. But, oh, it is blessed to get so near to God that when you fall asleep, you seem to hear, even in your dreams, the music of His voice! And when you wake in the morning, you will wish to recall those blessed thoughts that came to you even when your whole being seemed steeped in sleep! The text says, "When I awake, I am still with You." And I think that it also means, "When I wake up from any temporary lethargy into which I may have fallen, I am still with You." We all, sometimes, get into that state—sleeping, though our heart is awake. We wish to be more brisk, more lively—but we cannot stir ourselves up. We sing—

"Dear Lord! And shall we always lie
At this poor dying rate?"

We have fallen into a kind of stupor. What a blessing it is to be awakened out of it, possibly by a severe affliction, perhaps by an earnest discourse! Then the awakened one says, "Now I have come back to You, my God. There was a something within me that could not forget You, even for a while, though it lay still and dormant."

And, best of all, what a grand thing it will be, one of these days, to go upstairs for the last time and stretch ourselves on the bed and say, "Adieu! Adieu!" to all we love below—and then put our head back on the pillow while those who are watching say, "He sleeps in Jesus!" "I shall be satisfied when I awake with Your likeness." "'When I awake, I am still

with You.' I trusted You when I fell asleep and in the morning I awoke to find You still my Friend."

Then, when my body wastes from its long sleep in the tomb, every rising bone of it shall acknowledge the Lord! My eyes shall see Him in that day—the God that loved me and died for me! Oh, how blessed it is to keep the whole heart so fixed upon God that come sleep, come life, come death, come what may, we shall be just like the needle in the compass which always turns to the pole! You may turn it around, if you like, but it always goes back and will not point anywhere but in that one direction. May it also be true of you and me that we can rest nowhere but in our God! I close my discourse, as I have often done before, with that sweet verse—

"All that remains for me
Is but to love and sing,
And wait until the angels come
To bear me to the King."

I wish that all of you knew this blessed experience of which I have been speaking. Some of you do not. You are afraid of God. You are afraid of His seeing you. You are afraid to go to Him. See, then, here is Jesus Christ who took upon Him our nature though He is God! Go to Him, trust Him, believe in Him—then He will make you to be a child of God and you will not be afraid of your Father. God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 139.

May the all-seeing God, of whom this Psalm speaks, look down upon us and bless us richly while we read it!

Verse 1. *O LORD You have searched me, and known me.* "Known me perfectly, far better than I know myself. You have made an inquisition and investigated every secret thing concerning me. 'You have searched me, and known me.'"

2. *You know my sitting down and my rising up, You understand my thoughts afar off.* "Before I think it, while as yet it is not actually my thought, while it is still unformed and far away, You understand it. You not only know what it is, but You understand it—the motive from which it springs, the state of mind out of which it arises, and whereunto it tends—'You understand my thought afar off'"

3. *You compass my path.* "You are all round me—behind, before, above, beneath"—

"Awake, asleep, at home, abroad,
I am surrounded still with God."

3. *And my lying down.* "When wearied by my journey I lie down to rest, You still bless my lying down."

3. *And are acquainted with all my ways.* "I cannot tell you anything which You do not know; nor can I hide anything from You. Whatever I have done, or am doing, or shall do, 'You are acquainted with all my ways.'"

4. *For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, You know it altogether—*

"He knows the words I mean to speak,
Ere from my opening lips they break."

God sees the word that is lying quietly on the tongue as well as the word which has been uttered by the tongue. "You know it altogether." God's knowledge is not partial or imperfect. He never misjudges any, for He is acquainted with every part of every man.

5. *You have beset me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me.* "You have come so near me that You touch me. You not only know my thoughts and my words, but You come into contact with me. You know me as I know a thing when I feel it with my hand—'You have laid Your hand upon me.'"

6, 7. *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Where shall I go from Your Spirit?* Not that David desired to go away from God, but he wished to show the impossibility of escaping from the eyes of God. "Where shall I go from Your Spirit?"

7. *Or Where shall I flee from Your Presence?* "You are everywhere and Your far-seeing eyes will behold me in every place. Vain is it, therefore, for me to think that I can ever flee from Your Presence." Is it not a very striking thought that every sin is committed in the Presence of God? He must be a very bold rebel who would insult his monarch to his face! Men are generally on their best behavior when they stand upon the palace floor—yet the whole earth is but the habitation of the great King eternal, immortal, invisible—and every time we sin, we sin in His very Presence, and with His eyes resting upon us.

8-10. *If I ascend up into Heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Your hand lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.* Well did Dr. Watts write—

"If mounted on a morning ray
I fly beyond the western sea,
Your swifter hand would first arrive,
And there arrest your fugitive."

There is no hope of escaping from God by any speed to which we may attain, for if we could fly with the speed of light, yet would Jehovah be before us—His hand would lead as, and His right hand would hold us.

11. *If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.* It shall be light to the eyes of God, for He depends not upon the light in order that He may see. Light is a most welcome aid to our poor eyes, but God sees just as well in the dark! "Even the night shall be light about me."

12. *Yes, the darkness hides not from You; but the night shines as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to You.* This is a very commonplace Truth of God and yet how seldom do men realize it! They still fancy that when the night comes on and they are not perceived by mortal eyes, they may do what they will. But there is no curtain in the night that can hide a deed of guilt from the eyes of the Omniscient Jehovah! "The darkness and the light are both alike to You."—

"Almighty God, Your piercing eyes
Strike through the shades of night
And our most secret actions lie
All open to Your sight."

13. *For You have possessed my reins.* "The innermost parts of my being—You have possessed them as Your own. You know as much about them as a man knows of the rooms in his own house. 'You have possessed my reins.'"

13, 14. *You have covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You.* That is a very sweet thing for the Psalmist to say. Just when he felt stricken with awe by reason of this august attribute of the Omniscience of Jehovah, he looks up to his God and says, "I will praise You."

14. *For I am fearfully and wonderfully made.* Anyone who understands anatomy will tell you that man is strangely formed. So fearfully are we made that our life stands in constant jeopardy—it looks as if every breath might be our last and every pulse might speedily end our life. You cannot examine a blood vessel—especially some of the very small one through a microscope without being utterly astonished. Any medical man will tell you that there are many times in an hour—perhaps even in a minute—in which a very simple thing would put our life in imminent peril of destruction! Truly we are "fearfully and wonderfully made."—

"Our life contains a thousand springs,
And dies if one is gone!
Strange, that a harp of thousand strings
Should stay in tune so long!"

Every man is a world of wonders. He need not go abroad for miracles, for he is, himself, a marvelous and miraculous combination!

14. *Marvelous are Your works; and that my soul knows right well.* How there can be a compound of spirit and matter—how the earth on which we tread should enter into our composition and yet we should be akin to angels. How there can be something about us that links us with the dust, yet much about us that joins us to God, Himself—these are extraordinary things which we do not understand Where is the point in which the spirit touches materialism? How is it that the will can move the hand or the finger? How does spirit act on matter? Those are questions much more easily asked than answered.

15. *My substance was not hid from You, when I was made in secret, and curiously made.* Embroidered, as it were, with a needle. So extraordinary is the body of man that it may be compared to the needlework of God—"curiously made."

15, 16. *In the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect. And in Your book all my members mere written.* Just as an architect sketches his plan for a building and specifies so much of this and that, so the Psalmist represents God as writing down in a book all the members of our body.

16. *Which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.* God mapped out what He intended that we should be even when as yet we were not in existence! And from our earliest days He cared for us. If we look back upon our infancy—that considerable period of life in which we were utterly helpless and could do nothing whatever for ourselves—it ought to check our unbelief, because, if God took charge of us, then, and found means for our protection and our growing up when we were but little babes, if we should live to a second infancy, we may fairly trust that God will take care of us again! And if we should ever, through

sickness, be reduced to such a helpless state that we can do nothing for ourselves, yet He that cared for us before we saw the Light of God, and when we saw it with feeble trembling eyes, will take care of us still!

17-19. *How precious, also, are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with You. Surely You will slay the wicked, O God.* It must be so! God cannot let sinners continue to live and provoke Him to His face. He must, one day, take down the sword of Justice, unsheathe it, and slay the foes of righteousness! "Surely You will slay the wicked, O God."

19. *Depart from me, therefore, you bloody men.* "Get away, lest, when He comes to kill you, I should have to see you die."

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 to love our own enemies, but we are not to love God's enemies! We are to forgive our personal enemies, but we cannot forgive God's enemies! That man loves not the Truth of God who does not hate a lie and he loves not the right who has no anger against wrong. We are living in an age in which we are practically told that truth and error are the same, that the devil's lie and the Divine Revelation may lie down together! If we will not endorse this lie, men call us bigoted or dogmatic. Bless the Lord, we mean to be a great deal more dogmatic than we have been, and to stick even closer to the Truth of God than we have up to now done, if that is possible!

23, 24. *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 Your way everlasting.* That is a blessed prayer! May God hear it in the case of each one of us, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—230, 229, 194.

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

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

A WITNESS AND A PARTAKER
NO. 2610

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 19, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 4, 1883.

"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed."
1 Peter 5:l.

KINDLY notice, dear Friends, the Apostle's great gentleness. Peter was not always thus gentle, but the Spirit of God had rested upon him and now he writes with much tenderness. He does not say, "As an Apostle, I command," but, "As an elder, I exhort." It is always well to combine the *suaviter in modo* with the *fortiter in re*, that is, suavity in our method blended with strength in the thing, itself. There are some who are very blustering in their style of speech and there are others who, if they do not bluster, yet in the smallest matter always put forth their greatest force, or what they think to be so. They command and rebuke with all authority—yet here is Peter, who certainly was not a whit behind the very chief of the Apostles—and he speaks, not by way of command, but, addressing the elders, he tenderly exhorts them. Oh, that we may always manifest such a meek and gentle spirit—not drive men, but *draw* them to Christ—not terrify and threaten, but entice and woo to the Savior those to whom we are speaking or writing!

Next, notice Peter's humility. "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder." He was an elder, most truly, as are all those who, in word and doctrine, feed the flock of God and who, at Christ's command, take the oversight of the souls of men. But Peter was much more than an elder, he was an Apostle. There were but few Apostles and those who were called to that high dignity were greatly favored—yet Peter does not mention his higher office, but, with true humility, he puts himself on a level with his Brothers. "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder." My Brother, if God has given to you extraordinary talent, do not exalt yourself on that account. If others willingly follow your leadership and you have the privilege of rendering to the Lord greater service than they can give, what have you that you have not received? And should not the chief among the saints be the servant of all? Is not he really the highest in Christ's esteem who is willing to be counted the lowest? Therefore, let no man exalt himself, or think highly of himself, for this he ought not to do. We admire in Peter—the once headstrong, impetuous Peter—the gentleness blended with humility

which leads him to say, "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder."

At the same time, let us especially note the wisdom of Peter, for it would have been an unwise thing for him to speak to the elders as an Apostle, for they might have replied to him, "You do not know the worry and toil and trouble of our service. You labor in a higher sphere. You, sitting on the Apostolic benches, are far above us. We, poor plain elders, cannot hope to attain to such eminence as yours." "No, my Brothers," says Peter, "I am one of you, for I, also, am an elder and, as a brother speaks to brother, so I exhort you. Knowing all your travail of heart and all your hard service in the cause of the Master, I, sympathizing with you, and altogether one with you, speak from my heart to your heart. Exhorting you, the elders, I, who am also an elder, say to you, Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away."

It will always be our wisdom, dear Friends, to put ourselves as much as we can into the position of those whom we address. It is a pity for anyone ever to seem to preach *down* to people—it is always better to be as nearly as possible on the same level as they are. Paul knew this and, therefore, he became "all things to all men." To the Jew, he was a Jew. Among Gentiles, he was a Gentile, for it so happened that he belonged to both classes. He was one with all men, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free. If he had to argue with the learned upon Mars' Hill, he could be a match for them. If he had to speak with the rough and illiterate, he threw out all beauty of language and talked to them in the plainest style. And you and I, if we want to win men to Christ, must act after the same wise fashion. Dear Sunday school teachers, would you be the means of blessing to the children under your charge? Then, be yourselves, children! Keep a child's heart throbbing beneath a manly breast. If you are a mother, go to the girls in your class as though you were still a girl, yourself, and you shall soon find the key of their heart and enter into the innermost chambers of their spirit. A true man welcomes a fellow man—he sees that he is a member of the great family of mankind and he says to him, "Come in." But if you, in your majestic greatness, speak to me like Jupiter thundering from a cloud, I shall not be likely to regard you. Or, if I do regard you, your message will be forgotten in the grandeur and glory of yourself! This is what never ought to happen, my Brothers—that people should think of *us* and forget our *message*! Let us belittle ourselves that we may magnify our God. Let the Truth of God be borne before us like a shield! And though we are the Lord's armor bearers, let us hide behind the great shield which we lift up before the eyes of men. "'The elders which are among you I exhort'—not as Peter, the head of the College of Apostles—but as one who is a fellow elder with you." Therein, we see Peter's gentleness, humility and wisdom combined—and we shall be wise if we imitate him in all those respects.

With this introduction, I now come to speak of the two great offices which Peter said that he filled. I cannot help calling them great, yet they

are open to you and to me—and I hope that, by God's Grace, we have also, in our measure, been what Peter said that he was—"A witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed."

I. First, then, let us think of Peter as "A WITNESS OF THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST." And, as far as possible, let us be witnesses with him.

Peter was what we have not been, *an eyewitness of the suffering of Christ*. He actually and in very deed saw our Divine Master in His terrible griefs. Peter could never forget that he saw the Lord Jesus in His agony in the Garden. He was one of the three disciples who failed to watch with their Lord even for one hour and who, for very sorrow, fell asleep within a stone's cast of the place where Christ was "exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." Peter remembered how, when the Master rose from prayer, and said, "He is at hand that does betray Me," he was there and saw the traitor imprint that cruel kiss upon the cheek of Him who still called him, friend. Peter was, about that time, drawing his sword and cutting off the ear of Malchus—and he could not fail to remember the look upon his Master's face when he who had eaten bread with Him did lift up his heel against Him, and the Son of Man was betrayed with a kiss from the apostate Apostle. Peter was also an eyewitness of our Lord's being hurried away to the bar of Annas where He underwent His preliminary examination. He remembered seeing one strike Him on the mouth. He could recall how they charged Him with blasphemy. He could remember how, after the first examination was over, Annas sent Him, bound, to Caiaphas. Peter was in the palace of Annas, warming himself by the fire, so he was an eyewitness of all that transpired. I do not quite know how far that witnessing went, for the time came when he denied his Master, but he could never forget that gaze of concentrated agony and pity when Jesus looked at him—not so much reproachfully, perhaps, as mournfully—feeling in His own soul that sorrow which He knew that Peter must, before long, feel. A spark from the torch of the Savior's anguish set the heart of Peter on fire and he went out and wept bitterly.

I believe—I cannot help believing—that Peter rallied, by-and-by, from his fit of cowardice and that he came to the front, again, and saw the Master in Pilate's judgment hall. You know the story of our Savior's griefs and woes and I think that Peter and others of the Apostles were eyewitnesses of His sufferings. They saw Him after He had been scourged. They marked Him after He had been despised, flouted and mocked. They saw Him as the Cross-Bearer and heard Him say," Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children." They watched Him as He went in awful anguish along the *Via Dolorosa* to the Mount of Crucifixion. And they stood and saw Him nailed to the tree, to die there, like a felon, with no relief or succor, for God Himself forsook Him. And the bitterest pain of all was that He had to cry," My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Possibly, Peter saw it all. Certainly he was an eyewitness of Christ's sufferings and, I think, when he was writing to these elders, he seemed to say to them, "Feed the flock of God, for I saw the Great Shepherd when He bought that flock. I was there when He purchased the sheep with His own blood. And, after He had risen from the dead, three times He said to me, 'Simon, son of Jonas, Do you love

Me?' And when I answered, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You," He said to me,' Feed My lambs. Shepherd My sheep. Feed My sheep.' Therefore, O my Brethren, by His agony and bloody sweat, by His Cross and passion, by His precious death and burial, by His glorious resurrection and ascension, I beseech you, 'feed the flock of God which He has purchased with Jesus' own blood.'" I see great force in this exhortation by the eyewitness who is writing to his fellow elders.

But, dear Brothers and Sisters, you and I, never having seen Christ in His sufferings, might never have had a participation in this part of our text if there had not been another kind of witnessing, namely, *the faith-witness*. I do not place this second in importance, though I put it second in order, for, indeed, it is of the very greatest importance. There were thousands who were eyewitnesses of our Lord's sufferings who, nevertheless, saw not the true meaning of them. They saw the dear Sufferer besmeared with His own blood, but into His wounds they never looked by faith. Thousands saw the Savior die, but they simply went their way back to Jerusalem, some of them beating on their breasts, but none of them believing in Him, or really knowing the secret of that wondrous death. I trust that I am addressing many who could be grouped together as faith-witnesses of the sufferings of Christ. Speaking for myself, I remember well when my sins, like an intolerable burden, crushed me down. I dared not look up and I never would have been *able* to look up, or to speak to anyone of the joy which is now within my bosom if I had not, by faith, seen—

"One hanging on a tree,
In agonies and blood,
Who fixed His languid eyes on me
As near His Cross I stood.
Sure never till my latest breath
Can I forget that look!
It seemed to charge me with His death,
Though not a word He spoke.
A second look He gave, which said,
'I freely all forgive.
This blood is for your ransom paid,
I die, that you may live.'"

Then I saw not only that Christ Jesus died upon the Cross, but I also perceived who He was and why He died—and what He accomplished by that death. I was helped to learn that He "loved me and gave Himself for me." I understood that He took my place that I might take His place—that He took my sin that I might take His righteousness—that He bore my woe that I might share His joy. And when I saw that—I do *not* mean when I heard about it—I do *not* mean when I read of it—but when I *saw it with my soul's inner eyes* and not only understood it, but perceived my share in my Savior's Sacrifice, and believed in Him to the saving of my soul, oh, it was a blessed day for me! Many of you, dear Friends, know well what I mean, for you also had just such a sight as I have described. You were faith-witnesses of Christ's sufferings! With some of us, many days have passed since we had that first sight of our suffering Lord, yet that sight has been often renewed to us. Sitting at the Communion Table I have seen it most clearly—the bread and the wine have set forth

Christ's broken body and poured out blood—and my soul has realized within herself His Godhead and His Manhood, His perfection and His grief, His sinlessness and yet His sin-bearing, His suretyship and the way He smarted for it. And it has been a great joy to see it, and to be able to sing—

"He bore on the tree the sentence for me,
And now both the Surety and sinner are free"—

for Jesus redeemed us completely and effectually when He died upon the Cross. Many of you, Beloved, have been in like manner, faith-witnesses of Christ's sufferings.

There are some who depreciate this faith-witness, but, Sirs, it is faith that saves! You may be an eyewitness and yet perish as Judas did. You may be an eyewitness and yet be lost as Pilate was. You may be an eyewitness and still hate Christ as Caiaphas did. But if you become a faith-witness, then shall you be included among those of whom it is written, "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." Such a faith-view begets repentance, hope and love—and brings salvation to every soul that has it!

Peter, then, was an eyewitness, but, better still, he was a faith-witness. And this being the case, he went on to be *a testifying witness*. If a man sees anything happen, he is a witness of it. But he is more manifestly a witness when he comes and says that he saw it—when he appears in court and bears a public testimony concerning it. I judge that the principal business of any minister of Christ, or of any elder of the Church of Christ, is to bear testimony to the sufferings of Christ. If the atoning sufferings of Christ are left out of a ministry, that ministry is worthless. "The blood is the life thereof," is as true about sermons as it is about animals and sacrifices. A bloodless gospel, a gospel without the Atonement, is a gospel of devils and not the Gospel of God. Many are laboring hard, till their oars bend, to get away from the Gospel of Jesus Christ—I mean hundreds of so-called ministers of Christ—but in proportion as they forsake the Gospel, they cease to be what they pretend to be. They are not the ministers *of God, or of His Christ*! They are not ambassadors telling of reconciliation to men if in their teaching the sufferings of Christ are hazy and their cause and motive and objective are obscured. It is the glory of some of us that whatever else we bear witness to, we certainly are witnesses of the sufferings of Christ. We declare to men that there is no hope for them but in Christ who died! We testify to them that we have, ourselves, exercised faith in His death and have, thereby, received eternal life! We tell them that we know that what we say is true—we are as sure of it as was that disciple who, when he saw the blood and water flowing from Christ's side, bore witness to it, and added—"He knows that what he says is true, that you might believe." These things are not like dreams to us, they are part of our very being! We have believed in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ and our troubled conscience has therein found peace. Our soul has been filled with all the fullness of God and, therefore, we are and must be witnesses to the sufferings of the crucified Son of God, to the reality of the Atonement that

He made on the Cross and to the effect of that Atonement upon the heart and conscience of all those who receive it.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, this is not only the minister's work, but it is your work, too. We are all to be constantly bearing our witness to Christ and saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." You know what the people said of John the Baptist when he was dead—it is a kind of epitaph which any one of us might be glad to have put on our tombstone—"John did no miracle, but all things that John spoke of this Man were true." He had no great talents. He was not noted for His eloquence. He was not s man of commanding presence. He had no recondite knowledge. He had no profound logical power, but all that he said concerning Christ was true! I would like to have John the Baptist's epitaph as my own and I would be glad for you to have it, too—that in life and death we might be known as true witnesses to the sufferings of Christ, the power of which we have felt in our own souls.

There is one other view of this witness-bearing, and that is that Peter was, to a very large extent, *a partaking witness* in the sufferings of Christ. He does not say so in our text, but in the 13th verse of the fourth Chapter he wrote, "Rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings." And he could write like that because of what he had, himself, endured for Christ's sake. He had been mocked, despised, persecuted. His life had been sought and he knew that he would have to suffer a painful death, for His Master had said to him, "When you shall be old, you shall stretch forth your hands, and another shall gird you, and carry you where you would not." Putting all these things together, Peter could truly say that he was a witness of Christ's sufferings because he had, in a measure, participated in them.

I hope I am addressing some who can also say—though to a far smaller degree than could the saints of old—"Yes, for Christ's sake we have been accounted fools. We have been reckoned among those who have not the courage to advance with the times. We have been willing to be mocked in the workshop, or in the pulpit, or wherever our lot has been cast among men. And we would cheerfully have borne far more if it had been imposed upon us." As the persecuted Believer looks up to his Lord, he can truthfully say—

"If on my face for Your dear name,
Shame and reproaches be,
All hail reproach, and welcome shame,
If You remember me."

Thus you see how Peter was a witness of the sufferings of Jesus Christ. May each of us be appointed to the same high and honorable position!

II. The second thing which Peter says of himself is, perhaps, more remarkable than the first. He says that he was 'A PARTAKER OF THE GLORY THAT SHALL BE REVEALED.

I like to see that word, "partaker," coming after the word, "witness," for I do not think that any man can really be a useful witness for Christ unless he is a partaker. Can you go and talk to others about the bitterness of sin when you have never wept over it or repented of it, yourself? Can you speak of the sweets of Divine mercy of which you have never tasted? Will you magnify "precious faith" when you are, yourself, a

stranger to the faith of God's elect? Will you set forth Christ, evidently crucified among men, when you have never seen Him, yourself? Can you describe the love which has never cheered your own heart? Will you tell of communion with Christ when you know nothing of its blessedness? Unhappy man! Your office would be, indeed, terrible if you were called to such a work! It were better for you to perform the most menial labor with the most grievous sweat and wear and tear of your very marrow and bones, than have to occupy a pulpit to talk of things which you have never tasted, handled and felt yourself. I would sooner not exist than be a preacher of the Truths of God which I had never believed in my own soul! The old writers used to speak of men who served in the shambles and butchers' shops and who saw and handled and sold the meat, but who, themselves, died of hunger. And they spoke of wretched folk who prepared dainties for their fellow men, but who did not, as they expressed it, get so much as a lick of their own fingers, but died of famine while they were feasting others.

Oh horrible, horrible, must it be to be sick unto death and yet to be selling medicines that will heal! Oh, dreadful must it be to be hammering away building an ark, as Noah's carpenters did, and yet never to enter it, but to die in the deluge while the ship which you helped to build bears others over the wild waste of waters! Get home, minister! Tear off your gown and lay aside the very name that makes you appear to be a servant of God! Get down on your knees and cry, "God be merciful to me, a sinner, and forgive me for ever having dared to assume an office whose duties I could not fulfill! For how can I, who am blind, be the guide of others? And how shall I, who am spiritually deaf and dumb, make others hear? And how shall I tell of God and of His Covenant, and of His Grace, while I know not God experimentally and have no evidence that I am in the Covenant and have never tasted of His Grace?" That is right, Brother—you are getting on the right lines—if you would be a witness, you must first be a partaker! And you who teach in the Sunday school, you who preach at the street corners, you who go from house to house with your tracts—whoever you are who profess to be witnesses for Christ, take care that you are both *witnesses and partakers*. Join the two together—you cannot witness if you do not partake, or if you witness and do not partake, you only witness to your own condemnation!

Very strangely, Peter here writes of himself as "*a partaker of the glory*." Did he mean that he was on the holy Mount of Transfiguration and saw the splendor of that sight when Christ was all aglow with a white light which gathered up all brightness and beauty into its solitary ray? Was he thinking of that memorable scene? I know not. It may have flitted across his mind but, in this passage, he says that he is "a partaker of the glory *that shall be revealed*." Not the glory that *had been* revealed, but that *shall be* revealed. Is that possible? Can a man be a partaker of a glory that, as yet, is not revealed?

I answer that he may, first, *by the closeness of his union with the glorified Christ*. If I am, by faith, indissolubly one with Christ, then in His Glory I am glorified. On His Throne I am enthroned. By His victory I am "more than conqueror." If we are one with Him, then we are raised up together with Him and made to sit together with Him in the heavenly

places. Oh, it is grand when a Believer does not so much think of himself as himself, but as part and parcel of his Lord! This is a very high attainment, yet Peter had reached it—and if you are vitally joined to Christ, you may reach it, too. If you have been, indeed, planted with Him in the likeness of Hs death, you shall also share the likeness of His resurrection—and you even now share it with Him, for as He is, so are you in this world! Was He humbled? Every saint underwent humiliation in Christ. Is He glorified? All His elect are virtually glorified in the glorification of their Covenant Head. It is indeed a blessed thing to know your union with Christ so completely that you are made "a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed" as far as you are personally concerned, but which is already revealed to Christ and, therefore, is already yours.

I am sure that Peter also means that he had become a partaker of this glory to be revealed *by the absolute certainty which he felt in his own soul that he should be ultimately, in very deed, a partaker of it*. When a man knows that he has such-and-such a possession in reversion, if he is very poor, he discounts it and begins to live upon its present worth. It is a very blessed thing when a child of God knows that because he is in Christ by faith, therefore, whatever things God has laid up for His people in general, He has laid up for him in particular! Whatever Christ has prepared for His redeemed, He has prepared for this redeemed one. Often his faith does, as it were, appropriate the future glory, and cry, "It is mine." The Believer begins to glorify God for it, though as yet he has not actually partaken of it, for faith brings him the substance of things hoped for, and is to him the evidence of things not seen. Brothers and Sisters, the next best thing to being actually in Heaven is to be assured that you *will be there*, and also to have this thought at the back of the assurance—that you may be there within the next five minutes! Oh, how speedily may you and I be in Glory! Before the clock ticks again, I may see the face of the King in His beauty, in the land that is very far off, in some respects, but very near in others. You know how John Newton puts it—

"In vain my fancy strives to paint
The moment after death,
The glories that surround the saint,
When yielding up his breath.
One gentle sigh the fetter breaks—
We scarce can say, 'They're gone!'
Before the willing spirit takes
Her mansion near the Throne."

Well, since this glory is certain and may be so near, let us sit down and look at the golden gates—look until we see them—until they seem to come nearer and nearer and nearer, until the vision becomes so vivid that it ceases to be a vision and we are actually where we were thinking that we should soon be! It has so happened to many a child of God. There is one whom God favored with great wealth and to whom a friend said, "What a paradise this lovely garden is!" "Yes," he replied, "and I bless God for the assurance that, when I leave it, I shall go from one paradise to another and a better one." Some have said to a poor Christian, "What an ill-furnished place your room is! How scanty are your worldly goods!" "Ah," the man, has answered, "but I have enough to last

me till I get Home, for I have the promise that bread shall be given me, water shall be sure and then I shall have Heaven to crown it all." When we have faith like that, then are we partakers of the Glory that shall be revealed!

There is a step even beyond this when we advance from faith to positive enjoyment. There is such a thing as *anticipating the glory to be revealed* with such a full, realizing faith that we begin to enjoy it even now! Surely, you have, at times, sat down with your fellow Believers, when the Word has been preached in the demonstration of the Spirit, and you have said, "Well, Heaven must be glorious, indeed, to be any better than this! My soul is all ablaze with love to Christ and even while my poor body is lingering here—

"My heart is with Him on His Throne,
And ill can brook delay.
Each moment listening for the voice,
'Rise up, and come away.'"

And when the service has been over, you have said, "My soul was like the chariots of Amminadib—whether I was in the body or out the body, I could not tell." On your bed, sometimes, or in the chamber of sickness, or sitting alone in quiet meditation after you have been enraptured with a vision of your Lord, has it not seemed as if God had taken some dainty dish from off the table of the angels and passed it down to His waiting child below? Have you not heard stray notes of which you could almost say, "I am persuaded that is the angels' song"? And sweet sounds have reached your ears, like the music of "harpers harping with their harps," making you impatient of your exile here, but, at the same time, making you unspeakably happy until you shall be called up to join in the grand chorus of the Church of God above! "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever!"

Yes, Beloved, Peter could truly say that he was a partaker of the Glory yet to be revealed. I have no doubt that, sometimes, when he preached the Word, his soul was all aglow with holy fervor. I know that, often, I have been so graciously helped by the Holy Spirit to uplift my Lord and Master from this platform, that I have not wanted to go up those stairs any more. I would have liked to just finish up my discourse and say, "Amen," on earth, and at once begin to sing the everlasting song above! Have not you, dear Friend, also reached that blessed state? I am sure that Peter was often in that condition. And when he was persecuted, despised, imprisoned and his own brethren cast him out, there was often within his own bosom a company of the angels of God, Christ's sacred host—a very Mahanaim—and, still better, there was the Prince of Princes, the Angel of the Covenant, the Lord and Master of all the angels, speaking deep bliss into His servant's soul and filling him with unspeakable joy and glory!

Now, my Brother or my Sister, if you get that Presence of Christ—and I pray that you may—you will be qualified to be a witness for Christ. People will say, "What makes those eyes so bright? What causes that man to be so happy? What is it that produces that calm, quiet spirit in the

house? How is it that that man is not troubled as others are? He does not seem to have much cause for joy, but he is very serene and placid in spirit." They will perhaps say to you, "What is the secret of it all?" Then you will have an opportunity of saying, "I am a witness of Christ's sufferings, but I am also a partaker of the Glory that shall be revealed." Come with me, in thought, to Calvary, that you may learn the meaning of His sufferings, that you may afterwards be taught how you may share His Glory.

I wish I could speak right to the very soul of some of you who do not know my Master—how I wish you did know Him! I cannot imagine what some of you have to comfort you which you can, for even a moment, compare with the bliss of knowing my Lord! I have seen your joys. I know something of what mirth can do and what relief laughter may be able to bring, but I also know that these things are of little use in the time of sickness, or when one is near death. It is just at such times that true joy in Christ becomes more deep, more sweet than ever! The less there is of the creature, the more room is there for the Creator. The more of suffering and sorrow we have to endure, the more of content and bliss can we enjoy. And oftentimes, when the body is weak and the head is aching, and the soul is faint, there is, as it were, a sweet swoon of Divine delight which comes over the spirit, which has more strength in it than strength, more joy in it than joy, and almost as much of Heaven in it as there is in Heaven! May you know this, for the sake of Him who has loved us and given Himself for us! God bless you all! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 CORINTHIANS 1.

I am going to speak about the testimony of the Apostle Peter concerning his Lord, but we will first read together part of the writings of his "Beloved brother Paul," that we may see how these eminent servants of Christ agreed in their witness-bearing.

Verses 1-3. *Paul, called to be an Apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that 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.* So this is a message to us, also, who "call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord."

4-9. *I thank my God always on your behalf, for the Grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in everything we 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. God is faithful, by whom you were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.* Paul was going to blame them for some things that were not right, but he began by commending whatever good was in them by God's Grace.

10-12. *Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that everyone of you says, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.* So that, at the least, there were four parties in that one little Church which ought to have been knit together in unbroken harmony! This is only one instance of what has happened hundreds of times since. These Corinthians had a great many speaking Brothers among them and they held services in which it was open to anybody to speak as he felt inclined. There was no reason why they should not do so, but what was the result of it? This Christian liberty of theirs, by-and-by, tended to mischief. They became divided into factions. They did not practice discipline as they ought to have done and, therefore, this community at Corinth is a beacon to all other churches, warning them not to carry on their worship in a similar style. It is a very curious thing that some people have taken these Corinthians as an *example* instead of a warning and, having copied their methods, the very same result has followed until there is no section of the Church of Christ that has become such a scandal, through its divisions and its intestine quarrels, as that which has imitated the Corinthians in their mode of worship! I suppose that while human nature is what it is, the same causes will produce the same results to the very end of the chapter. Paul does not tell them that their mode of worship was wrong—perhaps it was not—for great liberty is allowable to Christians, but he does lay the axe at the root of their divisions.

13, 14. *Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius.* They were such a quarrelsome set of people that he could not have taken any comfort from having baptized them. He was glad that they could not quote his name as having done so and thus it may be, have added still more to their division and strife.

15-18. *Lest any should say that I have baptized in my own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanus: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the Cross of Christ should be made of no effect. For the preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.* I suppose that in that Church, with its many eloquent speakers and men of knowledge, there came to be a spirit of emulation among them as to which should speak best. And some were tempted to find novel meanings in the Word, and to come to the meetings to tell of their wonderful discoveries. The Apostle says that he did not so preach—he kept to the Cross of Christ, which some counted to be but foolishness. "We know all about that," they said. "Ah, but," replied the Apostle, "unto us which are saved it is the power of God."

19-21. *For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wiser, where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Has not God*

made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. God, in His infinite wisdom, raised up a number of philosophers just about the time of the coming of Christ and a little before that great event. If ever there were great minds upon the earth, it was then—yet these men, with all their schools of thought, knew not God—and the people did not follow after them, so that the earthly wisdom turned out to be a failure.

22-29. *For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men for you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are: that no flesh should glory in His Presence.* And, at this day, it is a great snare to the Church when she glories in her education, when she puts any confidence in the learning, or the wit, or the eloquence of her ministers, when she relies in any degree, whatever, upon an arm of flesh. The sword of the Spirit, if it is put into a velvet and embroidered scabbard, is all the worse for that. Pull it out! The Word of God cannot cut while it is hampered with human wisdom and human learning half as well as when its keen edge, alone, is used! It is the Lord, by the power of His Spirit, who must make the Word effectual. Oh, for more faith and truer faith in Him!

30, 31. *But of Him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, he that glories, let him glory in the Lord.* There is no one else in whom we may glory! Away with every form of boasting except that of making our boast in the Lord, and especially of glorying in the great atoning Sacrifice of His dear Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—331, 282.

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

A LOST CHRIST FOUND
NO. 2611

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 26, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A THURSDAY EVENING, EARLY IN THE YEAR 1857.

"But they, supposing Him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintances. And when they found Him not, they turned back, again, to Jerusalem, seeking Him. And it came to pass that after three days they found Him in the Temple sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions." Luke 2:44-46.

WHAT a precious treasure must the child Jesus have been to His parents! You who have children whom you love, not merely because they are yours, but because you discover in them traits of character which are signs of Divine Grace, can tell, in some measure, how precious the Child Jesus must have been. Born to His mother in a miraculous manner, her heart was set upon Him and, after all the wonderful things that had been said about Him by the angel, by Simeon and by Anna, you cannot wonder that she expected much, although she really expected less than she received. When you think of the perils and troubles to which His parents were exposed for His sake, by the sword of Herod, the flight into Egypt and the cruelty of Archelaus, you cannot wonder that He was a very choice treasure to them, carefully tended and well guarded and protected. They had felt how terrible it would be to lose Him. They knew His worth—at least they guessed something of that inestimable value which must always be attached to the perfect Manhood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you not marvel, therefore, that they could have lost Him? It seems not a little amazing that they could have allowed Him to go away from them even for a minute! Trustworthy as He was, yet He must have been a Child so dear to their hearts, His company must have been so precious to them that one would have thought His mother could scarcely have spared Him from her side for a single moment. You would hardly have imagined that in the midst of such a crowd as was assembled at Jerusalem she would have left Him alone for an instant. Surely, you would say, she would tend that precious treasure perpetually. If she took her Child to places where she might lose Him, she would, with the utmost care, watch over Him until she brought Him back. And yet Mary lost her Son—lost Him in Jerusalem—and even went a day's journey before she discovered her loss!

Do not be astonished, O Believer, do not be amazed at Mary losing her Son! You have a treasure quite as precious, for it is the same blessed Person! Jesus Christ is yours—not your Son, but your Brother—not your child, but your Friend. No, more—your Savior! Yours spiritually, yours by precious experience, yours by gracious donation of Himself to you and yours by happy communing which He has held with you in many seasons of sweet refreshment. Yet some of you have lost Him—lost His company—but He has not lost you! His loving heart is still immutably the same towards you. You who have lost Him, as you think of your former joys, can join with deep emphasis in Cowper's lines—

"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."

How is it you have lost Christ? One would have thought you would never have parted from Him. In such a wicked world as this, with Satan ever ready to rob you of Him, with ten thousand enemies trying to take Him away from you—with such a precious Savior whose Presence is so sweet, whose words are so melodious and whose company is so dear to you—one might have thought you would have watched Him every moment and never allowed Him to stray from you. But, alas, you have let Him go! Your Jesus has left you and you are seeking Him, and crying, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!" And, possibly, you went many a day's journey before you discovered that you had lost Him. You thought He was still in your soul, when really He had gone from you and left you for a season, to let you find out your great need of Him that you might seek Him, again, with full purpose of heart.

To you, therefore, I address myself, for I think there is something in this narrative especially suitable for you. There is, first, *the loss of Christ.* Secondly, *the seeking after Christ.* And, thirdly, *the finding of Christ.*

I. First, I have something to say concerning THE LOSS OF CHRIST.

And I begin by saying that *souls, very dear and precious to the Redeemer, may yet lose the sensible enjoyment of His Presence.* His mother lost Him, His father lost Him. They were very dear to Him and He was very dear to them, yet they lost Him. Many of the Lord's beloved people have lost their Savior. Not lost Him wholly—that can never be—their substance is in them, even when they have lost their leaves. The holy Seed within them is the substance of their piety, but they have lost His visible Presence and yet they are dear to Him, as when, by faith, with Simeon, they took Him in their arms and kissed Him with the lips of ardent affection. The best of saints sometimes have to endure the hiding of God's Countenance and are made to walk through dark paths where they see not the shining of the sun. Shall I pause to give you instances? I might find you many such in God's Word, but instead, thereof, let me find them in your own hearts. Who among us, that has long known the Lord, has not had, sometimes, to mourn the absence of our Savior? Like the dove

that has lost its mate, inconsolable until it has returned, we have been sitting alone and pouring out our moans and groans. We have sung, in plaintive tones—

"Return, O holy Dove, return
Sweet messenger of rest!
I hate the sins that made You mourn,
And drove You from my breast."

We have cried to Him to come back, but He has hidden His face from us, and covered Himself in the thick darkness, nor would He manifest Himself to us.

The first time that this great trouble surprises a true Christian, he usually draws this conclusion from it—"I am not the Lord's child, or else I would always have the smile of His love." It is a wrong conclusion! It is the logic of unbelief, it is a false logic, its conclusion is, therefore, untrue! A child does not always have its father's smile, though it is a fondly loved one, and is greatly delighted in—it is the offspring of its father's heart, very dear to him, sprung from his inmost soul as well as from his loins, yet it does not always have a smile, nor always a sweet word from him. There must be, sometimes, even in Christian families, sharp words from a wise parent's loving lips. It is not, therefore, a fair inference that Christ has left the soul on which He is not smiling. Oh, conclude not, you distressed one, you who have lost the evidence of Grace and the comforting Presence of your Master! Conclude not that He has shut up His heart of compassion when He has seemed to close His eyes of love. "I sleep, but My heart wakes," He says. "I shut My eyes upon you, but My heart is still loving you. I lift the rod and scourge you, but my heart, in its inmost recesses, has still your name inscribed upon it. I will not leave you, I will not forsake you, I have not cast you away. I have chastened you sorely, but I have not given you over unto death. The clouds have not quenched the sun, you shall yet see the light. I will yet shine upon you and once more will I manifest Myself to you." The losing of the conscious realization of Christ's Presence, the suspension of communion with Him is a very disagreeable and a very sad part of Christian experience, but let this be noted—it is often the experience of a true Christian and some of the very best and most highly favored of God's children have had to suffer it.

Now please notice *where the parents of Jesus lost Him.* They lost Him at the feast at Jerusalem and if ever you lose the company of your Master, O Christian, you will most likely lose it at a feast! I never lost my Master's company at a funeral—such a thing is more than possible at a wedding. I have never lost my Savior's Presence in the house of mourning, by the bedside of the sick and dying—but I have sometimes felt suspension of fellowship with my Lord when the flute and the viol have been sounding in my ear and when joy and gladness ruled the hour. Our most happy moments are our most perilous ones! It is said that where the most beautiful cacti grow—the most glorious of flowers—there are to be found the most venomous of snakes and, truly, among our delights are to be found our dangers. As Cleopatra had an asp introduced to her in a basket of flowers, so have we many an asp brought to us in our joys. Take heed in the time of your joys, Believer—you are safer in your season of sorrow!

Storms afford the safest sailing for a Christian, calms are, for him, more terrible than whirlwinds. Deep waters know no rocks, shallow waters that gaily ripple are the perils of the sea of our life. Far out upon the ocean, where the horizon has its round ring and nothing is within sight, the ship is seldom in danger, but near the shore, when the white cliff gladdens the eyes of the mariner—there the pilot must look well to his helm! In your troubles, God is often especially with you, but He is not always with you in your joys. Job's sons learned that there were dangers in feasts—God's sons may not learn the same lesson in so terrible a manner—but they may learn it in a very grievous way. It would have been better for David to have been sick on his bed than to have been walking on his housetop enjoying the evening breeze. And it would be better for you to be cast into the fiery furnace of affliction, where you can be refined, than to be left to lie down in the meads of happiness, where you may have poison poured into your ear by a wily adversary. Beware of your joys! There is more fear of losing Christ at a feast than anywhere else. You are a young Christian and you are going out to a party this week—mind what you do! I will not say to you—Do not go. If you can ask God's blessing in going, go. But I do say to you—Take care, take care! Mind you, be careful! Reef your sails when you get there. Go as fast as you like when you are alone, but mind what you are doing when you are in the society of others. Take care, take care, take care, especially in mixed company!

And, ah, I am sorry to have to say—Take care, too, when you are in professedly Christian company, for what fine "Christian company" there is to be seen, sometimes. Christians that cannot find amusement enough for themselves, cannot talk about the Lord Jesus, cannot mention His name, cannot find pleasure enough in the things of Scripture, but must turn to other and meaner things to supply them with joy. Take heed of all doubtful company—there is little good to be gained in some of your gatherings. If you cannot spend your time in prayer and in seeking what Jesus said and did, you had better be at home. Christ is often lost at a feast—His Presence is often withdrawn from us when we get into company. Our Jesus loves seclusion—He will not strive, nor lift up His voice, nor cause it to be heard in the streets! He loves to dwell with His people in the privacy of the house. His message is, "Come, My people, enter into your chambers, and shut your door after you." You will not lose your Master there. Have Him with you in your own household—you will not lose Him there! Walk with Him, alone, and you will not lose Him. I do not say—Have no feasts—

"Why should the children of a King
Go mourning all their days?"

I will not say—Have no hours of gladness—you have a right to them. I will not say—Do not meet together—do so, your meeting may be profitable to each of you. But I do say—Take care what you do. Christ Jesus was lost at a feast by His mother and He may be lost by you unless you are very careful.

To young persons who are seriously inclined, yet not decided for God, let me solemnly say that evil company is a snare of the devil. Oh, how

many have been ruined by it! If Satan can but get you back to your old companions, he thinks it will be all right for him and that he will be sure to have you at last. Nothing will do for a man who has kept evil company but to leave it altogether. You cannot bear much of it—you had better give it up, altogether—then you will be entirely safe. Or else there will be first, one, and then another enticing you a little way back, and then a little further back until who can tell?—All those fair beginnings, as you thought them to be, may end by being blighted and destroyed by the blast of carnal, frothy conversation! The Lord deliver us from losing Jesus at a feast!

Observe, also, that Mary and Joseph lost Jesus for three days, from which I learn that *it is possible for a Believer to lose the company of his Master for a long time, and yet find Him, again, after all.* They did find Him after the three days and you, too, poor mourning Believer, will find your Savior again! There is a poor doubter yonder. He is sick at heart, for he has lost his Lord and he cannot find Him. Oh, how he has groaned and poured out his heart before God, but still no answer has come to his cry. He concludes, therefore, that he must perish! No, poor desponding one, the parents of Jesus found Him the third day, so seek Him once more! His absence is but temporary. It may be long, but the longest hiding of His face shall have an end. O poor, timid child, cry not at the eclipse—though it may last an hour, the sun's light is not quenched! O you poor Little-Faith, you may well sigh, but do not despair! If Jesus has left you for a while, He will yet return to you, you shall again behold His face, again bask in the sunshine of His love and know that He is yours and that you are His. If you have lost Him for months—yes, even for years, I had almost said—yet shall you find Him again! With your whole heart seek Him and He will be found of you—only give yourself up thoroughly to the search for Him and verily He will not entirely leave you, but you shall yet discover Him to your joy and gladness, and shall again be feasted with marrow and fatness. Three days was the Child Jesus lost, but yet He was found again by Joseph and Mary! So Christ may be for a long time, absent, and yet may the poor saint find comfort in Him once more.

II. Now I come to notice THE SEEKING AFTER CHRIST. The father and mother of Jesus sought Him and those who have lost Christ's Presence will do well to imitate their example.

Note, first, that *they sought Him very judiciously,* by which I mean that they sought Him in the right places. They went back to Jerusalem and sought Him. It was at Jerusalem they lost Him, so it was at Jerusalem that they might naturally expect to find Him. Tell me where you lost the company of Christ and I will tell you the most likely place for you to find Him again. Did you lose the company of Christ by forgetting prayers and becoming slack in your devotions? Have you lost Christ in the prayer closet? Then you will find Him there! Did you lose Christ through some sin? Then you will find Him in no other way but by the giving up of the sin and seeking, by the Holy Spirit, to mortify the member in which the lust dwells. Did you lose Christ by neglecting the Scriptures? Then you must find Christ in the Scriptures where you lost Him—you will find

Him. It is a true saying, "Look for a thing where you dropped it, it is there." So look for Christ where you lost Him, for He has not gone away. It is hard work to go back for Christ—John Bunyan tells us that the pilgrim found the piece of the road back to the arbor of ease—that journey back that he had to travel to find his roll under the settle—the hardest piece he had to go. Twenty miles on the road is easier to go than one mile back for the lost evidence. Take care, then, when you find your Master, to cling more closely to Him! But if you have lost Him, go back and seek Him where you lost Him.

And note, too, that *they sought Him among His kinsfolk and acquaintances.* And that is the right place for us, also, to find Him. If I am in distress of soul, where can I get relief? I saw a huge placard as I came along, just now, recommending persons who have the heartache to go to Charles Matthews to get it cured—I suppose, by seeing a play. Ah, they will go a long while, if it is *real* heartache, before they will get it taken away *there*. The theater is the place where they get the heartache, not where they lose it! People don't lose diseases, generally, where they catch them. If you catch a fever anywhere, I would not advise you to go to the same house to get rid of it. If you have the heartache through indulging in some sin, it is not by deeper draughts of sin that you can cure it! Drinking may stupefy and intoxicate you for a while, and make you forget it, but it is a bad thing to use intoxicating liquor instead of the real remedy. O you that have the heartache, you that have broken hearts, you that have troubles rolling over your heads—where can you expect to find Christ? Why, among His kinsfolk and acquaintances! Do not go to the giddy haunts of vice and sin—go not where there is revelry and mirth, but go where the disciples of Jesus are known to meet! Talk with His people, converse with those who have the most knowledge of His love and of His power to save. It is most likely that you will find your Savior among His kinsfolk and acquaintance—go not to the world to look for Him! Seek pearls where they lie deep down in the sea, but seek them not where such treasures never were discovered. Otherwise, you will go on a fool's errand in verity and truth.

Mark, again, that while they sought Jesus judiciously, they sought Him continuously. They did not look for Him just one day and then give up the search—but they kept on looking until they found Him. So, Christian, if you have lost the precious joy of communion with your Lord, keep on seeking it and do not stop your prayers until you have recovered it. Be not content with one dive into the depths after this pearl, but dive again and again, with untiring perseverance, until you discover it. And yet, again, we are told that they sought Him *sorrowfully*. Mary said to Jesus, "Your father and I have sought You sorrowing." I know this—no true Believer will ever lose the company of His Lord without sorrowing over his loss—it would be impossible! I have heard some of you say that you have not had fellowship with Christ lately, but if you make that confession with a smile on your face, I have grave doubts about your piety. True Christians think it their greatest grief to lose their Master's Presence—they do not talk of it lightly—it is their misery that they have not the Prince of Mercy with them! They perpetually need His company and if it

is withdrawn, even for an instant, they feel that the light of the sun is taken away from their eyes—

"'Tis Heaven to dwell in His embrace,
And nowhere else but there."

The parents of Jesus sought Him sorrowfully and we must do the same if we have lost Him. The best messengers to find Christ are the penitent tears of His saints. Tears act on Divine mercy like the magnet on the needle—the tears of the Christian find the heart of God. Go after your Master with wet eyes and He will soon come to you. There is a sacred connection between Christ and weeping eyes, for it is Christ's office to wipe the mourner's eyes. And whenever He sees you weeping, His fingers are eager to be wiping them. He *must* wipe them. He cannot bear to see the tears and, if He wipes them, He must come to you. So, the surest way to find Him is to seek Him sorrowing. There is nothing like a sorrowing prayer if we have lost our Lord. Prayers from a heart that is wrung with the rough hand of sorrow are the most acceptable in the ears of the God of Sabaoth. If you are sorrowing, O Christian, then seek on and believe that you are all the nearer to finding your Lord when your sorrows increase! Tears are the bilge-water of the soul—the eyes are the pumps and thus God keeps you floating till He brings you, again, into the haven of rest and peace! It is a blessed thing to be able to seek Christ, though it is sorrowfully.

III. Now I close by speaking concerning THE FINDING OF CHRIST. Mark, first, *where the lost Christ was found.* Do you know where His parents went to seek Him? When they went to Jerusalem, they asked all their kinsfolk and acquaintances, "Have you seen that dear lovely Child?" All knew Him, but they answered, "No, we have not seen Him." I suppose they then went to the house of entertainment, the inn where they had stayed, and asked, "Is our Son here? Is our Child here—that fair-haired Boy, the most beautiful you ever saw?" "Ah," the people would reply, "that is an old tale with women. Go away! We have not seen Him. He is not here." Christ was not in the inn. There was not room for Him there when He was born and there was not likely to be room for Him to remain there afterwards. They did not go to the palace to seek Him—not inside it, at any rate. They were afraid of Herod, for if Herod had laid hold of Him, there would have been an end of Him. I daresay they thought that the dear Child had been attracted by the splendid buildings that decked Jerusalem with glory, and that He would be sure to be in the crowd, gazing at some of the great and grand structures, so they went through the principal streets, thinking, surely, He would be there. And when they asked the curious people from foreign countries who were investigating all the wonders of the city, if they had seen the Child, they most likely stared them in the face, for Christ Jesus is not always to be found with the curious in their research. There was a mountebank in the street and a number of children had gathered around him and the performance might be likely to attract Jesus, so His parents went there, but folly knew nothing about the holy Child Jesus.

At last, His mother thought that, possibly, He might be in the Temple. Yes, that was the place for Him! He was the King of the Temple, and a

king should be in his palace—and there they found Him, humbling the pride of the doctors! So learn from this, O Christian, that you will never find your Master where folly exhibits herself to gazing multitudes. You will never find Him where curious learning studies with deep research to discover everything that is wonderful and profound. You will never find Him where giddy mirth is gathered in the assemblies of the ungodly. But if you would find Christ, you must find Him in His Temple, in the house of prayer! It is here that He makes His glories known! It is here that He speaks to His children. Here are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David—

"The King Himself comes near,
And feasts His saints today.
Here we may sit and see Him here,
And love, and praise, and pray.
One day amidst the place
Where my dear God has been,
Is sweeter than ten thousand days
Of pleasurable sin."

Sinner, if you seek Christ, seek Him where He is to be found! If you seek happiness, peace and mercy, go after Him where He goes. Lie down at the pool of Bethesda and if God has not yet quickened you, oh, that you might be brought to the pool of Siloam, to the gate of Divine Mercy, for it is here that Jesus Christ loves to resort and work the great wonders of His Grace! To the saints, I wish to say just this—Do not rest if you have lost the society of your Lord. Do not give sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids until you have had restored to you the communion that has been suspended. Do not live, oh, I beseech you, do not live—*live*, did I say?—it is *not* living—do not continue to merely *exist* in such a condition for another hour! If your fellowship with Christ is broken, run to your house, fall upon your knees and cry to Him to give you fresh manifestations of His love. It is dangerous to delay! O child of God, it is perilous to be without your Lord! This would be to make you like sheep without its shepherd, a tree without water at its roots, a sere leaf in the tempest, not bound to the Tree of Life. Oh, may Christ influence your heart, that you may first see your danger and then, with full purpose of heart, seek after Him who is waiting to be found of you! I beseech you, by your desire for usefulness and happiness. I beseech you, by the loveliness of Christ, by the fearful condition of being found out of fellowship with Him. I beseech you, by your own sorrow, which you have already suffered, and by the misery which will certainly increase unless you find Him! I beseech you rest not until you have found Christ, again, to the joy and gladness of your spirit!

And as for those of you who know not the Savior, what I have been saying is as nothing to you—you are careless about these all-important matters—but I beseech you, by Him that lives and was dead, by the solemnities of Hell, by the dread mysteries of eternity, by the bliss of Heaven and by the terrors of the Day of Judgment—I beseech you as a dying man speaking to dying men, if you have never found Christ, let these words ring in your ears—you are without God, without Christ, without hope and strangers from the commonwealth of Israel! Let me say

those words again, though they are like the tolling of a knell—*Without God, without Christ, without hope and strangers from the commonwealth of Israel!* Ponder over those two words, "Without Christ! Without Christ!" And if they do not stagger you, God help you! But if, my Hearer, they do cause you to start. If God shall make them break you up, then, Sinner, when He has broken you in pieces, remember that Christ Jesus is willing to save all those whom He has made willing to be saved! As certainly as you need Him, He wants you! Seek Him and you will find Him! Do but knock and the door of mercy shall be opened! Do but ask and you shall receive!

O awakened Sinner, here is Christ's message to you! "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Oh, that you would believe in Christ and be baptized! Oh, that God would help all of you who have nothing of your own, to give yourselves up to Christ and take Him to be your All-in-All! But, hardened Sinner, I send you away with those dreadful words which I repeated, just now, and I hope they will ring in your ears all the week—when you walk the streets, when you are on your bed, when you are at your meals—*without God, without Christ, without hope and strangers to the commonwealth of Israel.* And, therefore, *without Heaven!* Those who have the earnest of Heaven even now have a blessed "hope which makes not ashamed." May that hope be given to you, my Hearers, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 57:10-21; 58:1-11.

The Prophet has been giving a very terrible description of the sin of the nation. We need not read it all, but at last he says this—

Verse 10. *You are wearied in the greatness of your way.* "You are worn out with your own way. You have been so zealous in your rebellion against God that you have actually fatigued yourself in the pursuit of evil." That is a true description of those who have worn themselves out in the ways of sin.

10. *Yet said you not, There is no hope: you have found the life of your hand; therefore you were not grieved.* Though they had hunted for pleasure and had not found it, and had brought themselves into great distress, yet they would not give up the hope of, after all, succeeding in their rebellion. Oh, how obstinately are men set upon seeking satisfaction where it can never be found—namely, in the pursuit of sin! These people were still alive and they were content to be so, but they were not grieved although God had sorely chastened them.

11. *And of whom have you been afraid or feared, that you have lied and have not remembered Me?* "Me, your Maker, your Friend, to whom you owe your very soul, unless that soul shall go down into the Pit, 'You have not remembered Me.'"

11. *Nor laid it to your heart; have not I held My peace even of old, and you do not fear Me?* When God is very long-suffering and lets men alone in their sin, then, often, they quite forget Him and have no fear of Him.

12. *I will declare your righteousness, and your works; for they shall not profit you.* If God once takes the self-righteous man's righteousness and explains what it really is, He will soon reveal to its owner that it is a mere delusion and sham that will not profit him at all.

13. *When you cry, let your companies deliver you.* "When sickness, depression of spirit and death, itself, shall come to you, and you begin to dread what is to follow, and cry to those who comforted you in your time of health, what will they be able to do for you?"

13. *But the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shall take them: but he that puts his trust in Me shall possess the land, and shall inherit My holy mountain.* All confidence in men shall be blown away as chaff is driven by the wind—but faith in God wins the day.

14, 15. *And shall say, Cast you up, cast you up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling block out of the way of My people. For thus says the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place with him, also, that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.* That is a wonderful verse! You notice that the prelude to it explains the greatness and the holiness of God and then, like an eagle swooping out of the sky even down to the earth, we find God coming from His high and lofty place to dwell with humble and contrite hearts! Not with the proud—not with you who think yourselves good and excellent—does God dwell, but with men who feel their sin and acknowledge it. With men who feel their unworthiness and confess it. I will read this verse again to impress it upon your memory. "Thus says the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place with him, also, that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

16. *For I will not contend forever, neither will I be always angry: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made.* See the tender meaning of God's message in this verse. He has been encouraging the guilty one and making him feel the enormity of his offenses and then He says, "I will not do that any more, lest I should crush him. He is too weak to bear any more punishment or reproof. Therefore I will not any longer afflict him, but I will turn to him in mercy, 'for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made.'"

17. *For the iniquity of his covetousness was I angry, and smote him: I hid and was angry, and he went on forward in the way of his heart.* Here God shows that His chastening does not always produce a good result, for, sometimes, when men are tried on account of sin, they grow worse and worse. "I hid and was angry, and he went on forward in the way of his heart." What does God say of such a great sinner as that?

18. *I have seen his ways.* "I have seen that he goes from bad to worse when I afflict him. Now I will try another plan. 'I have seen his ways,'"

18, 19. *And will heal him: I will lead him, also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off and to him that is near, says the LORD; and I will heal him.* It is heart-melting to see the tenderness of God. "I will not further smite him, lest his spirit should fail before me. I will not continue to

strike him because I can see that he only goes farther away from Me, the more I chastise him. I will deal with him in abounding love. 'I will heal him.'" I believe that there is many a sinner who runs away from God thinking that the Lord is his enemy and, as God pursues him, he does not dare look back. He thinks that it is the step of the Avenger that he hears, so he flees faster and farther away from God. But when he does venture to look back and sees that it is a loving Father's face that is gazing upon him, oh, how he regrets his folly in running from Him! Then he throws himself into the arms of the God of Love and wonders how he could have been the enemy of this, His greatest Friend. May such a happy turn as that happen to some whom I am now addressing!

20, 21. *But the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked.* They may have the semblance of peace, or a false peace, but nothing which is worthy of being called peace.

Isaiah 58:1, 2. *Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet and show My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek Me daily.* There are many nominally religious people who are full of sin. They have an external religion which allows them to live in rebellion against God. And such people are not easily convinced of sin. Hence the Prophet is bid to lift up his voice like a trumpet. Yet, even if he does so, they will not hear him. There are none so deaf as those that will not hear—and these men do not wish to hear what God has to say to them "Yet they seek Me daily"

2. *And delight to know My ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of Me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God.* They are always in a place of worship if possible. They cannot have too many services and sermons, yet they have no heart towards God. O my dear Friends, let us always be afraid of merely external religiousness! Genuine conversion, real devotion to God, true communion with God—these are sure things—but mere outward religiousness is nothing but so much varnish and tinsel! It is, indeed, but the ghastly coffin of a soul that never was quickened unto spiritual life. This is the way these sham religionists talked about their religion.

3. *Why have we fasted, they say, and You see not? Why have we afflicted our soul, and You take no notice?* When God rejects a man's religion, what must be the reason of it? Here is the explanation.

3. *Behold, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and exact all your labors.* "You fast, but you make your workmen toil on! You determine that they shall not have one atom of their labor abated and you make an amusement of what you call a fast. 'In the day of your fast you find pleasure.'"

4. *Behold, you fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fiat of wickedness: you shall not fast as you do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high.* The best sort of mere external religion will soon turn sour. If you do not worship the Lord in a right spirit, God will loathe the very form of your service! Why, you might, by hypocrisy, make even Prayer Meetings to be hateful in the sight of God! And the ordinances

may be made as abominable to God as the "mass" itself! You can soon degrade hearing sermons into mere listening to oratory and the Sabbath may easily become an object only of superstitious and formal observance. The heart—the heart is everything! If that is wrong, it sours the sweetest things under Heaven.

5. *Is it such a fast that I have chosen? A day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast and an acceptable day to the LORD?* Does God care only for the externals of worship? Is He satisfied with sackcloth and ashes, and the hanging down of the head like a bulrush?

6. *Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that to break every yoke?* Yes, this is true fasting before God—not to demand your pound of flesh and declare that you will have it. Not to grind down the poor man to the last farthing, but, "to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens and to let the oppressed go free."

7. *Is it not to deal your bread to the hungry, and that you bring the poor that are cast out to your house? When you see the naked, that you cover him; and that you hide not yourself from your own flesh?* That is the kind of fast that the Lord approves—to deny yourself that you may give to those who are in need!

8, 9. *Then shall your light break forth as the morning, and your health shall spring forth speedily: then your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your reward. Then shall you call and the LORD shall answer; you shall cry, and He shall say, Here I am. If you take away from the midst of you the yoke, the pointing of the finger and speaking vanity.* That is, if you shall take away all oppression, all wrong-doing to men, all talking of lies and speaking vanity, "Then shall your light break forth as the morning."

10, 11. *And if you draw out your soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall your light rise in obscurity and your darkness be as the new day: and the LORD shall guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and make fat your bones: and you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.* What promises God gives to those who consider the poor and needy round about them! But if you shut your ears to the cry of the distressed, God will shut His ears to your cry.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—709, 587, 242.

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

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS CONCERNING ZION NO. 2612

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 5, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 8, 1883.

"What will they answer the messengers of the nation? That the LORD has founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust in it." Isaiah 14:32.

ZION evidently attracted great attention in its own day and, I suppose, the term, "Zion," stood for the whole city. It was a city of many singularities and it was especially remarkable for its worship when Jerusalem was as it should be. It had a Temple, but there was no image in it. Worship was continually carried on there, but the God who was worshipped was invisible. This made Zion and its Temple different from all other cities and all other temples under Heaven, for, wherever else you went, you saw graven images set up and men prostrating themselves before the work of their own hands. It was not so in Zion. There, the one living and true God resided, and the Temple at Jerusalem was the center of His worship for all the faithful—and every type or symbol in His solemn service was meant to teach the people concerning Him. Zion was remarkable, not so much for the strength of its defenses, the beauty of its palaces and the glory of its Temple, as for being "the city of the great King." "God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved." Hence, although Zion was but a little hill and other hills were great compared with it, yet the fame of it went forth even to the ends of the earth.

Zion is always a type of the Church of the living God—and everywhere the Church of God is singular and, for that reason, noticeable. It is a power altogether unlike all other powers, a Kingdom quite different from the kingdoms of the earth. It uses not the force of arms—it has no defense except the indwelling Deity—it knows nothing of the pomp of earthly splendor, it exists for God's Glory and for no other purpose. Its reason for being a Church at all is that Jesus Christ may be honored and glorified in its midst and, therefore, the true Church of Christ is sure to be noticed, however obscure it may be in any particular place. You cannot plant a Christian Church in a village without its being discovered. It may be said of Christ's Church as it was said of Himself, "He could not be hidden" neither can His Church! And in any kingdom or country, though the true Christians may form a very small remnant, yet they are sure to be noticed. They are as a fire that gives light as well as heat and, therefore, their presence must be known and felt.

I push this Truth of God a little further and say that if you are one of the citizens of this Zion, one of the members of the Church of God, you, also, will be known. You cannot go through the world unobserved! You

are like Bunyan's pilgrim when he passed through Vanity Fair. He was but a humble individual, yet everybody looked at him because he hurried through the fair, neither attracted by its business nor detained by its wealth. Christian and his companion simply sped on and when the men of the place asked them, "What will you buy?" they gave no answer but this, "We buy the Truth," and hastened on as fast as they could! And you must do the same if you are bound for the Celestial City. It may be that they will not take you, as the people of Vanity Fair took Faithful, and send you to Heaven in a chariot of fire, but they will be sure to notice you. In a free country like this, you may be almost anything that you like except a Christian. There is no liberty for you and you will find that the dogs of Hell will bark at you because you are a stranger and a foreigner in this world! If you were a child at home, they would not trouble you, but you are of a different race from the men of the world who have their portion in this life—and, as you pass along, they will let you know that you do not belong to them.

They do not wish to understand you and you will find that they will always be ready to misrepresent you. And when they have finished their misrepresentation, they will endeavor to laugh you to scorn. Of old, Zion was so remarkable that the nations sent messengers to enquire about it. And today the people of God are a remarkable people, a pilgrim race, strangers and sojourners in the world, passing on to "a city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." If you are a true Believer in Christ, you will be sure to be noticed, questioned, quizzed, criticized, caricatured, misrepresented—never mind all that—it is the lot of all the holy Seed, and the citizens of Zion must expect such treatment until the Lord Himself shall come.

Our text may be made to apply to all God's people and I shall use the Jews and Zion as the basis upon which I shall build up my discourse. From their history we shall try to gather the true meaning of the passage. In it we have the mention of messengers and we shall enquire, first, *What do these messengers of the nation ask?* Secondly, *why should they be answered?* And, thirdly, *how shall they be answered?* "That the Lord has founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust in it."

I. First, WHAT DO THESE MESSENGERS ASK?

Messengers came from Babylon to Zion and, no doubt, one of the first questions they asked was, "*What is the treasure of Zion?* What is the wealth of this city? It stands not by the sea, like Tyre, so that it may flourish by its merchandize. It is not situated among the cedars of Lebanon, so that it may sell its precious wood or its carved work. This city stands in a strange place and yet we see that it is a wealthy place—what is the source and the extent of its wealth?" Unhappily, Hezekiah forgot how to answer that question aright, and he took the Babylonian messengers through his palace and showed them his *material* treasures. He led them from one secret cabinet to another and let them see all his riches. And they looked on with wondering, covetous eyes and went home to tell what loot there would be there, what a grand place Jerusalem would be to sack and how all Babylon might be the richer because of the treasures that were hidden there. How unwise was Hezekiah! He ought to have given a far better answer. I have been in churches on the Continent

where I have been asked by the guide whether I would like to see the treasury, and I have seen it. In one church, I saw what was estimated at about a million pounds sterling in the form of plates of different kinds for the adornment of the altar. I saw a treasure which was regarded as far more precious than gold and silver—a saint with all his bones laid bare, a skeleton saint decorated with emeralds, rubies and all kinds of precious stones—but it was a ghastly sight for all that! If I had purchased him, I would have speedily buried him. Should not such a treasure be buried in the earth? It is the best place for saints and sinners, too, when they are dead.

I do not doubt that living saints are a precious treasure in the Church of God, yet it would not do, if the messengers of the nations asked us what our chief treasure is, to exhibit the members of the Church—saints alive or saints dead—or to talk about the wealth of the Church, or the intellect of the Church, or even the earnestness and prayerfulness of the Church, precious as these things are. There is a better answer to that question and our text tells us that the great treasure of the Church is the fact that Jehovah has founded her. His Grace is the inexhaustible storehouse from which she derives all her spiritual wealth!

The messengers of the nations probably asked next, "*What is Zion's confidence*?" When city after city had been overthrown by Rabshakeh and Sennacherib, if messengers came into Jerusalem, no doubt they were amazed to find the people holding out against the great king who smote and overcame wherever he went. And they said and Rabshakeh said, "What is your confidence? Has not the king of Assyria smitten all the gods of the people whom he has fought? Upon whose arm do you rely?" If the people had taken the messengers and bid them look from the rocky sides of Zion, down the steep precipice into the ravines, and if they had said, "Who can climb up here?" Or if they had pointed to the tower of David, or to the walls of the city well jointed together, or to its massive gates and said, "These are our defenses," it would have been a poor and sorry reply, for no walls stood out long against the kings of Babylon! They brought their battering-rams and engines to the siege and very soon they cast up breast-works and all kinds of entrenchments and, before long, made a breach in the city walls and rushed in and slew the inhabitants.

But what a good answer it would have been to say, "Jehovah is our confidence. He is our defense, our castle and high tower, our battleaxe and weapons of war. And He has said that Sennacherib shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with a shield, nor cast a bank against it. The adversary may come near enough to mark the walls and bulwarks of Zion and count her towers, but he shall not be able to capture her, for 'God shall help her, and that right early.' He is our defense! Not the valiant men that stand upon the watchtowers and shoot swift arrows against the foe. Not the trained armies that throng her gates and charge upon the adversary with sword and shield, but the Lord God is a wall of fire round about us and the glory in our midst." What a grand answer that would have been to the question of the messengers!

Let us also, Beloved, give the same answer to all who ask what is our confidence. Let us tell them that our confidence is in God alone. If, dear

Friends, we are truly citizens of Zion, this is one of the marks of our citizenship, that our entire confidence is in that unseen arm upon which alone we lean. We look only to God for our salvation, and we cast away all confidence in ourselves, or in our fellow men, reckoning all earthly supports as being like broken cisterns that can hold no water, and trusting alone to the deep eternal fountain of Grace that wells up in the heart of God Himself.

No doubt the messengers of the nations also asked, "*What is the history of this Zion?* What is the story of the nation of which Jerusalem is the capital? Where did your fathers come from? Did they obtain possession of this land with their own bow and their own swords? Have they made advances, step by step, to the greatness whereof they now boast?" The right answer to that question was, "God has founded Zion." That was the secret of her glorious history and the messengers ought to have received no other reply but that to their enquiry! Sometimes, nowadays, men come to us and they say, "Where did your Church come from? What is the origin of it? From where did it arise?" Well, you may tell the story, if you give all the glory to God and if you reflect all honor upon the power of Divine Truth, but never fail to go back to the very beginning and answer, "God has founded Zion," for if there is a church which cannot trace its foundation to the eternal Truth of God's Word, to the eternal power of God's Spirit, to the eternal founding by God's own Sovereign Grace, it is not the Church of God at all!

I hope you would give a similar answer to the question about your own history. If you are a believer in Christ, how came you to be a Christian? How was it that you ever began to love the Lord? How is it that you have a good hope of Heaven? How is it that you believe that you have eternal life? This is the answer for you to give—

"Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God.
He, to rescue me from danger,
Interposed His precious blood."

Each saved soul must say, "It is of God's Grace that I am what I am. As God has founded Zion, so has He founded me."

Another question which these messengers would be sure to ask would be this—"*What is the expectation of Zion?* You say that Jehovah built it and that He has, up to now, guarded and preserved it, but to what end is such a little city as this made so conspicuous? Why is it so honored by the Divine Presence?" Oh, then I hope the people opened their mouths wide and told the messengers that God had founded Zion and that the poor of His people would trust in it and that they added, "So we have the expectation of being provided for, preserved, delivered, magnified through God's mercy." And as for you and me, Beloved, when they say to us, "What do you expect?" let us open our mouth wide and tell what God has done and what we expect He will yet do for us—that He will guide us by His counsel and, afterwards, receive us to Glory—that He will correct and chasten us as a man chastens his own son—that He will perfect our education and then will take us Home to dwell with Him where sorrow and sighing can never come! Then let us tell them of the coming of our Lord and of the Glory that is wrapped up in His advent. And let our hearts burn and our eyes sparkle as, with joyful lips, we talk of the things

which God has prepared for them that Love Him and which He has revealed to us by His Spirit!

II. Now, secondly, WHY SHOULD THESE MESSENGERS BE ANSWERED?

The question in our text is, "What will they answer the messengers of the nation?" But there is no hint of any question as to whether they are to be answered or not. It is taken for granted that a reply is to be given to their enquiries. I hope, dear Brothers and Sisters, that we shall always be ready to give an answer with meekness and fear to every man who asks of us a reason for the hope that is in us. Questions will be sure to be put to Christians, for they are men wondered at and, hence, there is a necessity for us to be well taught of God and to have our minds stored with heavenly knowledge, that we may not be dumb when we ought to speak, but may always be ready with such an answer as shall be acceptable to God and may be beneficial to those who ask the question.

Some who come to Zion *ask questions out of curiosity*. I should not wonder if the ambassadors who came to Jerusalem looked all about the city with wondering eyes and kept on enquiring, "What is this? What is that? What is the meaning of this memorial and what is the intention of this symbol?" They did not ask these questions because they cared particularly about what they saw—possibly they asked even more questions when they were in Epsom, or when they sauntered through the streets of Nineveh, but, having come to Jerusalem, they had a curiosity about what was to be seen there, so they began to enquire. In like manner, Beloved, there will come to you, to your Zion, to your house, persons who will make enquiries about your religion—not that they love it, or believe in it—but, still, they would like to know about it. Men are curious about religious matters. They jot down in their notebook information that they gather concerning them. They may not be, themselves, devout, but they would like to know what is the nature and extent of your devotion. They may not be, themselves, Believers, but they would be glad to learn what kind of faith yours is. Would you discourage this curiosity? I think you would be very unwise if you did so. No, rather try to make some use of it. It is, in itself, nothing particularly worthy of notice, but there is at least a measure of hopefulness about it. When men's minds once begin to work, we are led to hope and pray that the Spirit of God may work with them and work in them, according to the good pleasure of His Grace. It is a very hopeful thing when you, my Brothers in the ministry, get an attentive audience to listen to you. Mind that you always give them something worth listening to! It were an ill day for you and me, in trying to do good, if we could never persuade anyone to listen at all. Let us hold the wedding guest and detain him with our tale, though it may seem to him to be as sad as that of the Ancient Mariner of whom Coleridge speaks, let us try to hold him fast till we have told him—

"The old, old story
Of Jesus and His love!"

We shall not complain if people ask, simply out of curiosity, about our religion, for that very curiosity will give us an opportunity to set things belonging to the Kingdom of God before minds which are somewhat receptive. If you ever lose your present access to those ears and they grow fast closed to your message, you will say, "I wish that even that curiosity

would come back, again," for curiosity about the things of God may lead to something better, by-and-by, if you know how to use it wisely. So, we will answer the messengers of the nation even though they ask merely from curiosity.

No doubt there are others who *ask out of contempt.* The ambassadors of a great power like Babylon, when they passed inside the walls of Zion, most likely said, "So this is your precious capital, is it? This little pettifogging village that we could put in one corner of Babylon and never know that it was there—is the city of the great King, is it?" And they laughed within themselves for very scorn and said, "This little miserable dog hole is your wonderful city, is it? Why, in Babylon, we have hanging gardens, wondrous palaces and mighty works of art and yet you say, 'Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion?'" And they gave a loud guffaw at the very thought of what seemed to them so absurd! Well, Brothers and Sisters, shall we refuse to answer when our questioners ask in contempt concerning our Zion? Sometimes we shall do well not to reply, for we are forbidden to cast pearls before swine, but, on other occasions we may answer them because we do not wish men to think that we are ashamed or afraid to declare our convictions, or that we have nothing to say concerning the faith that we hold. Oh, proclaim it, though all Philistia shall be listening! Proclaim it among the nations that the Lord reigns! Proclaim it amid a senate of philosophers or a parliament of kings!

This Truth of God might well be written across the sky and the sun, itself, as it makes its daily circuit, should be the Mercury to bear this message everywhere! The heavens should proclaim the Glory of God and the firmament show His handiwork! And it is our desire and intention to let the Gospel be published wide as the light of day! Publish it even to the contemptuous, for, sometimes, even he who despises is not the last to be converted. And an enemy who has enough light to hate the Truth of God may have enough to be brought to love it! Think not that a man like Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor of the saints, is the most hopeless of mankind. God thought not so and He brought him in penitence to His feet and made him to be not a whit behind the very chief of His servants! Therefore, if men ask you about religion, even out of contempt, and you can see the sneer upon their faces as they ask the question, give them an answer! Tell them of Jesus' dying love and of all that wonderful plan of salvation arranged by the Sovereign Grace of God. You may even find your answer in our text—"The Lord has founded Zion and the poor of His people shall trust in it."

But sometimes, no doubt, the messengers of the nations will *ask out of admiration.* There were some of them that came, like the Queen of Sheba, and asked about everything because they admired it all. And there are, perhaps among us, some whose hearts God has touched. They have the first signs and tokens of an affection for the Truth of God and for the Lord—and when they come where you are who love His dear name, they will ask you many questions most admiringly. Oh, never be slow to answer such enquirers! No, but set out before their eager eyes all the wonders of Zion and all the glories of your Lord! Tell them what the Lord has done for you and for all His people. Tell them how you were washed in

the blood of the Lamb, how your heart has been changed, cheered and comforted. Tell them everything, for now that the Lord has given them some hungering and some thirsting after these things, now is your time to bring out the "butter in a lordly dish!" Now is your opportunity to set before them the Bread that came down from Heaven, even Christ Jesus who is the Bread of Life. Now let them all know about the "wines on the lees, well-refined," and the "fat things full of marrow," for you have before you those who will gladly feed on all the dainties and delights provided in the great banquet of the Gospel.

And it may be that while you are telling the story, there will be some enquirers who will *ask because they want to enjoy these good things for themselves*. The spouse in the Canticles said, "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my Beloved, that you tell Him, that I am love-sick." And they then asked her, "What is your Beloved more than another beloved, O you fairest among women? What is your Beloved more than another beloved, that you so charge us?" So the spouse sat down and told them of all His matchless beauties and finished up by saying, "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem." Then they enquired, "Where is your Beloved gone, O you fairest among women?—Where is your Beloved turned aside?—That we may seek Him with you." In like manner, dear Friends, when you see others who are willing to hear what you can say to them about Christ, do not hesitate to tell them, for perhaps they, too, will love your Savior! Perhaps they have a wish to participate in the merits of His blood and the blessings of His salvation—and that is exactly what you wish concerning them and concerning all mankind, for you often say—

"His worth, if all the nations knew
Surely the whole world would love Him, too."

Therefore, tell all who are in the world about it, praying God's Spirit to open their hearts that they may receive the message and may trust in Jesus and be saved.

O my dear Hearers who love the Lord, be none of you reticent about these precious things, but answer the messengers of the nation whenever you meet with them! It may do them good, contemptuous though they may be! It may do them good though they are, for the time, but curiosity-mongers. Therefore tell them. Tell them the story fully, for, at any rate, it will do *you* good. It is a very useful thing for a man to proclaim what spiritual Truth he knows, for he thereby teaches himself. It will increase your own sense of safety if you declare to others what the real defense of Zion is. It will increase your own sense of joy if you proclaim what is the true joy of Zion. For your own good, do this, and do it also for the Glory of God. You are to be God's mouth to man—let not God ever seem to be silent because you are idle! O you people of God, "You are God's heritage"—the word the Apostle uses means, "You are God's *clergy,*" so I charge you, be not dumb dogs that cannot bark, but let others know what the Lord has done for your souls! "You that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence," but speak and speak, and speak yet again, and give to the messengers of the nations an answer to their enquiries concerning Zion and the Church of the living God!

III. Now I come to the closing and most important point. How SHALL THESE ENQUIRERS BE ANSWERED?

According to our text, they are to be answered by this declaration—"The LORD has founded Zion." Whenever any religious enquiry is put to you, let it be definitely made known in your answer that *every good thing that you have, or that the Church of God has, comes from God.* Leave your hearer in no doubt about this matter—do not let him suppose that it came by your own exertion or merit—but say most plainly, "The Lord has founded Zion." If one soul is saved, God has done it. If 500 souls are saved and banded together in Christian fellowship, "this is the finger of God." And if there are tens of thousands of saved saints in the world, this is what the Lord has done by His own Almighty power! It is not *of* man, neither is it *by* man, but it is of the Lord alone! Make that Truth of God very conspicuous in your answers to all enquirers.

And that being done, make this Truth equally plain, that *the Lord is the Founder of His Church*—His true Church—that all her doctrines are revealed in His Word and are her doctrines because He has given them to her—that her ordinances are taught by Christ, Himself, in His own Word and, therefore—and for that reason only—are they ordinances of His Church! Lay this down with the utmost emphasis, that the Lord has founded Zion as to her doctrines and her ordinances and also as to all the polished stones that He has built into all her walls. Christ is the one Foundation of His Church and God has laid Him in Zion as the chief Cornerstone—elect, precious—but every stone that is laid upon Him is laid there according to the Divine purpose and predestination, yes, and by the effectual working of the power of the Holy Spirit who brings men up from the quarry of sin and builds them upon the Foundation of Christ Crucified!

To make our answer to these messengers complete, they will want to know all about our Church and our Zion, so let us acknowledge our own poverty. You notice, in the text, that the answer is, "The Lord has founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust in it." Say to the enquirers, "Ah, you must not look for anything great in us! We are poor by nature and poor by practice, too. And in ourselves we are less than nothing and vanity." There may be some very good people in the world who think that they are perfect. We are not among them—we could not, dare not, will not stand up and say, "We thank God that we are not as other men are." We have rather, each one of us, to smite upon our breasts and say, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." It is most important, in our testimony, that we should confess our spiritual poverty, for our Lord Jesus is never magnified unless He is set forth as the Savior of sinners. And Grace is never glorified unless sin is denounced and bemoaned. O Beloved, let your own poverty be a black foil that shall make the precious gem of Divine Grace shine the more gloriously in the eyes of men!

Then say also that, *as God has founded Zion, we mean to cleave to her.* That is to say, if this Bible is God's Book, we believe in it from cover to cover. If any doctrine, however mysterious, is taught by the Spirit of God, we accept it. If we do not understand it, we believe it. If there are any ordinance commanded by God, we will obey it to the best of our ability as it is delivered to us. I cannot agree with those who say that they have "new truth" to teach. The two words seem to me to contradict each other—that which is new is not true. It is the old that is true, for truth is as old as

God. Albeit that its locks are bushy and black as a raven for strength and force, yet I might say of every Truth of God that its head and its hair are white like wool, as white as snow, for its antiquity. "Ah, but," they say, "we are wise in this generation; we have learned much from this source and that." Have you? Then keep your precious knowledge to yourselves—we do not covet it. We are content to believe concerning this Word, that the Lord has founded it and, we poor simpletons mean to trust in it, and to cleave to it, come what may.

Do you notice how sweetly is put in the text *the resolve to trust in what God has founded?* "The poor of His people shall trust in it." The inhabitants of Jerusalem sheltered behind the walls of Zion and they felt perfectly safe. There was Sennacherib coming up with hordes of Assyrians, apparently numerous enough to eat them all up, but when they knew that God had founded Zion and meant to preserve her, they might smile at the king of Babylon, and they did so. "The virgin, the daughter of Zion, has despised you, and laughed you to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem has shaken her head at you." If Zion is founded by God, vain is all the might and malice of man or devil against it—it shall stand against all who oppose it. I can fancy Luther talking like this, only with stronger sentences than I can put together, and bidding the people join in singing that favorite Psalm of his, the 46th –"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear though the earth is removed and though the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea."

Let us, also, have this brave confidence, my Brothers and Sisters! Trust in Jehovah and be at ease concerning His Truth and cause. Let nothing daunt or disturb you. God has routed greater men than the wiseacres of the 19th Century! And when they are all swept into the nothingness from which they came, His Truth shall still live and triumph, glory be to the name of Him who sent it to us and, thereby, founded the one only Eternal City, the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of His Truth! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 14.

Verse 1. *For the LORD will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob.* This promise had a measure of fulfillment when Israel was brought back from Babylon. And it is still true that when God's people come to their worst, there is always something better before them. On the other hand, it is equally sure that when sinners come to their *best*, there is always something terrible awaiting them. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans, "God has not cast away His people which He foreknew." And his declaration agrees with this prophecy, "The Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land" I believe that there will be a far grander fulfillment of this prophecy in that day when God shall bring back His chosen people to their own country—and then shall be

the fullness of blessing to the Gentiles, also. "The strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob."

2. *And the people shall take them and bring them to their place: and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the LORD for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captives, whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors.* The chosen people now have the worst of it in many parts of the world, but they shall have the best of it, by-and-by. They shall not always be trampled on—their time of uplifting shall come at the last. And there is nothing after the last—that which is last, lasts forever.

3, 4. *And it shall come to pass in the day that the LORD shall give you rest frown your sorrow, and from your fear, and from the hard bondage wherein you were made to serve, that you shall take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How has the oppressor ceased! The golden city ceased!* O child of God, you shall, by-and-by, have a glorious season of rest! Today is your time of labor. You are now under hard bondage, but you shall yet come forth into the fullness of your liberty in Christ Jesus. In that day Jehovah, Himself, shall give you rest from all your grief and fears. You shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. This was a great prophecy for Isaiah to utter, for, in his day there was no power on earth equal to that of Babylon. That great city abounded in palaces and extraordinary wealth—and its power was such that no kingdom could stand against it. For a while it broke in pieces all those who fought against it, yet God broke Babylon in His own time. And here is a song of rejoicing in anticipation of its overthrow, "How has the oppressor ceased! The golden city ceased!"

5. *The LORD has broken the staff of the wicked and the scepter of the rulers.* No power can ever be permanently strong that is founded upon wickedness. Sooner or later it will have to come to an end. A falsehood may array itself in the garments of wisdom and strength and go forth to fight hopefully for victory, but, in the end, it must die. The stone of the Truth of God will reveal the giant's brow and lay him headlong in death.

6, 7. *He who emote the people in wrath with a continual stroke. He that ruled the nations in anger is persecuted, and none hinders. The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet: they break forth into singing.* The Babylon that none could resist becomes, herself, destroyed and there is no one to come to her assistance. Go at this day and see where the owl dwells, and mark the habitation of the dragons, and say to yourself, "This is Babylon, the great city that was the queen over all nations. But she did evil in the sight of the Lord, and spoke extremely proudly and, behold, Jehovah has crumbled her in the dust and, now that Babylon is gone, 'the whole earth is at rest, and is quiet: they break forth into singing.'"

8. *Yes, the fir trees rejoice at you, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, Since you are laid down, no feller is come up against us.* For the cruel kings of Babylon cut down the nations as the woodman with his axe fells the trees of the forest. But when the power of Babylon was broken, peace and quietness reigned everywhere. O Brothers and Sisters, what a blissful day it will be when the modern Babylon is taken away, for to this hour she is the troubler among the nations! Wherever the blight of Popery comes, there is evil, there is oppression, there is bondage—and only

when Romanism shall be utterly swept away and cast like a millstone into the flood, will it be said, "The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet: they break forth into singing." Here is s very wonderful picture of the king of Babylon going down to the grave!

9, 10. *Hades from beneath is moved for you to meet you at your coming: it stirs up the dead for you, even all the chief ones of the earth; it has raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto you, Are you also become weak as we? Are you become like unto us?* It is a fine pictorial representation of the spirits of departed kings lifting themselves up from their beds of dust and saying, "Are you, king of Babylon, that slew us, also come here? The mighty conqueror—are you yourself conquered—and brought to the grave?"

11-15, *Your pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of your viols: the worm is spread under you, and the worms cover you. How are you fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How are you cut down to the ground, which did weaken the nations! For you have said in your heart, I will ascend into Heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the height of the clouds; I will be like the Most High. Yet you shall be brought down to Hades, to the sides of the Pit.* God hates pride with a perfect hatred! He drives His sword through the very heart of it and cuts it in pieces. None can be great and mighty, and boast of what they are able to do without provoking the King of Kings to put forth against them some of His great power! Oh, let none of as talk about climbing to Heaven by our good works, or getting there by our merits, lest it should happen to us, also, that we should "be brought down to Hades, to the sides of the Pit."

16-18. *They that see you shall narrowly look upon you, and consider you, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; that made the world as a wilderness and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners? All the kings of the nations, even all of them, lie in glory, every one in his own house.* That is, they lie in state, each one in the mausoleum of his family. They went down to death and they were buried with all the honor and glory that were supposed to be due to their high position.

19. *But you are cast out of your grave like an abominable branch, and as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of the pit; as a carcass trodden under feet.* So total, so terrible, so disgraceful was the destruction of Babylon, that no honor or glory remained to it.

20-22. *You shall not be joined with them in burial because you have destroyed your land and slain your people: the seed of evildoers shall never be removed. Prepare slaughter for his children for the iniquity of their fathers; that they do not rise, nor possess the land, nor fill the face of the world with cities. For I will rise up against them, says the LORD of Hosts.* And he has done it. It seemed the most unlikely thing to happen, but the Lord spoke, and it was done—all the glory of Babylon was swept away. "I will rise up against them, says the Lord of Hosts."

22-27. *And cut off from Babylon the name, and remnant, and son, and nephew, says the LORD. I will also make it a possession for the bittern*

and pools of water: and I will sweep it with the boom of destruction, says the LORD of Hosts. The LORD of Hosts has sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand: that I will break the Assyrian in My land, and upon My mountains tread him under foot: then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulders. This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth: and this in the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For the LORD of Hosts has purposed, and who shall disannul it? And His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back? And God did this to the Assyrians in the day when Sennacherib invaded the land and the Angel of Destruction slew the whole host in one night! What a striking simile the Lord uses here! "This is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For the Lord of Hosts has purposed, and who shall disannul it? And His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" Conceive in your mind the picture drawn here—Jehovah Himself puts out the hand of His almightiness and challenges the nations to stand up in opposition to it!

28. *In the year that king Ahaz died was this burden.* About this time, the Philistines had plucked up courage and had invaded Judah.

29. *Rejoice not, whole Palestina, because the rod that smote you is broken: for out of the serpent's root shall come forth a cockatrice, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent.* Ahaz was defeated, but Hezekiah was raised up to be the leader of the LORD's people.

30. *And the firstborn of the poor shall feed, and the needy shall lie down in safety: and I will kill your root with famine, and he shall slay your remnant.* If God's enemies have a bright day or two, it shall soon be stormy weather with them. They may for the moment exult over God's people, but He knows that their day of reckoning is coming.

31. *Howl, O gate; cry, O city; you, Palestina, are dissolved: for there shall come from the north a smoke, and none shall be alone in his appointed times.* That is the way the Babylonians would come running down from the north. No one would be able to hide himself from them, not a single person would find a shelter, or escape from their terrible adversaries.

32. *What will they answer the messengers of the nation? That the LORD has founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust in it.* Though the passage seems dark at first, yet it is full of consolation to the people of God and is of similar import to that other gracious promise—"No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" —46 (VERSION I), 722, 886.

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

SONSHIP QUESTIONED
NO. 2613

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 12, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 16, 1883.

"And when the tempter came to Him, he said, If You are the Son of God."
Matthew 4:3.

IN speaking upon the temptation of our Lord, I first want to say a few words that ought always to be remembered by those who are tempted, lest they encounter unnecessary sorrow. And to begin with, I remark that there is no sin in being tempted. Even when our first parents were in their perfect state, they were liable to temptation. The serpent came and beguiled them. It was not their fault that they were tempted—their sin was that they *yielded* to the temptation. We know that our blessed Lord was personally without the slightest taint of sin—"holy, harmless, undefiled"—yet He was tempted by Satan, himself, the prince and leader of all tempters, and He was tempted to what would have been the worst of sins. Still, there was no blame attached to Him on that account, for He did not yield to the assaults of the Evil One. So, dear Friends, should you be tempted while you are about your lawful calling, or when you are in the House of God, distinctly engaged in His service and worship, do not be surprised! Who are you that you should escape temptation when your Lord had to endure it? Do not be cast down by the fact of your being tempted, as though it were, in itself, a sin. The guilt lies with him who tempts—not with the tempted one until he yields to the temptation. Let that always be remembered.

And remember, next, that temptation does not necessitate sinning. It did not in the case of our Lord, for He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." And that which was possible of Him, in His life on earth, can also be possible of you by Him with whom all things are possible! A man need not fall into avarice because he is tempted to covetousness. A man need not become unchaste because he is tempted to lewdness. Remember the case of Joseph—he was none the less pure because he was so foully tempted. A man need not be false to his convictions because someone tries to bribe him to be so—rather, he may prove the honesty and uprightness of his heart by recoiling from the very touch of the briber. He who is tempted need not, therefore, sin, for God, who permits the temptation to come will, with the temptation, make a way of escape for him that he may be able to bear it. A man may walk in the midst of a furnace of temptation, yet not even the smell of fire shall be upon him. He may be "kept by the power of God through faith unto sal-

vation" and kept as well amid the most furious temptations as if he lived in a region that was most helpful to his Graces. A child of God may be specially, peculiarly, singularly and emphatically tempted, and yet he may be preserved from sin. In the case before us, we see that our Lord was not only tempted, but that He was tempted by Satan, by him who has the greatest power and the most cunning sleight of hand of all tempters and, though the arch-tempter put before Him the subtlest of temptations, yet He did not yield in any respect whatever. So may you, dear Friend, pass unharmed, as it were, between the very jaws of Hell, preserved and upheld by the Sovereign, Omnipotent Grace of God!

Note, yet again, that it may be necessary for you to be tempted. It evidently was so in the case of our Lord, for He did not fall into temptation through unwatchfulness. He did not go into temptation presumptuously, but we read of Him, that He was "led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil," so that He was in His right place—He was in the path of duty even when He had to go through this, His great threefold trial in the desert. It was necessary that it should be so with Him that He might be made, in all points, like unto His brethren, that He might have full sympathy with us in all our temptations and that He might make His life-work complete in every respect.

Temptation may be necessary for us for the purpose of testing and trying us. We read, in the Book of Genesis, "It came to pass after these things, that God did tempt (or, *try*) Abraham." That is, God *tested* him, put his faith to a very severe test. There are no champions in God's army who are mere fair-weather soldiers. They must all endure hardships and their valor must be tried and proved. God sends none of His ships to sea without having first tested them—and when their seaworthiness is proved, then they may go on their long voyages. You, tried Believer, are to be tested, that the great Angel of the Covenant may say to you, as He said to the father of the faithful, "Now I know that you fear God." God already knows this through His Omniscience, but He would know it practically by testing us and it is, therefore, necessary that we should be tempted in order that we may be tested. Temptation may also be necessary to us for our spiritual growth. Muscles are not developed except by exercise and if we were to be, spiritually, put under a glass case, and never suffered to endure temptation, we would become dwarfed and stunted—and some of our virtues would never be developed at all. Where would our patience be if there were no suffering to test it? Where would be the Grace of forgiveness if we never had to suffer injury from our fellows? It is for our growth in Divine Grace that the stormy winds of temptation are let loose upon us, that, like a stalwart oak, we may take firm root-hold. By this stern experience, Christian men grow "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." They sit loose to the world and they take a firmer grip on the invisible things of God as they are tried and tempted by Satan.

It may also be necessary for us to be tempted to increase our usefulness. He that was never tempted cannot help those who are tempted! He lacks sympathy because he has never passed through the fiery trial to which they are exposed. Dear young man, it may be that you wonder why

you have such a stormy inward life. Perhaps God is going to make you greatly useful as a dispenser of comfort to others. Men might be Boanerges, that is, sons of thunder, without trouble, but you could not be a Barnabas, a son of consolation, unless you had first known what it was to be comforted in time of trial. God might use you to scatter His Seed with a hand that was never wounded, but He could not use you to bind up the broken in heart unless that hand had been rendered tender and sensitive by trial. Your present experience, though painful, is a necessary preparation for something which will give you tenfold joy—so you may endure the present trial even with cheerfulness because of the blessed result that will come from it!

Beside that, Brothers and Sisters, we must be tempted, or else we cannot be victorious. The rule of the Kingdom is—no battles, no crowns; no conflicts, no conquests! We must stand foot to foot in deadly combat with the archenemy of souls or else we can never have a memorial pillar set up by the wayside, like that one of which Mr. Bunyan speaks, where Christian met Apollyon and it was recorded of him—

"The man so bravely played the man,
He made the fiend to fly—
Of which a monument I stand,
The same to testify."

The great reason why God's children are tempted is for God's Glory, for, when they stand fast and defeat the foe, then the strong man is overcome by a stronger and then He that is the strongest of all—the mighty Son of God—gets fresh crowns upon His head as, one after the other, the weakest among His people put to rout the great adversary. There is a necessity, then, that you should, at times, be "in heaviness through manifold temptations" and, though you may pray not to be led into temptation and are bound to do so, yet sometimes it may be necessary that, like your Lord, you should be brought into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

Note, once more, that solitude will not prevent temptation. "Oh," said a young man, "I think that I must give up my job, for it involves me in so many temptations." "Ah," said a Christian woman, "I wish that I could get right away into some sisterhood where I should have no temptations." Yes, and if you did, as some foolish women have done, you would have your temptations greatly increased! I am afraid that, sometimes, solitude is a *help* to temptations and that Christian people who are much tormented by Satan would do well to mix more often with other Believers, and tell out their sorrows. A good burst of tears and a narration of your grief to a sympathetic friend may be the best possible way for you to find relief from your sorrows. Do not be so shut up within yourself as to refuse to tell of the heartache that is wearing into your very soul—seek help from some Christian Brother or Sister, for we are bid to bear one another's burdens, and I trust we are not slow to do so.

Having thus introduced the general subject of temptation at rather unusual length, I want, now, to speak with some brevity, but to practical purpose concerning the temptation of our LORD.

The text I have taken shows that Satan is apt at writing prefaces. He is cunning and crafty, if not wise. He does not come to the Savior and say

at once, "Command that these stones be made bread," but he begins thus, "If You are the Son of God." This is his old plan of insinuating doubts, by which Eve was vanquished in the Garden of Eden! And this is the sharp end of the wedge with which he thought to separate the Son of God from His Father. And notice, too, that Satan knows how to fire a double-shotted gun, for, while he began by insinuating doubt—"If You are the Son of God"—he linked it with rebellion—"Command that these stones be made bread." Thus there were two temptations at the same moment and, sometimes, our mind is greatly perplexed and our heart is wounded by two attacks at one time, or one following very closely upon the heels of the other. It is a part of Satan's tactics to be quick with his temptations so that we scarcely recover from one blow before he deals another—and then another—that, if possible, he may drive us out of our wits and overcome us by his cunning.

I. Let us look closely into this double temptation with which he attacked the Savior. "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." And notice, first, that THE TEMPTER BEGINS BY ASSAILING THE SAVIOR WITH AN, "IF."

Note that *he does not begin with a point-blank denial*, saying, "You are not the Son of God," but he suggests a doubt upon the point—"*If* You are the Son of God." At the present time there is a spirit of infidelity creeping over the Christian Church and it puzzles and perplexes me to lay hold of it because of its very vagueness. Ministers and others of the modern-thought school do not positively assert that the Scriptures are not Inspired, but they have a theory of inspiration which practically comes to that conclusion. They do not actually say that Jesus Christ is not the Son of God, but they try to explain away His Divinity in such a fashion that they might just as well deny it at once. As for the Fall—oh, of course, there was a fall, but it was a matter of very small importance and the idea that the serpent tempted Eve is held up to positive ridicule as a myth, an ancient fable! The depravity of the human heart is admitted in words, but it is really denied when you come to see what those words actually mean. There is a new theology, lately sprung up, which has taken every pea out of the pod and every kernel out of the shell—and its advocates present us with the empty shucks and shells and say, "Do not quarrel with us. We are all brothers and there is very little difference between what we hold and what you teach, only we are not so dogmatic and positive as you are." Yet, all the while, they are throwing doubts upon that which is our very life! And we cannot help feeling that they have learned the devil's way of dealing with the Truth of God—"If, if, if."

That is just how Satan comes to each Believer. He will not positively say, "You are not a child of God," but he tries to inject a doubt into our minds, "*If* you are a child of God." He will not declare that Christ's people will certainly perish, but he asks, "Suppose they should?" Often, when I have heard a great many suppositions, I have felt more indignation at them than I have ever felt at a point-blank denial. Somebody once said to Mr. Gough, "Now, Mr. Gough, suppose you were in a beer parlor." Mr. Gough said, "I will not allow you to suppose anything of the kind! With my convictions about the drink traffic, I will not have you suppose such

a thing!" And I do not know what better answer he could have given. Yet people come to us with their supposing and insinuations—and we feel as indignant as Mr. Gough did. It is the devil's plan to assail with an, "if," and we have met with many who have adopted his tactics. One says, "I am not an infidel. I am not a freethinker! I am practically the same as you are. I hold the same views, I subscribe to the same creed, I am in the same Union and Association!" Yet, as we go on talking with him, he undermines the whole thing with some dreadful, dreary, "if," concerning the faith which we hold dear.

Notice, next, that *the devil grafts his, "if," upon a holy thing*. He says, "If You are the Son of God." This is the very title that had been applied to Christ by His Father at His Baptism—"This is My beloved Son." Yet Satan attacks it by trying to graft an, "if," on it. Thus does the devil still seek to do with every precious Truth of God and we must be always on the watch against him as those who are not ignorant of his devices. What a blessed stock is that glorious Doctrine of the Adoption of Believers into God's family, but, with an, "if," grafted upon it, what sour grapes it bears! It is with great joy we sing—

"Behold what wondrous Grace
The Father has bestowed
On sinners of a mortal race,
To call them sons of God!"

But put an, "if," on it, and then, ah, me! All the joy and all the wonder vanish at once.

Moreover, on this occasion, Satan put an, "if," upon a plain utterance of God. The Father had said, "This is My beloved Son," yet this impudent fiend dares, in the face of God's Only-Begotten, to quote that title with an, "if," added to it. I am never afraid of what any text of Scripture may teach, but I am often afraid of the gloss that has been put on a text and this Satanic glossing is the most mischievous of all mischief! It matters not how plainly any Truth may be revealed in the Scriptures, nor how clear is the language in which it is stated, so that we can see that it is certainly taught to us by God, but the devil will come and put an, "if," on it. I suppose that some of us who have been Christians for many years have had to fight over every Doctrine in the Word of God. There is scarcely one Truth of God I believe for which I have not had to contend in my own soul. David said that he rejoiced over God's Word "as one that finds great spoil." Now, spoil is found after a battle, and God's Truth is, to most of His people, a thing for which they have had to fight with the powers of darkness and they have had to take the Doctrine from the enemy by main force through the aid of the Holy Spirit. "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty?" No, that which has been gained in battle by such soul-conflict as we have had shall be held fast till we die! Yet, while we say this, we know that Satan has the impertinence to come and write over many of the great Truths of Scripture his ugly, insinuating, "if."

Yes, and not only does he put an, "if," on Scripture, but *he puts an, "if," also on past manifestations*. You enjoyed, some time ago, a blessed visit from God. You thought that you never could forget it—you said that you would never doubt again. The sacred Dove rested upon you and you were full of holy calm. The voice and witness of the Spirit were within you

and you knew that you were a child of God and that you lived in Jehovah's love. But the devil will come and say to you, "All that was fancy and excitement! There was nothing in it." Or if he is not so positive, he questions it with an, "if." With his great black pen, he scrawls, "if," right across all our sweet experiences, all the tops of Tabor—all the communion tables where we have met our Lord, all the places of secret retirement where our soul has been made like the chariots of Amminadib! And then, unless our Lord comes to our help, we lose the comfort of these past manifestations.

In this case, *the devil puts an, "if," across nearly the whole of Christ's life*. Our Lord had already had 30 years of retirement and preparation for His public ministry. I do not know whether Satan had tempted Him while He was in His obscurity, living with His father and mother in quiet. One would think that after 30 years of holy retirement, there must be a certainty of His being the Son of God, yet Satan has a bronze forehead and he says, "if," even to Him after all that! Some of us have been more than 30 years in God's ways. Some, perhaps, for 50 years have enjoyed the Lord's Presence and blessing, yet Satan will come and say, "If—if you are a child of God." Yes, and he has whispered that insinuation in the ears of dying saints whose faces have begun to glow with the Glory to be revealed! He has persecuted them with his cruel, "ifs," even to the last moment! Do not be astonished at it, Beloved, for our Lord Jesus Christ had no sin in Him—He had never done anything that could have made His sonship questionable, and yet, with a perfectly pure and holy and consecrated life before Him, this arch-enemy dares to sneer at it and to spit upon it one of his abominable, "ifs." "If You are the Son of God." There was our Divine Master, fully assured that He was the Son of God. His unerring consciousness told Him that He was so. He knew it, He was sure of it, as sure of it as He was of His own existence—and yet the fiend dared to say to Him, "If You are the Son of God." And you, Beloved, may feel the pulsing of the heavenly life—your heart may beat high with immortality—yet the hiss of the old serpent may be heard in your spirit, "If you are a child of God." That is his usual mode of attack, so be on your guard against it!

II. But, now, secondly, notice that THE TEMPTER AIMS THE, "IF," AT A VERY VITAL PLACE. "If You are the Son of God."

In like manner, with his poisoned arrow of an, "if," he will attack a child of God, sometimes, with *doubts as to whether Christ is God*. "If He is the Son of God." Oh, but that Doctrine of the Godhead of our Savior is a thing which we must be prepared to defend even with our life, if necessary—we can never give up that great Truth of God! It has been assailed all through the history of the Christian Church. The devil has seemed to say to his fiendish archers, "Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the King of Israel." If he can get men to deny the Godhead of Christ, he knows that the chief Truth of God is assailed. If that were gone, there would be nothing left that would be worth having!

When he has not assailed the Godhead of Christ, he has often attacked *our sonship.* "Oh," he says, "are *you* a child of God? *You*, with all your imperfections and infirmities—are *you* a child of God?" And he puts

it to you, over and over again, as a matter of question, until, at last, you are driven almost out of your wits. This questioning of Satan is always with an evil intention. He knows that he is assailing us in a very vital place—he is attacking our faith—and faith is vital to a Christian. If faith should fail us, then our life has failed us.

He also, by this means, attacks *our childlike spirit,* for, if we are not children of God, why should we submit to His will? Why should we not kick and struggle against our daily trials? If we are childlike, we trust, we obey, we believe, we endure, we persevere—but Satan puts an, "if," on all that and so he tries to disarm us.

Moreover, he is here *aiming at our Father's honor*, for he as much as says, "Is He your Father? If He is your Father, why does He allow you to be tried as you are? Why are you so poor? Why are you so ill? Why are you so depressed in spirit? He certainly does not act towards you as if He were your Father." Thus the devil tries to take from us all our comfort and all our delight, for if God is not the Father of us who believe, then are we orphans, indeed! We are strangers in this land and we have no other land to go to if God is not our Father and Heaven is not our home. The world has rejected us and if God does not acknowledge us, we are, of all men, most miserable. So, Satan attacks us with that, "if," in the most tender place where he can most wound us. If he could succeed in his assault, he would, indeed, leave us naked, poor and miserable. He would prevent our prayers, destroy our patience and hinder us in every respect. And he does this that he may then make room in our hearts for any other form of temptation that he likes. If you are not a child of God and God will not take care of you, then something whispers to you, "Take care of yourself. Rob your fellow men. Do a dishonest thing, do something or other by which you can escape from your present difficulty." This is what Satan is aiming at—therefore, my Brothers and Sisters, I earnestly entreat you to look well to this vulnerable part—your faith—your firm conviction of your sonship in relation to the Most High.

III. Thirdly, SATAN SUPPORTS HIS, "IF," WITH OUR CIRCUMSTANCES.

I will dwell only a minute or two upon this point. I think that the devil seemed to say to Christ, as he looked round the desert and saw that there was not a disciple or friend or anybody about—no guards to take care of this Prince of the blood—"*You,* the Son of God, alone, deserted, forsaken, in a wilderness? You, the Son of God?"

And, sometimes, he has come upon us *when we have been all alone.* We have looked and there was no man to help us. We had to war a warfare all by ourselves. Friends were all gone—some were dead, others had proved false—and then he said, "*You*, a child of God? While He would have given His angels charge concerning you if you had been one of His children, He would not have left you all alone like this."

And then Satan, with a glance of his cruel eyes all around us, has seemed to say, "*You are in a desert.* There is nothing but sand and stones—no food to eat, no water to drink, no shrubs or trees to shelter you. This is a pretty place for a child of God! Why, surely, if you had been one of His children, you would have been in a paradise! Was not that

where God put Adam? How can you be a child of God and be in a desert?" Has he ever said something like this to you, Beloved? "You have had trials all around you. Losses, crosses, bereavements, afflictions, poverty—nothing but troubles and nobody to help you out of them." And you have echoed the devil's words, "Alone and in a desert!" And then the question has come, "Can I really be a child of God?"

Our Lord was also *with the wild beasts* and I have no doubt that Satan pointed them out to Him, and said, "*You*, the Son of God, along with lions and bears and leopards and wolves?" So, sometimes, you have gone out into what has been a desert to you and all day long you have been among wild beasts. When you have been at work, you have not heard a word to comfort or cheer you—you have been surrounded by blasphemers and filthy talkers. You have said, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar." The misery of your surroundings has gone right home to your heart and then the devil has said, "*You*, a child of God, and put into such a position as this?"

Then, last of all, we read that Jesus hungered. And, after 40 days fasting, well He might—and hunger is a hard thing to overcome. It bites and gnaws most terribly. It was then that the devil said to Him, "If you are the Son of God," and threw a sardonic sneer into it—"a *hungering* Son of God!" So, you see, Satan backs up his insinuations by appealing to the circumstances in which we are found. And I will put it to you now, whether there is anybody here—even the very bravest of us—who could endure such temptation as this!

Suppose you had to go out of that door, tonight, with ragged garments on you, without a single penny in your pocket, without a solitary friend left and no place where you could lay your head? Do you not think that it is very likely that you would begin to be afraid that, after all, you were not a child of God? Supposing that you had eaten nothing all this day, and for many days before, and you were faint and weary, and no man gave you anything—if the devil said to you, then, "If you are a child of God," I am afraid that you would say, "Ah, Satan, now that it has come to this pass, I am afraid that I am not!"

Or I will put it in another way. If there should knock at your door, tonight, a man without shoes on his feet, one who had nowhere to sleep, and was all in rage, and he told you that he had not broken his fast for days, would you believe that he was one of your Brothers in Christ, and that he was a child of God? Well, perhaps, you might, but I know a good many who would not—they would say, "No, no, no! You are an impostor and if you do not leave, I will call in a policeman." Do you see, then, what pith and force there is in the temptation, when, finding the Savior without a place to lay His head, hungering, alone, with the wild beasts and in a wilderness, the devil comes to Him, and says, "Are you, indeed, the Son of God?" It was only the true Son of God who could answer him with confidence when in such a plight as that!

IV. To close my discourse, let me remind you that IF THE TEMPTER CAN BE OVERCOME, IT WILL BE EXCEEDINGLY HELPFUL TO US ALL THE REST OF OUR LIFE.

For, first, note that, if an, *"if," about our being a child of God comes from the devil, it is as good as a certificate stating we are!* "Oh," you say, "how is that?" Why, the devil never puts an, "if," to anything that is not true! Whenever he says, "if," to a thing, we may be sure that it is true! If he comes along and finds a text of Scripture, and says, "If it is true," that is the best homage which he can pay to it by trying to undermine it! I believe that your sonship is true when the devil tells you that it is not! If you were not a child of God, the devil would not be likely to utter an, "if," about it. I hope I am not, in any sense, a servant of the devil, and whenever I see anyone in my congregation who is puffed up with carnal conceit and who thinks that he is a child of God, I say to myself, "I will try to preach, next Sunday, in such a way as to make him question whether he is or is not a Christian, for he ought most seriously to question it." It is true, as Cowper says—

"He that never doubted of his state,
He may perhaps—perhaps he may—too late."

It is no part of the devil's work to make the self-deceived and hypocrites question themselves—he rather lulls them into deeper slumber—but when he does suggest to any man the doubt, "If you are a child of God," you may depend upon it that the man is a child of God, or else the devil would never think it worth his while to raise a question about it! So you may take Satan's insinuation for a certificate of your sonship!

When you are once able to battle with his evil suggestion, you may say, "If I were Satan's own, he would not worry me. If I belonged to him, he would try to make me content in his service—and these doubts and fears, these questions, this self-examination, these great searching of heart are all evidences that I have escaped from the talons of the old dragon and that he worries me because he cannot devour me." So we get a confirmation of our sonship even from Satan, himself!

Thus, dear Fiends, *if you once thoroughly overcome that "if," it is very likely that it will not occur to you again for many a day*, for, as far as I know, our blessed Lord had not that, "if," put to Him any more for years. The devil departed and angels came and ministered to Him, and He spoke with a holy confidence and joy in His Father's love all the rest of His life. At the last, when He was in a still worse plight and His hands were nailed to the Cross, and He was faint with thirst and near to death, then cruel men stood around Him and repeated the Satanic insinuation, "If You are the Son of God." Oh, but our blessed Master must have inwardly smiled as He thought, "You cannot tempt Me with that, 'if,'—I have been tempted, long ago, by a far greater adversary than any of you—even by your master and lord, the arch-fiend, himself! In the wilderness, he said to Me, 'If You are the Son of God,' and I repulsed him, and turned the edge of his sword upon himself. And now you have only tried to pierce me with a blunted weapon—you cannot wound Me as you cry, 'If You are the Son of God.'" Do you not see, Brothers and Sisters, that a temptation overcome may be used, the next time, to overcome another one? You may lay up this conquered temptation, just as David laid up Goliath's sword and, one of these days, when you come the same way and need a sword, you will say, "There is none like it! Give it to me." And

you will be glad to get the old sword into your hand again. So, temptations vanquished may be of service to us even on our dying bed and, as our Master triumphed on the Cross over a temptation which He had defeated in the desert, so, when we come to die, we may have peace and joy because of those early trials in which we were enabled to overcome our great adversary by the blood of the Lamb.

I have been all this while talking to God's children about the "if." Yet I fear that I am addressing some to whom the devil will not say, "if," for he knows, and perhaps your own conscience knows, that you are not a child of God. O dear Friends, do not deceive yourselves about this matter! If you are not His children, do not pretend that you are, but remember that if you are not the children of God, you are children of the Evil One and heirs of wrath, even as others. Oh, may Infinite Mercy adopt you into the family of God! And the way that mercy works is by leading you to trust in Christ Crucified. Then you shall be put among the children—adopted into the Lord's family—yes, born into it by a new birth through faith in Jesus Christ! The Lord grant it to every unconverted one here and grant it now, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 3:13-17; 4:1-11.

Matthew 3:13, 14. *Then came Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade Him, saying, I have need to be baptized of You, and do You come to me?* Who among us would not have felt as John did? Shall the servant baptize the Master and such a Master even his Lord and Savior? But mark the condescension of our blessed Lord! He would do everything that He wished His people to do afterwards and, therefore, He would be baptized and set the example that He would have them all follow.

15. *And Jesus answering said unto him, Allow it to be so now: for thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he allowed Him.* We are never to be so modest as to become disobedient to Christ's commands! We have known some who have allowed their humility to grow alone in the garden of their heart without the other sweet flowers that should have sprung up side by side with it—and thus their very humility has developed into a kind of pride. John was easily persuaded to do what his feelings, at first, seemed to forbid. "Then he allowed Him."

16, 17. *And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo, a Voice from Heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* It has also happened unto the servants of Christ, as well as to their Master, that in keeping the Commandments of God there has been a sweet attestation borne by the Holy Spirit. I trust that we, too, according to our measure of sonship, have heard in our hearts the Voice from Heaven, saying, "This is My beloved son," and that we have experienced the descending of the dove-like Spirit, bringing us peace of mind and gentleness of nature.

Matthew 4:1. *Then was Jesus led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.* What a change it seems from the descent of the Holy Spirit to being led up into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil! Dear Friends, be especially on the watch after a great spiritual joy, for it is just then that you may have some terrible temptation! Perhaps the voice from Heaven is to prepare you to do battle with the enemy. I have noticed that the Lord has two special seasons of blessing His people—sometimes, before a great trial, to prepare them for it—and, at other times, after a great affliction, to remove the weakness which has been thereby occasioned. Think not that you can come up out of the waters of Baptism and then live without watchfulness! Imagine not, because the Spirit has sealed you, and borne witness with your spirit that you are the Lord's child, that, therefore, you are out of gunshot of the enemy. Oh, no! At that very time he will be preparing his most subtle temptations for you, just as Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil immediately after His Baptism and His Father's testimony, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

2. *And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He afterward was hungry.* I suppose that He was not "hungry" during His long fast, and this renders it a fast altogether by itself. We are here told, "He afterward was hungry."

3. *And when the tempter came to Him, he said, If You are the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.* "You can do it if You are, indeed, the Son of God. You are hungry, therefore feed Yourself. Your Father has forgotten You. His Providence has failed You! Be Your own Providence—work a miracle for Yourself." How little the tempter, with all his knowledge, understood the true Character of Christ! Our Lord never worked a miracle in order to supply His own needs.

4. *But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread, alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.* He had been attacked as a man who was hungry, so He quoted a text which evidently belonged to man—"Man shall not live by bread, alone." It was a wilderness text. It concerned the children of Israel in the desert, so it was suitable to the position of our Lord in that wilderness. He meant to let the tempter know that as God once fed man by manna from the skies, He could do it again. At any rate, this glorious Man, this true Son of God, was determined not to interfere with the ordinary working of Providence, but He left Himself and His needs in His Father's hands.

5, 6. *Then the devil took Him up into the Holy City and set Him on a pinnacle of the Temple, and said to Him, If You are the Son of God, cast Yourself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning you: and in their hands they shall bear you up, lest at any time you dash your foot against a stone.* "It is written." Thus the devil tried to turn Christ's own sword against Himself—that two-edged sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God! And the devil can still quote Scripture to suit his own purpose. Yet it was a misquotation as to the letter of it, for he left out the essential words, "to keep you in all your ways." And it was a worse misquotation as to the spirit of it, for in the true meaning of the passage there is nothing to tempt us to *presumption*. There is a guaran-

tee of safety when we are walking where we should walk, but not in leaping from a temple's pinnacle down into the abyss!

7. *Jesus said to Him, It is written again, You shall not tempt the Lord your God.* Here was a plain, positive precept, which clearly forbade Christ to tempt God by such a presumptuous action as casting Himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple! And we must always follow the precepts of Scripture whatever the tempter may say.

8. *Again, the devil took Him up into an exceedingly high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them.* Notice that these temptations were in high places. Alas, high places are often full of trial, whether they are places of wealth and rank, or of eminent service in the Church of God. A pinnacle is a dangerous position, even if it is a pinnacle of the Temple. And the summit of an exceedingly high mountain is a perilous place even if the view from it is not the poverty of the city, nor the sin of the people, but the glory of the kingdoms of the world. Even with such a view as that, the mountain's brow is full of danger to our weak heads.

9. *And said to Him, All these things will I give You, if You will fall down and worship me.* Why, they were Christ's already! They never belonged to Satan and, though, for a while, he had, to some extent, usurped authority over them, it was only his impudence to offer to give away what was not his own!

10. *Then Jesus said to Him, Get you hence, Satan: for it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.* Let the bribe be what it may, you must not worship or serve either yourself or the devil! Your God alone claims your homage. And if the whole earth might be yours through one act of sin, you would not be justified in committing it.

11. *Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto Him.* What a change! When the devil goes, the angels come! Perhaps some of you are just now sorely tempted and much troubled. Oh, that you might speedily come to Mahanaim, of which we read, "And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him"—that there you might be met by troops of angels coming to minister to you, weary with the conflict with the Evil One, just as they ministered to your Lord! You need them as much as He did and, therefore, you are as sure to have them if you look up to Him and ask Him to send them to you.

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

STRANGE THINGS
NO. 2614

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 19, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 18, 1883.

"We have seen strange things today."
Luke 5:26.

THE world is growing very old, dull and commonplace. One takes the newspaper and, often, after glancing through it, has to say, "There is really nothing in it." The reason probably being that there is nothing fresh or new happening on the earth—it is the same old sad story of sin and sorrow constantly repeated. The world seems to be like a cluster from the vine when all its generous juice has been pressed out. Life, to many persons, has come to be excessively humdrum. The human mind is always craving after novelties and, to find these novelties, it makes "much ado about nothing." It runs raving mad over that which is not worth thinking of and whips itself up into an intense excitement about a matter that is of no more importance than a drop in a bucket, or the small dust of the balance. The fact is, man wants something really fresh and strange and if he can get it, he feels delighted! I hardly think that when our good friend, Mr. John Ashworth, brought out his book, he would have achieved so great a success with it if he had not called it *Strange Tales.* But the strangeness was the attraction. The stories in it were strange tales to the mass of mankind, though to some of us they are very familiar things—but the *strangeness* was the point that attracted readers.

No man ever spent a day with Jesus Christ without being filled with the sight of strange things! No man ever entered into communion with the Lord Jesus without being delighted with wonders of love, of mercy, of Divine Grace, of the Truths of God, of goodness for, while His Gospel is the old, old Gospel, yet it always has a new face upon it and is continually fresh and new—it never gets stale! We read of our Lord that when John saw Him, "His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow," to denote His antiquity. And yet the spouse said of Him, "His locks are bushy and black as a raven," as if to indicate His perpetual youth, His unfailing strength and His unfading beauty. Believe me, dear Friends, if you want to see that which is truly strange, you must get into that spiritual realm where Christ is acknowledged as King, the new Heaven and new earth wherein dwell righteousness.

If you want to continue to be astounded, amazed, astonished, filled with holy awe, you must come and be familiar with the Savior, His person, His work, His offices and everything that has to do with Him and, when you have become familiar with all these things, then you will have to say constantly, "We have seen strange things today. Something has occurred that has surprised even us who have grown used to surprises. Our Lord has seemed to outdone Himself, though we thought Him to be higher than the heavens—and His mercy has appeared to go deeper than ever before, though we judged that it had already gone deeper than the abyss, itself!" "O world of wonders! I can say no less." He that enters this spiritual world where Christ is adored as God and King has unlocked a cabinet of marvels that shall astonish him during all his lifetime here and even throughout eternity! I am going to speak about strange things and I pray that God will make what is said to be of service to many.

I. First, I ask you to MARK THE STRANGE THINGS OF THAT PARTICULAR DAY which are mentioned in our text. It was so full of wonders that the people said, "We have seen strange things today." Well, what did they see?

First, they had that day seen *Christ disturbed in preaching*, greatly disturbed, and yet delighted to be so disturbed and accepting the disturbance as part of His usual experience and the means of doing further good to men. The Lord Jesus has gone into the square covered court of a house—the people have pressed in behind Him, one after another, till they are packed in a dense mass—and there are still others around the door vainly trying to enter. Here come four men—it is rather remarkable that there should be four such earnest men—who have brought a sick neighbor on his bed, with ropes tied to the four corners. But they find that they cannot get in through the crowd. They push, they squeeze, they struggle, but there is no getting in! And their poor paralyzed friend seems to be effectually shut out from Christ. They go up the outside stairs of the house. They get on the roof which covers the square where Christ and the people are—and they begin ripping off the tiling! And now, look! The man is being let down by the four ropes right before the Savior's face! There must be some measure of dust, even if something still heavier does not come tumbling down upon the Preacher's head, but here comes the bed with the man on it! The people are sure to make room for him, now, or else he will be supported on their heads! They seemed to be squeezed as tightly as they could be, but they feel that they must, somehow or other, get a little more closely together and so the man is gradually let down by his four friends who carefully let out the four ropes at the same rate, keeping good time together, lest one end of the bed should be too high and he should fall.

That must have been a great disturbance to our Lord! I know some preachers who cannot bear to have even a baby crying during the sermon. I do not feel especially delighted with that sweet music, yet I rejoice that the good woman did not stay away from the service! As far as I am concerned, she may bring her baby, even if it should sometimes cry—I

am glad to have her here that God may bless her. Perhaps a friend has just dropped his cane in the aisle and made a loud noise just when the preacher was trying to be very earnest. Well, that is a pity, but the dear Savior was much more rudely interrupted by all the falling stuff from the ceiling and the sick man coming down into the midst of the crowd before Him! If there had been any "thread" in His sermon, He certainly would have lost it—but His discourses were made of better material than that. They were made, indeed, of fire, and fell like fire-flakes on men's heads and hearts. He still spoke on, after He had paused a while to attend to this man's case, and He did attend to it very sweetly. He looked at the four men who had brought him and He saw that they had great trust in Him. And, seeing their faith, He worked the cure upon the sick man.

It was a strange thing that it should be so, but how much I would like to see more of this strange kind of work! I don't know where I am to find four men who are so in love with one of their friends that they will break up ceilings and roofs to get him where Christ can bless him! They will probably be four very imprudent and rash men, in the opinion of others—the Lord bless the imprudent and the rash! They are generally the best sort of men for such a task as this. Your more prudent men would have stopped till the service was over and the people had come out and, very likely, they would have waited till Christ had gone out at another door—and so their friend would have missed Him. But these rash, headstrong, ardent lovers of their sick neighbor must somehow get him to Christ! So they break up the roof and there he is, right in the Presence of Christ! It was a strange thing to do, but, Brothers and Sisters, do not hesitate to do strange things in order to save souls! Hardly mind what you do, so long as you can get them to Christ. Your Lord will not blame you. He is so strangely loving—so strangely full of goodwill to men—that even should you be guilty of an indiscretion in your zeal, He will not upbraid you for it. Oh, labor for the souls of your children, your servants, your neighbors—and the Lord will accept that service, and you may yet have the delight of seeing them made whole by Christ! That was a strange thing to begin with. I am bound to say that the people who witnessed it talked all their lives about the man coming down from the ceiling and Jesus Christ healing Him!

But now they saw a greater wonder than that—the Christ of God forgiving this man his sins! We talk about the forgiveness of sins, I fear, rather glibly, without always realizing what a great thing it is. You know that when Martin Luther was in deep distress of soul, a good old monk said to him, "Brother, can you not say the Credo?" "Yes," said Luther. "Well, then," replied the old man, "in the Credo you say, 'I believe in the forgiveness of sins.'" "Yes," said Luther, "I know that. I have often said it." "Then," enquired the other, "do you believe in the forgiveness of your own sin? For, if not, how can you say, 'I believe in the forgiveness of sins'?" This great Truth is sometimes spoken of as though forgiveness were an impalpable something that was done and yet not done, but Christ never meant it to be so. His death was not a shadowy, vague Atonement that

might possibly be available for sinners, but a real and complete putting away of sin and, as many as believe in Him may know for sure that their sin is put away and is as completely gone as if it had actually ceased to be, seeing that Christ bore the punishment of it. Yes, and the sin, itself, was, by imputation, laid upon Him, as it is written, "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed."

Whenever a sinner has his sin forgiven, it is a strange, a wondrous thing! Never think of it as a mere commonplace matter of no account, for it is a marvel of marvels. The angels—a far nobler race than men—fell from their first estate, but never has any of the devils bean pardoned for his rebellion against the Most High. No Savior has espoused their cause, no sacrifice has been offered for their guilt, no Gospel is ever proclaimed in their ears! When they sinned, they fell finally and now they are "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." Yet man, who was not a pure spirit, like the angels, but a spirit allied with materialism, an inferior being, fell—and for him God left His throne to come and bleed on earth to offer up an expiation! For men, sin became pardonable! No, more, to multitudes of the sons of men sin has been forgiven and an act of amnesty and oblivion has been passed concerning their rebellion! What a wonderful Truth of God is this! Whenever you feel a sense of pardoned sin, or whenever you know that your fellow man has received absolution from the great High Priest, the Son of God, you may at once say, "We have seen strange things today."

When these people around our Lord had seen that wonder, they saw something else which must have greatly surprised them—they saw an exhibition of thought-reading. I have heard and read many curious things about thought-reading. Some I have believed, and some I have not. That any man can read my thoughts, I shall take leave to question! At any rate, he may read this thought, for I will tell him what is on my mind—that I do not believe him! But our Lord Jesus Christ, as He looked at the Pharisees and the scribes, read their unexpressed thoughts and, at once, saw what was passing within their minds! It was not an easy thing, I should think, to read thoughts like these, "Who is this which speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God, alone?" But our Lord Jesus read those thoughts and answered them, though the men before Him had not as yet spoken a single word! I have seen wonderful exhibitions of thought-reading in this Tabernacle—not by me, but by the Lord Himself! Many of you are witnesses of how I have uttered from this platform the very words you have spoken when you were coming here—and what you said in your bedchamber, where nobody heard, perhaps, but some one companion, has been repeated in this place and you have been astounded as you discovered that the Word of God, which is quick and powerful, searches the heart and cuts asunder, just as you have seen an animal split from head to foot by a butcher and its innermost parts laid bare to the view of every passerby!

The Word of God often does that—discovers the secret thoughts and intents of the heart and makes the man see himself as God sees him—and makes him stand astonished that it should be so! We have frequently seen this sort of thing happen as we sometimes tell to one another some of the extraordinary instances in which men's very flesh has seemed to creep as the things they said and did have been made known to them. It will probably happen in like manner to many others—and those to whom God will thus speak will say, as these people did—"We have seen strange things today."

There was another strange thing they saw and, with that, I will conclude this first part of my discourse. They saw a sick man who could not lift hand or foot made, in a single moment, to walk and carry his bed, at the word of the Lord, Jesus Christ! That must have been a strange sight to those who knew this poor paralyzed man, when they saw him stand up from the bed and glorify God as he did what Jesus bade him do. And when the Lord speaks with power to a soul, as He constantly does, and the man who knew not God learns to know Him, and the one who feared not the Lord is brought to trust and love and serve Him, what a marvelous thing it is! I sometimes wonder whether any person would doubt the Inspiration of Scripture and the Divine origin and power of the Gospel if he could live each day as I live and see what I see of the wonders that are worked by the Gospel. Last Sunday night there came into Exeter Hall a man who did not care for the things of God, but he sat and heard the sermon. His brother had brought him—and was praying earnestly for him. As he was going out, a friend, who had observed him during the service, said to this man who had entered the hall utterly careless and Christless, "You were interested in the sermon tonight, were you not?" "I was," he answered, "very much." "Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?" The man at once replied, "I do believe in Him with all my heart and all my soul." His brother, who was with him, and who had been praying over him, said, "I was astonished beyond measure to hear him make such a declaration of his faith!"

Beside that one, there were 12 other persons who came forward when the service was over and distinctly declared that they had found the Savior that night under the preaching of the Gospel. Though they had not been religious people, and had scarcely ever thought of their souls, yet God had found them! And these strange things do not occur with us, alone—they happen every day with our beloved friends, Moody and Sankey and, indeed, in a great measure, with all who preach the Gospel! It is its own evidence of its almighty power and, as it wins its way, men are saved, they are healed of the deadly paralysis of sin and made to leap with active obedience and joyful service in the cause of Christ! Whenever you see this miracle of mercy worked, you can say, "We have seen strange things today."

II. Now, with great brevity, I ask you TO MARK THE STRANGE THINGS OF CHRIST'S DAY.

If you had ever beheld our Lord's life and work with the eyes of faith, you must have seen many strange things. First, the Maker of men became a Man! *He that is Infinite became an Infant*—He that made all things was wrapped in swaddling clothes! He who fills all space was laid in a manger and the Son of the Highest was known as the Son of Mary! We have heard strange things when we have heard the Doctrine of the Incarnation! "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and truth." Truly, this was a strange thing!

Further, He who was Lord of All, became Servant of All! "Being found in fashion as a Man," He lived a life of perfect obedience to His Father's will and went about healing the sick, raising the dead and ministering to all who came near Him. Most marvelous of all, on Him who knew no sin, the sin of man was laid, and the righteous God meted out to Him, the Innocent One, the chastisement due to the guilty! This is the ground of our hope and the only foundation of hope for sinners, that He, the innocent Christ, was made sin for us, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." But what a wonder it is! The guilty go free because He who is free from guilt suffers in their place! Tell all men that wonder of wonders!

Yet that was not all. Jesus died on the Cross! And loving friends laid Him in the tomb. Death had conquered Him, but, in that moment, Death was conquered—

"He Death by dying slew."

That day He led Death, itself, captive to His own supremacy. Wonder of wonders—Death put to death by death! Jesus Christ, by His dying, puts dying out of the way for all His people. Yet, even that wonder is not the last. Look, there He lies, for a while, wrapped in the grave clothes and Death appears to have the mastery over Him. But that Scripture must be fulfilled—"You will not leave My soul in Hades; neither will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption." He must wait there till the appointed hour strikes and then, early in the morning, before the break of day, He was up and away! An angel rolled away the stone, for He that had been dead was alive, again, and Jesus left the abode of Death, no more to die! What a wonder it is that He who was dead worked out our resurrection! And now, since He rose from the grave, so all His followers must.

You may take what point you please in the history of the Lord Jesus Christ and, if you really understand it, you will say concerning every part of it, "We have seen strange things" in this matter. It is a chain of miracles! It is like Alps on Alps and more than that, for the mountains of mercy tower above the stars and reach even to the Throne of God and God, Himself, was never more lofty and glorious than when He was occupied in the stupendous labors of His Son Jesus Christ. Only spend your time in the company of the great Wonder-Worker, and you will continually be able to say, "We have seen strange things today."

III. Now I must close by asking you to MARK THE STRANGE THINGS STILL TO BE SEEN IN THOSE IN WHOM CHRIST WORKS. If He comes and blesses us, we shall often say, "We have seen strange things today."

First, we have seen *a self-condemned sinner justified by Christ.* I can tell you what I saw, one day, and I never shall forget the sight throughout eternity! I saw a sinner whom I know right well—and I can say no good of him, but much, very much that is evil, without at all slandering him. He had been proud and haughty in his opinion of himself, but there shone a light into his soul which unveiled to him his deep corruption and depravity, the sin that mixed with all his best things, and the still more dreadful sin that fermented in his worst things. I saw that sinner—for I know him well—self-condemned. He wrote his own sentence and he handed it to the Judge. He said that he deserved to be cast away forever from the Presence of God and the Glory of His power. And, as he passed up his own death-warrant, he dropped a tear upon it and he said, "I now trust myself to the Sovereign Mercy of God in Christ Jesus." I remember it well and I saw that self-condemned sinner pardoned in a moment! The Lord said to him, "Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven," and his face changed from darkness and gloom into shining light and joy! And he has never lost the impression of that blessed day—and, as he stands here to tell you the story, he can truly say that he saw strange things that day! But, Brothers and Sisters, there are hosts of you who have undergone the same blessed operation! Self-condemnation brought you where the Savior absolved you and, though it seems so easy to talk about it now, oh, how blessed it was when first we felt it! My heart did leap for joy! I was never so happy before and I sometimes think that I have scarcely ever been quite as jubilant as I was on that day of holy excitement and exhilaration!

I remember, also, *a natural heart renewed by Divine Grace*. I have gone into my garden and I have seen a great number of trees that have new branches which have been grafted into them, but I never yet saw a tree get a new heart. I have seen it get new bark and many changes have happened to it, but it cannot change its heart. There are some living creatures that shed their claws and grow fresh ones, but I never heard of a living creature that grew a new heart. That must be a strange, a wondrous thing, to change the very center and source of life! Yet the Lord Jesus Christ is constantly doing it—giving men new motives, new desires, new wishes, new habits—changing them entirely and, especially, creating in them new hearts and right spirits! Whenever you see that miracle of Grace worked, you can say. "We have seen strange things today." A woman came to see me and cast herself down at my feet. She said that she had been such a sinner that she was not fit to speak with me. I bade her rise, for I said I, also, was a sinner. And she told me what she had been—I will not tell you the sad story, for I should have to use words of shame if I described her. But she is among us now, washed and sanctified—and she delights to serve her God and honor and glorify Him! What changed that woman? Was it fear? No, she was a brave spirit who would

have dared any kind of devil, but the Grace of God changed and transformed her, and made her into a loving servant of the living Savior. Oh, whenever we see this deed of Grace done—and we see it continually—we say, "We have seen strange things today."

Another marvel is, *a soul preserved in spiritual life amid killing evils*. Did you ever see a bush burn and yet not be consumed? Did you ever see a spark float in the sea and yet not be quenched? Many persons here are, to themselves, just such wonders. They are living godly lives in the midst of temptation—holy in the midst of impurity—serving God in spite of all opposition. These are strange things!

Did you ever see *evil turned into good*? There are many of God's children who constantly see it. "All things work together for good to them who love God." They are made rich by poverty, made healthy by sickness, made strong by weakness, made alive by killing, made to go up by going down! You who live the new life know the meaning of these paradoxes and understand how these strange things make up a Christian's progress to the Eternal City of God. Strange things do the people of God see in their own lives as they find Heaven on earth! It is a singular thing for anyone to be on earth and yet in Heaven, but we have proved it to be so! We have seen men sick and we have seen men dying—and yet as full of bliss as they could hold, as thankful in their room of poverty—and almost as joyful, as if they had been among the angels before the Throne of God above! There are surprises all the way along the road to Glory, but what will it be when we come to the end of it?

Did you ever try to picture the first half-hour in Heaven? Have you ever thought of the sensations that will pass through you in the first few days there? I think that we can very well judge what they will be, for they have been revealed to us by the Spirit. We shall have the same joys as we have here, only carried to a far higher pitch, for the life of God in Heaven is the life of God *in the heart* on earth! Heaven is but the outgrowth of a holy consecrated life and he that lives with Christ below is already in the lower chamber of the Father's House. He has but to climb a pair of stairs and be in the upper chamber where all the glorified meet together with their Lord! Still, I doubt not that it will be passing strange to go from earth into Glory.

Whenever I begin to talk about this matter, I always wonder who will be the first among us to be called away, for it happens every week that some out of our great congregation go Home. Sometimes, in a single week, six or seven of our Church members go to the great Father's House—whose turn will it be to go next? We have not the choice, otherwise some of us might venture to put in an early claim that we might enjoy our rest. I know some old folk and some sick ones, and some who are greatly beset by Satan, and some who are sorely troubled with doubts and fears who would gladly say, "Would God it were time for us to go!" Well, dear Friends, rest assured that you are not forgotten—the messenger will come to you, perhaps soon, and he will say to you, "By tomorrow, you shall see the King in His Glory." You will have to go down into the

flood—to cross the dark river, as they call it—but I do not believe that it is dark at all. I have seen the light shining on the faces of many of the pilgrims as they have looked back at me, when I have stood upon the river's brink to comfort them—and it has not seemed at all dark. The happiest company I ever keep is that of dying saints! I come away right merry, sometimes, from their bedside, for they say to me, "O dear Pastor, the Truth of God you preach is good to live upon and good to die upon!"

I saw a man and his wife, both of them very ill, lying in bed, together, but not a syllable of sympathy did they appear to need from me. And they seemed delighted to say to me, "We learned Christ from your lips. We have lived on the Gospel you preached and it holds us up, now that we are lying here. We are glad to go home to Heaven—we are full of life and full of immortality even now!" Oh, yes, these are strange things—except to those who form part of this strange company with God, who is, to many, a stranger in His own world, and with Christ, who is a stranger, sometimes, in His own Church! We can say, and we shall say at the close of our lives, "We have seen strange things today."

There is one strange sight which I wish that you, dear Friends, if you are unconverted, would look upon—I wish that you would see Jesus as your own Savior. He is not far from any one of you. O look, look, look at Him and, as you look at Him, you shall live! That is God's appointed way of salvation. "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." And, dear Heart, if you should see that strange being—yourself—a saved sinner, I would like you to see another strange sight, namely, all your family saved! It will be such joy to you to have your wife rejoicing in Christ with you, joining in your daily prayer, and your children, even in their childhood, loving their father's God. There is a text for you to lay hold of, supposing that you are not yet converted. It was the middle of the night when, in Philippi, the jail began to rock to and fro. The jailer's house was up above, and he knew that he had two strange prisoners down in the vaults below. They had been singing in the night and the other prisoners had heard them and, as the jail rocked and reeled, and the doors flew open, the jailer, a stern Roman legionary, thought that his prisoners must have escaped and that he would be put to death for allowing it.

So he was about to thrust his sword into his own heart, but Paul shouted to him, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here." Then, when a light was brought, that man fell down before Paul and Silas and said to them, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And they answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house." Do not leave out those last three words, "*and your house*." Do not seek your own salvation without that of your household, also! Look up the passage in Acts 16:31-34—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house. And they spoke to him the Word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes, and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house."

It was a midnight service and Baptism of the whole household upon a profession of their faith! God send you a like blessing! You will see strange things, then! Many of us have seen already them in our families and we hope to see them repeated a thousand times! The Lord give you, every one, a personal blessing, and then bless your households, also, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 5:12-32.

Verse 12. *And it came to pass, when He was in a certain city, behold, a man full of leprosy.* What a contrast there was between these two persons—the Lord Jesus full of purity—and this man full of impurity—full of leprosy! He could not be more than full. He had as much leprosy as a man could contain.

12. *Who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought Him, saying, Lord, if You will, You can make me clean.* This was splendid faith! Here was adoration of the noblest kind! No angel before the Throne of God could render the Son of God more honor than this poor leprous man did. He believed in Christ's power at once to rid him of that otherwise incurable disease. "Lord, if You will, You can make me clean."

13. *And He put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be you clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him.* This is what Christ can also do in the *spiritual* realm. If a man is full of sin, let him but fall down on his face before Jesus and say, "Lord, if You will, You can make me clean," and the Lord will put out His hand, touch him, and he will be clean in a moment. "Immediately," not needing the lapse of a single hour—"immediately the leprosy departed from him."

14. *And He charged him to tell no man but go, and show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.* As long as the Ceremonial Law was in force, Christ very diligently obeyed it and bade others do the same. That Law is now abolished and the Jewish priesthood has also ceased to be. But mark the modesty of our Savior. As Man, He sought no fame or honor, but, as far as He could do so, He suppressed the voices that would have brought Him notoriety. Yet grateful tongues could not all be silenced, even at His bidding.

15. *But so much the more went there a fame abroad of Him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities.* There was s double attraction about the Lord Jesus—His sweet, instructive speech, and His gracious, healing hand. There is a still somewhat similar attraction in every true Gospel ministry, not the attraction of the mere words of human eloquence, but in the Truths of God which every faithful minister preaches and in that matchless soul-healing power which goes with the Word wherever it is believingly heard.

16. *And He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed.* That is just what you and I would probably *not* have done under such circums-

tances. We would have said, "We must seize this golden opportunity of publishing our message. There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to plenitude of blessing and we must take advantage of it." But our Savior did not wish for fame, He cared nothing about excitement and popularity, so, "He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed" for more of that real power which touches the hearts of men so as to save them, caring nothing for that power which merely attracts a crowd and excites momentary attention. O servant of God, when you are best succeeding in your service, imitate your Lord—withdraw yourself and pray!

17. *And it came to pass on a certain days, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which had come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.* To heal the people? Yes, and to heal the doctors, too! And that was a far more difficult thing than to heal the ordinary folk. It must have been a time of great mercy and favor when Christ was ready to bless even the Pharisees and doctors of the law who were sitting by.

18. *And, behold*—For it was a great wonder—

18. *Men brought in a bed, a man which was taken with palsy.* A paralyzed man.

18, 19. *And they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before Him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop.* There was, no doubt, a staircase outside, as there usually is to Eastern houses. "They went upon the housetop,"

19-21. *And let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus. And when He saw their faith, He said unto him, Man, your sins are forgiven you. And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?* Most true, O Pharisees and, therefore, He *is* God, for He can forgive sins and He has forgiven this poor sinner!

22, 23. *But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He, answering, said unto them, What reason you in your hearts? Whether it is easier to say, Your sins are forgiven you, or to say, rise up and walk?* "Does not each of these require the same Divine power? If I am able to bid him rise up and walk, I am also able, by the same Divine authority, to forgive his sins."

24-26. *But that you may know that the Son of Man has power upon earth to forgive sins, (He said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto you, Arise, and take up your couch, and go into your house. And immediately he rose up before them and took up that on which he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear.* With a reverent awe!

26, 27. *Saying, We have seen strange things today. And after these things He went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom.* This Levi, or Matthew, was a tax collector. Not like those of our own day, but one who collected the taxes for the Roman governor

and made what he could for himself out of them. At least that is what many of the "publicans" did.

27, 28. *And He said unto him, Follow Me. And he left all, rose up, and followed Him.* This was just a parallel case to that of curing the palsied man—it is precisely the same morally as the other was physically. The office of a publican was disreputable in the eyes of the Jews, and this Levi was probably making fast money at the cost of his own countrymen. He was *morally* paralyzed as the other man was *physically,* but as soon as Christ said to him, "Follow Me," "he left all, rose up, and followed Him."

29, 30. *And Levi made Him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them. But the scribes and Pharisees murmured against His disciples, saying, Why do you eat and drink with publicans and sinners?* It seems that there can never be a great wonder worked by Christ without somebody or other objecting to it! I suppose that the sun never rises without annoying thieves who would like a longer time to perpetrate their deeds of darkness. And no miracle of mercy is ever worked without somebody finding fault with it for some reason or other. Be not dismayed, therefore, now that in these modern days there have arisen many cunning objectors to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Let them object to it, as the dog barks at the moon—the moon still shines on in her silver brightness! So, when all objectors shall have howled themselves to silence, the eternal Gospel will shine on with never-failing splendor. These scribes and Pharisees murmured against Christ's disciples and said to them, "Why do you eat and drink with publicans and sinners?" Their Master did not leave them to defend themselves, but He took the case into His own hands.

31. *And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole*—"Such as you scribes and Pharisees claim to be

31. *Need not a physician; but they that are sick.* "You regard them as sick and I regard them in the same way and, therefore, am I found where these sick ones are. Why should I turn aside from them to insult you, who are so wonderfully healthy and think yourselves so good?"

32. *I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—289, 202, 570.

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THE ANXIOUS ENQUIRER
NO. 2615

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 26, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
EARLY IN THE YEAR 1857.

"Oh that I knew where I might find Him!"
Job 23:3.

WE will say nothing at this time concerning Job. We will leave the Patriarch out of the question and take these words as the exclamation forced from the aching heart of a sinner when he finds that he is lost on account of sin and can only be saved by Christ. "Oh that I knew where I might find Him"—my Savior—"That I might be saved by His love and blood!" There are some who tell us that a man, can, if he pleases, in one moment obtain peace with God and joy in the Holy Spirit. Such persons may know something of religion in their own hearts, but I think they are not competent to be judges of others. God may have given them some peace through believing and brought them into an immediate state of joy—He may have given them some repentance for sin and then quickly made them to rejoice in Jesus. But I believe that in many more cases, God begins by breaking the stony heart in pieces and often makes a delay of days, of weeks and even of months, before He heals the soul which He has wounded and gives life to the spirit which He has killed. Many of God's people have been, even, for years seeking peace and, finding none, they have known their sins, they have been permitted to feel their guilt and yet, notwithstanding that they have sought the Lord earnestly with tears, they have not attained to a knowledge of their justification by faith in Christ.

Such was the case with John Bunyan. For many a dreary month he walked the earth in desolation and said he knew himself to be lost without Christ. On his bended knees, with tears pouring like showers from his eye, he sought mercy, but he found it not. Terrible words continually haunted him! Dreadful passages of Scripture kept ringing in his ears and he found no consolation until, afterwards, God was pleased to appear unto him in all the plentitude of Divine Grace and lead him to cast himself on the Savior!

I think there may be some here who have been for a long while under the hand of God—some who have been brought so far toward Heaven as to know that they are undone forever unless Christ shall save them. I may be addressing some who have begun to pray—many a time the walls

of their chamber have resounded with their supplications. Not once, nor twice, nor 50 times, but very often have they bent their knees in agonizing prayer and yet, up to this moment, so far as their own feelings are concerned, their prayers are unanswered. Christ has not smiled upon them. They have not received the application of His precious blood and, perhaps, each one of them is at this hour saying, "I am ready to give up in despair. Jesus said He would receive all who came to Him, but apparently He has rejected me." Take heart, O Mourner! I have a sweet message for you and I pray the Lord that you may find Christ on the spot where you are now standing or sitting—and rejoice in a pardon bought with blood!

I shall now proceed to consider the case of a man who is awakened and is seeking Christ, but who, at present, has not, to his own apprehension, found Him. First, I shall notice some hopeful signs in this man's case. Secondly, I shall try to give some reasons why it is that a gracious God delays an answer to prayer in the case of penitent sinners. And then, thirdly, I shall close by giving some brief and suitable advice to those who have been seeking Christ, but have, up to the present time, found it a hopeless search.

I. First, then, observe that THERE ARE SOME VERY HOPEFUL SIGNS IN THE CASE OF THE MAN WHO HAS BEEN SEEKING CHRIST, THOUGH HE MAY NOT HAVE FOUND HIM.

Taking the text as the basis of observation, I notice as one hopeful sign that the man has only one objective—that he may find Christ. "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" The worldling's cry is, "Who will show us any good—this good, that good, or any other good—fifty kinds of good! Who will show us any of these?" But the quickened sinner knows of only one good and he cries, "Oh that I knew where I might find HIM!" When the sinner is truly awakened to feel his guilt, if you could pour the gold of India at his feet, he would say, "Take it away! I need to find HIM." If you could then give him all the joys and delights of the flesh, he would tell you he had tried all these and they but soured his appetite. His only cry is, "Oh that I knew where I might find HIM!"—

"These will never satisfy!
Give me Christ, or else I die!"

It is a blessed thing for a man when he has brought his desires into a focus. While he has 50 different wishes, his heart resembles a pool of water which is spread over a marsh, breeding foul air and pestilence. But when all his desires are brought into one channel, his heart becomes like a river of pure water, running along and fertilizing the fields. Happy is the man who has only one desire, if that one desire is set on Christ, even though it may not yet have been realized. If it is his desire, it is a blessed sign of the Divine work within him. Such a man will never be content with mere ordinances. Other men will go up to God's House and when they have heard the sermon, they will be satisfied. But not so this man! He will say, "Oh that I knew where I might find HIM!" His neighbor, who hears the sermon, will be content, but this man will say, "I need more

than that! I want to find Christ in it." Another man will go to the Communion Table—he will eat the bread and drink the wine—and that will be enough for him. But the quickened sinner will say, "No bread, no wine, will satisfy me! I need Christ. I must have Him! Mere ordinances are of no use to me. I want not the Savior's clothes, I want Him! Do not offer me these things—you are only bringing me the empty pitcher while I am dying of thirst! Give me water, the Water of Life, or I shall die. It is Christ that I want." This man's cry is, as we have it here in our text, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!"

Is this your condition, my Friend, at this moment? Have you but one desire, and is that desire that you may find Christ? Then, as the Lord lives, you are not far from the Kingdom of Heaven. Have you but one wish in your heart, and is that one wish that you may be washed from all your sins in Jesus' blood? Can you really say, "I would give all I have to be a Christian—I would give up everything I have and hope for if I might but feel that I have an interest in the Person and death of Christ"? Then, poor Soul, despite all your fears, be of good cheer—the Lord loves you and you shall soon come out into the daylight and rejoice in the liberty in which Christ makes men free.

There is another hopeful sign about this anxious enquirer. Not only has the man this one desire, but it is an intense desire. Hear the text again. "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" There is an, "Oh," here. This proves an intensity of desire. There are some men who are apparently very religious, but their religion is never more than skin deep—it does not reach as far as their heart. They can talk of it finely, but they never feel it—it does not well up from the heart and that is a bad spring that only comes from the lips. But this character whom I am describing is no hypocrite—he means what he says. Other men will say, "Yes, we would like to be Christians. We would like to be pardoned and we would like to be forgiven." And so they would—but they would like to go on in sin, too! They would like to be saved, but they would also like to live in sin! They want to hold with the hare and run with the hounds. They have no desire whatever to give up their sins—they would like to be pardoned for all their past transgressions—but go on just the same as before. Their wish is of no use because it is so superficial! But when the sinner is really quickened, there is nothing superficial about him. Then his cry is, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" and that cry comes from his very heart!

Are you in that condition, my Friend? Is your sigh a real one? Is your groan no mere fancy, but a real groan from the heart? Is that tear which steals down your cheek a genuine tear of penitence, which is the evidence of the grief of your spirit? I think I hear you saying, "Sir, if you knew me, you would not ask me that question. My friends say I am miserable day after day and so, indeed, I am. I go to my chamber at the top of the house and I often cry to God. Yes, Sir, I cry in such a style that I would not have anyone hear me. I cry with groans and tears that I may be brought near to God. I mean what I say." Then, Beloved, you shall be

saved! So surely as it is a real emotion of the heart, God will not let you perish. Never was there a sinner whose inmost spirit cried to the Lord for salvation who was not already loved of God! Never was there one who, with all his might, desired to be saved and whose soul groaned out that desire in hearty prayer, who was cast away by God! His mercy may tarry, but it will come. Pray on—He will hear you at last—and you shall yet "rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

But notice again that in the text there is an admission of ignorance, which is another very hopeful sign. "Oh that I knew!" Many people think they know everything and, consequently, they know nothing. I think it is Seneca who says, "Many a man would have been wise if he had not thought himself so. If he had but known himself to be a fool, he would have become wise." The doorstep to the Temple of Wisdom is a knowledge of our own ignorance. He cannot learn aright who has not first been taught that he knows nothing. A sense of ignorance is a very excellent sign of Grace. It is an amazing thing that every man seems to think himself qualified to be a Doctor of Divinity—a man who knows nothing of any other science, fancies he perfectly understands this greatest of all sciences and, alas, alas, for those who think they know so much about God's things and yet have never been taught of God! Man's school is not God's school. A man may go to all the Colleges in creation and know as little of theology when he comes out as when he went into them. It is a good thing for a man to feel that he is only beginning to learn and to be willing to open his mind to the teaching of God's Spirit, that he may be guided in everything by Him. He that is foolish enough to fancy that he knows everything need not think himself a Christian. He that boasts that he understands all mysteries, needs to fear as to his true state. But the quickened soul prays to the Lord, "Teach me." We become little children when God begins to deal with us. Before that we were big, tall, men and women, and oh, so wise! But when He takes us in hand, He cuts us down to the stature of children and we put on the form of humility to learn the true lessons of wisdom—and then we are taught the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. Happy are you, O Man, if you know yourself to know nothing! If God has emptied you of your carnal wisdom, He will fill you with that which is heavenly. If He has taught you your ignorance, He will teach you His wisdom and bring You to Himself! And if you are taught to reject all you know and know it, God will certainly reveal Himself to you.

There is one more hopeful sign in my text that I must mention. It is this—the person I have spoken of is very careless about where it is he seeks Christ, so that he does find Him. Do you know, Beloved, that people, when they really feel the weight and the guilt of their sins, are the worst people in the world to stick up for denominations? Other men can fight with their fellow creatures about various minor matters, but a poor awakened sinner says, "Lord, I will be glad to meet You anywhere!" When we have never seen ourselves to be sinners, we are the most respectable religionists in the world—we venerate every nail in the church or chapel

door—and we would not have anyone differ from us on any point of doctrine or practice! But when we feel our sins, we say, "Lord, if I could find You *anywhere*, I would be happy. If I could find you at the Baptist Meeting House. If I could find you in the Independent Chapel, I would be glad enough to go there. I have always attended a large, handsome church, but if I could find You in that little despised Meeting House, I would be glad to go there. Though it would be degrading to my rank and respectability, I would go there to find my Savior." Some are foolish enough to think that they would rather not have Christ if He goes anywhere except to their own church—they must keep to their own denomination and can, by no means, overstep the line.

It is a marvelous thing, but I believe I describe the experience of many whom I am now addressing, when I say that there are very few of you who were brought to know the Lord where you were in the habit of attending. You have, perhaps, worshipped there since you were converted, but it was not your father's church, not the place where you were born and bred, but some other into which you strayed for a time, where the King's arrows stuck fast in your heart! I know it was so with me—I never thought of going to the Chapel where I was first brought to know the Lord, but it snowed so hard that I could not go to my ordinary place of worship, so I was obliged to go to the little Primitive Methodist meeting. And when I got in, the preacher read his text—"Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." It was a blessed text and it was blessedly applied to my soul! But if there had been any opportunity as to going into other places, I would not have been there! So the awakened sinner says, "'Oh that I knew where I might find Him!' Only let me know where Christ is to be found! Let the minister be the most despised in the world, I will go and hear him! Let the denomination to which he belongs be the most calumniated and slandered, there I will be found seeking Him! If I can but find Christ, I will be content to meet Him anywhere!"

If divers can go into the deeps to bring up pearls, we should not be ashamed, sometimes, to dive deep to bring up precious jewels of Divine Grace. Men will do anything to get gold—they will work in the most muddy streams, or under the most scorching sun—surely, then, we ought not to mind how much we stoop if we find that which is more precious than gold and silver, even "Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Is this how you feel? Then, Beloved, I have not only a hope for you, but I have a certainty concerning you! If you are brought to cry out, in all the senses I have mentioned, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" then, assuredly, the Lord has begun a good work in you and He will carry it on even unto the end.

II. But now, for my second point, I SHALL ENDEAVOR TO GIVE SOME REASONS WHY IT IS THAT A GRACIOUS GOD DELAYS AN ANSWER TO THE PRAYER OF PENITENT SINNERS. I think I hear someone asking, "How is it that God does not give a man comfort as soon as he repents? Why is it that the Lord makes some of His people wait in bondage when they are longing for liberty?"

In the first place, it is to display His own Sovereignty. Ah, that is a word that is not often mentioned in pulpits! Divine Sovereignty is a very unfashionable Doctrine. Few people care to hear of a God who does as He pleases, who is absolute monarch over man, who knows of no law but His own will—which is always the will to do that which is right, to do good to those whom He has ordained unto eternal life—and to scatter mercy lavishly upon all His creatures. But we assert that there is such a thing as Divine Sovereignty and, more especially in the work of salvation! God seems to me to argue thus, "If I gave to all men peace as soon as they asked for it, they would begin to think they had a *right* to it. Now, I will make some of them wait so that they may see that the mercy is absolutely in My hands and that if I chose to withhold it altogether, I might do so most justly. And so I will make men see that it is a gift of My Free Grace and not of their own merit." In some of our squares, where the owners are anxious to keep the right of way in their own hands, they sometimes shut the gates, not because they would inconvenience us, but because they would have the public see that, although they may let them through, yet they have no right of way and might be excluded if the proprietors please. So is it with God—He says, "Man, if I save you, it is entirely of My own will and pleasure. I give My Grace, not because you deserve it, for then it were not Grace, but I give it to the most undeserving of men that I may maintain My right to dispense it as I please." And I take it that this is the best way of proving God's Sovereignty, namely, His making a delay between penitence and faith, or between penitence and that faith which brings peace with God and joy in the Holy Spirit. I think that is one very important reason.

But there is another. God sometimes delays manifesting His forgiving mercy to men *in order that they may find out some secret sin*. There is something hidden in their hearts of which they do not know. They come to God confessing their sins and they think they have make a clean breast of all their transgressions. "No," says God, "I will not give you pardon yet, or I will not, at present, apply it to your conscience. There is a secret sin you have not yet discovered." And He sets the heart to examine itself again—as Jerusalem is searched with candles—and, lo, there is some iniquity dragged out from the corner in which it was hidden! Conscience says, "I never knew of this sin. I never felt it to be a sin! Lord, I repent of it—will You not forgive me?" "Ah," says the mighty Maker, "now I have proved you, tried you and cast out this dross. I will now speak to you the word of consolation and comfort." Are you, then, a mourner seeking rest, and not finding it? I beseech you, look into your heart once more! Perhaps there is some hidden lust there, some secret sin. If so, turn the traitor out! Then will the Holy Spirit come and dwell in your soul and give you "the peace of God which passes all understanding."

Another reason why God delays His mercy is *that He may make us more useful in later life*. A man is never made thoroughly useful until he has passed through suffering. I do not think there is much good done by a man who has never been afflicted. We must first prove in our own

hearts and lives the Truths of God we are afterwards to preach, or we shall never preach them with effect! And if we are private Christians, we can never be of much use to our fellow men unless we have passed through trials similar to those which they have had to endure. So God makes some of His people wait a long time before He gives them the manifestation of their pardon, in order that, in later days, they may comfort others. The Lord is saying to many a tried soul, "I need you to be a consolation to others. Therefore I will make you full of grief and drunk with wormwood so that when you shall, in later years, meet with the mourner, you may say to him, 'I have suffered and endured the same trial that you are passing through.'" There are none so fit to comfort others as those who have once needed comfort themselves. Then take heart, poor afflicted one, perhaps the Lord designs you for a great work! He is keeping you low in bondage, doubt and fear, that He may bring you out more clearly and make your light like the light of seven days, and bring forth your righteousness "fair as the moor, clear as the sun and terrible as an army with banners." Wait, then, with patience, for God intends good to you and good to others through you, by this delay.

But the delay often arises not so much from God, as from ourselves. It is ignorance of the way of salvation which keeps many a man longer in doubt than he would be if he knew more about it. I do not hesitate to affirm that one of the hardest things for a sinner to understand is the way of salvation. It seems the plainest thing in all the world—nothing appears more simple than, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." But when the sinner is led to feel himself a sinner, he finds it not so easy to understand as he thought. We tell a man that with all their blackness, sinners may be pardoned. That with all their sins, they can be freely forgiven for Christ's sake. "But," says the man when he feels himself to be black, "do you mean to tell me that I am to be made whiter than snow? Do you really mean that I, who am lost, am to be saved, not through anything I do, or hope to do, but purely through what Another did ?" He can hardly believe it possible! He will have it that he must *do* something—he must do this, or that, or the other to help Christ—and the hardest thing in the world is to bring a man to see that salvation is of the Lord, alone, and not at all of himself! That it is God's free and perfect gift which leaves nothing of ours to be added to it, but is given to us to cover us completely, from head to foot, without anything of our own!

Men will conceive what God would not have them imagine and they will not receive that which God would have them embrace! It may be very easy to talk of certain cures and to read of them. We may say, "Such-and-such a medicine is very effective and will work such-and-such a cure." But when we, ourselves, are sick, we are often very dubious about the medicine! And if, having taken draught after draught of it, we find that it does not help us, perhaps we are brought to think that though it may cure others, it cannot cure us, because there has been such delay in its operation. So the poor soul thinks of the Gospel, "Certainly it cannot heal *me*." And then he misunderstands the nature of the sacred medi-

cine, altogether, and begins to take the Law instead of the Gospel. Now the Law never saved *anyone* yet, though it has condemned full many in its time—and will condemn us all unless we receive the Gospel.

If any here should be in doubt on account of ignorance, let me, as plainly as I can, state the Gospel. I believe it to be wrapped up in one word—Substitution. I have always considered, with Luther and Calvin, that the sum and substance of the Gospel lies in that word, Substitution—Christ standing in the place of man. If I understand the Gospel, it is this—I deserve to be lost and ruined. The only reason why I should not be damned is that Christ was punished in my place and there is no need to execute a sentence twice for the same sin. On the other hand, I know that I cannot enter Heaven unless I have a perfect righteousness. I am absolutely certain I shall never have one of my own, for I find that I sin every day. But then Christ had a perfect righteousness and He said, "Here, take My garment, put it on—you shall stand before God as if you were Christ—and I will stand before God as if I had been you. I will suffer in your place and you shall be rewarded for works which you did not do, but which I did for you."

I think the whole substance of salvation lies in the thought that Christ stood in the place of man. The prisoner is in the dock. He is about to be taken away to death. He deserves to die, for he has been a great criminal. But before he is removed, the Judge asks whether there is any possible plan whereby the prisoner's life can be spared. Up rises One who is, Himself, pure and perfect, has known no sin and, by the allowance of the Judge, for that is necessary, He steps into the dock and says, "Consider Me to be the prisoner. Pass the sentence on Me and let Me die. Reckon the prisoner to be Myself. I have fought for My country. I have deserved a reward for what I have done—reward him as if he had done good-and punish Me as if I had committed the sin." "But," you say, "Such a thing could not occur in an earthly court of law." No, but it has happened in God's Court of Law, in the great Court of King's Bench where God is the Judge of All, it has happened! The Savior said, "The sinner deserves to die. Let Me die in his place and let him be clothed in My righteousness."

To illustrate this, I will give you two instances. One is that of an ancient King who enacted a law against a certain crime—the punishment of anyone who committed the crime was that he should have both his eyes put out. His own son committed the crime. The king, as a strict judge, said, "I cannot alter the law. I have said that the loss of two eyes shall be the penalty—take out one of mine and one of his." So, you see, he strictly carried out the law, but, at the same time, he was able to have mercy, in part, upon his son. But the case of Christ goes further than that. He did not say, "Exact half the penalty on Me and half on the sinner." He said, "Put both My eyes out; nail Me to the tree; let Me die; let Me take all the guilt away and then the sinner may go free." We have heard of another case, that of two brothers, one of whom had been a great criminal and was about to die, when his brother, coming into the court, decorated with medals and having many wounds upon him, rose up to plead with

the judge that he would have mercy on the criminal for his sake. Then he began to strip himself and show his scars—how here and there on his big broad chest he had received saber cuts in defense of his country. "By these wounds," he said, and he lifted up one arm, the other having been cut away, "by these, my wounds, and the sufferings I have endured for my country, I beseech you, have mercy on him." For his brother's sake, the criminal was allowed to escape the punishment that was hanging over his head. It was even so with Christ. "The sinner," He said, "deserves to die. Then I will die in his place. He deserves not to enter Heaven, for he has not kept the Law of God, but I have kept the Law for him—he shall have My righteousness and I will take his sin—and so the Just shall die for the unjust, to bring him to God."

III. I have thus turned aside from the subject, somewhat, in order to clear away any ignorance that might exist in the minds of certain of my hearers as to this essential point of the Gospel plan. And now I am, in closing my discourse, to give SOME ADVICE TO THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN SEEKING CHRIST, BUT WHO HAVE NEVER FOUND HIM, AS TO HOW THEY MIGHT FIND HIM.

In the first place, let me say, Go wherever Christ goes. If Christ were to walk this earth again and heal the sick, as He did when He was here, before, many sick people would enquire, "Where will Christ be tomorrow?" And, as soon as they found out where He would take His walks, there they would be, lying on the pavement, in the hope that as He passed by, He would heal them. Go up, then, sick Soul, to Christ's House! It is there that He meets with His people. Read His Word! It is there that He blesses them by applying sweet promises to them. Observe His ordinances. Do not neglect them. Christ comes to Bethesda Pool, so lie by the water and wait till He arrives. If you cannot put in your foot, be where Christ comes. Thomas did not get the blessing, for He was not with the other disciples when the Master came to them. Stay not away from the House of God, poor seeking Soul—be there whenever the doors are opened, so that, when Jesus passes by, He may look on you and say, "Your sins are forgiven you."

And whatever else you do, when Christ passes by, cry after Him with all your might! Never be satisfied until you make Him stop. And if He should frown on you, seemingly for the moment, do not be silenced or stayed. If you are a little stirred by a sermon, pray over it—do not lose the auspicious moment. If you hear anything read which gives you some hope, lift up your heart in prayer at once! When the wind blows, then should the sails be set, and it may happen that God will give you Grace to reach the harbor's mouth and you may find the haven of perpetual rest. There was a man who was born blind and who longed to have his sight. As he sat by the roadway, one day, he was told that Jesus was passing by. And when he heard that, he cried after Him, "Jesus, You Son of David, have mercy on me!" The people wanted to hear Christ preach, so they tried to hush the poor man, but he cried again, "You Son of David, have mercy on me!" The Son of David turned not His head. He did

not look upon the man, but continued His discourse. But still the man shouted, "Jesus, You Son of David, have mercy on me!"

And then Jesus stopped. The disciples ran to the poor man and said, "Be still, trouble not the Master." But he cried so much the more, "Jesus, You Son of David, have mercy on me!" And Jesus at last asked him, "What will you that I should do unto you?" He answered, "Lord, that I might receive my sight." He received it "and followed Jesus in the way." Perhaps your doubts say to you, "Hush! Do not pray any more." Or Satan says, "Be still! Do not cry to Christ any more." Tell your doubts and fears, and the devil, too, that you will give Christ no rest till He turns His eyes upon you in love and heals your diseases. Cry aloud to Him, O you awakened Sinner, when He is passing by!

The next piece of advice I would give you is this—think very much of Christ. No way that I know of will bring you faith in Christ as well as thinking of Him. I would advise you, conscience-stricken Sinner, to spend an hour in meditation on Christ. You do not need to devote that time to meditation on yourself—you will get very little good from that—you may know beforehand that there is no hope for you in yourself. But spend an hour in meditation on Christ. Go, Beloved, to your most private place of seclusion. Sit down and picture Christ in the garden—think you see Him there, sweating, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Then view Him standing in Pilate's Hall. Behold Him with His hands bound, His back streaming with blood! Then follow Him till you see Him coming to the hill called Calvary. Think you see Him hurled backwards and nailed to the Cross. Then let your imagination, or rather your faith, bring before you the Cross lifted up and dashed into its socket, when every bone of Christ was jerked out of joint. Look at Him. Look at His crown of thorns and watch the beaded drops of blood trickling down His cheeks—

"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 over His body on the tree,
Then am I dead to all the globe,
And all the globe is dead to me."

I know of no means, under God, so profitable for producing faith as thinking of Christ, for while you are looking at Him, you will say, "Blessed Jesus, did You die for sinners? Then, surely, my Soul, His death is sufficient for you." He is able to save unto the uttermost all those who trust in Him. You may think of a doctrine forever and get no good from it, if you are not already saved. But think of the Person of Christ and specially of His death, for that will bring you faith. Think of Him everywhere, wherever you go. Try to meditate on Him in all your leisure moments and then He will reveal Himself to you and give you peace.

None of us, not even the best of Christians, think and say enough of Christ. I went into a friend's house, one day, and he said to me, as a sort

of hint, I suppose, "I have known So-and-So these 30 years, without hearing anything of his religion." I said, "You will not know me 30 minutes without hearing something of mine." It is a fact that many Christian people spend their Sunday afternoons in talking about other subjects and Jesus Christ is scarcely ever mentioned. As for poor ungodly worldlings, of course they neither say nor think anything of Him. But oh, you that know yourself to be a sinner, despise not the Man of Sorrows! Let His bleeding hands rest on you! Look at His pierced side and, looking, you shall live! Remember, it is only by looking to Christ that we shall be saved, *not by doing anything* ourselves.

This brings me to close by saying to every awakened sinner—If you would have peace with God, and have it now, *venture on Christ*. We must venture on Christ, and venture wholly, or else we can never be saved. Yet it is hardly right to say *venture*, for it is no venture—there is not a grain of chance in it. He that *trusts* Himself to Christ need never fear. "But," someone asks, "how am I to *trust* Christ? What do you mean by *trusting in Christ*?" Why, I mean just what I say—fully trust on what Christ did for the salvation of sinners. A Negro slave, when he was asked how he believed, said, "Massa, dis is how I believe—I fall flat down on de promise, I can't fall no lower." He had just the right idea about believing in Jesus. Believing is falling down on Christ and looking to Him to hold you up. I will illustrate it by an anecdote which I have often told. A boy at sea who was very fond of mounting to the masthead, one day climbed to the maintop, and could not get down. The sea was very rough and it was seen that, in a little while, the boy would fall on the deck and be dashed to pieces. His father saw but one way of saving his life. Seizing a speaking-trumpet, he shouted, "Boy, the next time the ship lurches, drop into the sea." The next time the ship lurched, the boy looked down and, not at all liking the idea of throwing himself into the sea, still clung to the mast. The father, who saw that the boy's strength would soon fail him, took a gun in his hand and cried out, "Boy, if you don't drop into the sea the next time the ship lurches, I'll shoot you!"

The boy knew his father meant it—and the next time the ship lurched, he leaped into the sea. It seemed liked certain destruction, but out went a dozen brawny arms and he was saved. The sinner, in the midst of the storm, thinks he must cling to the mast of his good works, and so be saved. Says the Gospel, "Let go your own works, and drop into the ocean of God's Grace." "No," says the sinner, "it is a long way between me and God's Grace. I will perish if I trust to that. I must have some other reliance." "If you have any other reliance than that, you are lost." Up comes the thundering Law of God and declares to the sinner that unless he gives up every dependence, he will be lost. Then follows the happy moment when the sinner says, "Dear Lord, I give up all my dependence, and cast myself on You. I take You, Jesus, to be my one objective in life, My only trust, the refuge of my soul."

Can any of you say that in your hearts? I know there are some of you who can, but are there any who could not say it when they came here,

but who can say it now? Oh, I would rejoice if one such were brought to God! I am conscious that I have not preached to you as I desired, but if one such has been brought to believe and trust in the Savior, I rejoice, for thereby God will be glorified!

But, alas, for such of you as will go away and say, "The man has talked about salvation, but what does it matter to us?" You think you can afford to laugh at God and His Gospel today, but remember, men cannot afford to despise boats when their vessel is going down in a storm, although they may do so on land. Death is after you and will soon seize you—your pulse must soon cease to beat. Strong as you are, now, your bones are not made of brass, nor are your ribs of steel. Sooner or later you must lie on your lowly pallet and there breathe out your last. Or, if you are ever so rich, you must die on your curtained beds and must depart from all your enjoyment into everlasting punishment! You will find it hard work to laugh at Christ, then! You will find it dreadful work to scoff at religion, then, in that day when Death gets hold of you, and asks, "Will you laugh now, Scoffer?" "Ah," you will say, "I find it different from what I supposed. I cannot laugh now death is near me."

Take warning, then, before death comes! Take warning! He must be a poor ignorant man who does not insure his house before it is on fire and he must be the greatest of fools who thinks it unnecessary to seek the salvation of his soul till he comes to the last moment and is in peril of his life! May God give you thought and consideration, so that you may be led to flee from sin and fly to Jesus! And may God, the Everlasting Father, give you what I cannot—His Grace, which saves the soul and makes sinners into saints and lands them in Heaven!

I can only close by repeating the Words of the Gospel, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." Having said this, if I had said no more, I would have preached Christ's Gospel to you. The Lord give you understanding in all things and help you to believe, for Jesus 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.

CHRIST'S CARE OF HIS DISCIPLES
NO. 2616

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 2, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, EARLY IN THE YEAR 1857.

"If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way."
John 18:8.

WE need but hint at the circumstances under which these words were uttered. Our Savior was in the Garden of Gethsemane with His disciples when a multitude came with the officers commissioned by the High Priest to seize Him. He went boldly towards them and asked, "Whom do you seek?" They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." At His words, "I am He," "they drew back and fell to the ground," and then Jesus said to them, "I have told you that I am He. If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way."

Now, in a very simple manner, I shall try, first of all, to draw a few lessons from this occurrence and then, secondly, to bring out a great Truth of God which I think is foreshadowed in this utterance of our Redeemer.

I. First, let us CONSIDER THE LESSONS OF THE OCCURRENCE ITSELF. Our Savior said to these people, "If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way."

In this incident, our Master proved His own willingness to die. This word of His was a mandate so powerful that none of the disciples were seized, much less put to death. There was Peter, who had drawn his sword and cut off the ear of the High Priest's servant. We should naturally have expected that he would have been arrested, or smitten to the earth, but so powerful was the command of Christ that not a finger was laid upon His hasty-tempered disciple. Peter and John later went into the judgment hall—into the very teeth of our Lord's enemies—but, with the exception of a few jeers, they were allowed to go their way. John did even more than that, for he went within the range of the spears of the Roman soldiers and stood at the foot of Christ's Cross and wept—yet not a finger was laid on him, nor on any of Christ's disciples—not for lack of will, for, you remember, they seized a young man who left his garment in their hands, and fled naked—evidently supposing him to have been a disciple of Christ. This shows, then, the power of Christ's mandate that, in that hour of darkness, not so much as one of His disciples was maltreated, but all were allowed to go their way. If Christ, then, by His simple word, delivered His disciples, how much more could He have delivered Himself?

And in His not doing so, you cannot fail to see how willing He was to die. One word threw them to the ground. Another word would have hurled them into the arms of death! But our Savior would not speak the word which might have saved Himself, for He came to save others, not Himself.

There is something very courageous in the Savior's saying, "If you seek Me." You know that when Adam sinned, God had to seek the culprit, but, in this case, when Christ stood as the Surety for His people, instead of being sought, He seemed to seek His executioners! "If you seek Me," He said—and He put in an, "if," as though it were not so much their seeking Him as His seeking them—for He had come into their very midst to die. Our blessed Lord was well acquainted with the circumstances of His own death. He sat at the table, at the institution of the Lord's Supper on that memorable evening—why could He not wait and be seized there? But no, dauntless, "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" steps out and boldly faces His enemy! He does not wait to be attacked, but goes forth to meet death, to give Himself up for us. Scarcely any martyr has done such a deed as this! God has helped them to die when they have been delivered into the hands of their enemies, but our Savior goes to His enemies and says, "Here I am. If you seek Me, I have come to give Myself up. I will put you to no trouble in searching for Me. There is no necessity to hunt through the length and breadth of Jerusalem to find Me. Here I am. If you seek Me, I am ready to die. Take Me, I have no opposition to make. 'If you seek Me,' all I have to say is, 'Let these go their way.' As for Myself, I am willing enough to die!"

Learn, then, Christian, the readiness of your Master to suffer for you. He was no unwilling Savior. You have, sometimes, borrowed money from a friend and when you have taken it from him, it was a grief to you to accept it, for he looked upon you as a beggar, or even as a robber who had demanded spoil of him. But when you take Christ's favors, there is this sweet consideration with them, that they are all given willingly! The blood that you drink and the flesh that you eat, *spiritually*, is no dole of a strained benevolence, but the voluntary, munificent gift from the heart of Jesus to you and to your brethren. Rejoice, then, in the willingness of Christ to suffer for you!

In the second place, upon the very face of our text we read *the care of Christ towards His people*. "If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way." Oh, the agony of the Savior's heart at that moment! A friend in trouble is frequently forgetful—expect not a man in great grief to remember you—the heart is then so full of its own bitterness it has no time to think of others. I would pardon any man for not noticing me in the street if he were ill. I would easily forgive anyone for forgetting anything when loaded with pain and sorrow and surely, Beloved, we might have thought it not hard of Jesus if He had forgotten His disciples in His hour of grief! But mark how kind His heart is—"'If you seek Me'—I say nothing about how you should treat *Me*—but 'let these'—these disciples were the only ones He cared about. He cared not for Himself—'let *these* go their way.'"

Like the mother in the snowstorm who takes off her own clothes to wrap around her cold shivering baby—what does she care though the cold blast should find out her inmost soul, and though her body is frozen like ice, if her baby but lives? Her first thought, after she is restored to consciousness, when she has been well-nigh benumbed to death, but chafed to life by kindness, is concerning that baby! It was even so with Jesus. "Let these go their way."—

"When Justice, by our sins provoked,
Drew forth its dreadful sword,
He gave His soul up to the stroke
Without a murmuring word.
This was compassion like a God,
That when the Savior knew
The price of pardon was His blood,
His pity ne'er withdrew.
Now though He reigns exalted high,
His love is still as great.
Well He remembers Calvary,
Nor lets His saints forget."

They are all remembered, all borne upon His heart and still cared for. Therefore you are cared for, you lamb of the flock! You are cared for, poor Ready-to-Halt! You are remembered, Miss Despondency! You are regarded with the eyes of love, timid Mr. Fearing! Though you stumble at every stone, yet your Savior's love fails not! He remembers you, for He cared for His disciples in His hour of greatest sorrow.

In the next place, learn from this incident *our Savior's wisdom*. When He said, "Let these go their way," there was wisdom in it. How? Because they were not prepared to suffer and it would have been unwise to have allowed them to suffer, then, even if they had been prepared—for if they had suffered, then, it would have been thought that at least they shared the honor of our redemption—therefore Christ would have none but thieves upon the mount of doom, lest any should suppose that He had a helper! He tread the winepress alone and of the people there were none with Him. Besides, these disciples were but infants in Divine Grace—they had not received the plenitude of the Spirit. They were not fit to suffer. Therefore Christ said, "If you seek Me, let these go their way." These raw recruits must not yet bear the brunt of the battle. Let them tarry until, by a greater experience and by greater Grace, they shall be made brave to die and shall, each of them in his turn, wear the crown of martyrdom. But not now. Christ spared His people at that moment since it would have been unwise to have allowed them to die then.

Learn also, Christians, from your Master's example, *the duty of putting yourselves in the way of suffering when you can save your Brothers and Sisters*. Oh, there is something glorious in the spirit Christ manifested in placing Himself first. "If you seek Me, let these go their way." That is the spirit all Christians ought to have—the spirit of heroic self-sacrifice for the disciples' sake. The mere professor says, "Let *me* go my way, seek another to be put to death." But if we were what we should be, we would, each one, say, "If you seek *me*, let *these* go their way." How many of us

would be ready to escape martyrdom and allow our Brethren to be burned! That would not be the spirit of our Master. How frequently you are ready to allow ridicule and shame to fall upon the Church if you can but be spared! How very frequently you will allow a Brother to perform a duty, at much inconvenience, which you could do without any trouble to yourself! Now, if you were like your Master, you would say, "'Let these go their way.' If there is sufficient ground for it, let me suffer. If there is a painful duty, let me do it. Let others escape, let them go free—lo, I will be, myself, a willing substitute for them in this matter." Oh, we need, everywhere, more of this spirit to be able to say to the poor saint, "Poverty is seeking you. I will, in some degree, bear the inconvenience that you may be spared. You are sick. I will watch you. You are in need. I will clothe you. You are hungry. I will feed you. I will stand in your place as far as I am able, that you may go your way."

These seem to me to be the lessons to be learned from our Savior's words, "If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way."

II. Now I come to notice, secondly, THE GREAT DOCTRINE WHICH THIS INCIDENT SEEMS TO FORESHADOW.

Will you please observe the next verse to the text? "That the saying might be fulfilled, which He spoke, 'Of them which You gave Me have I lost none.'" If I had quoted this passage in such a connection, you would have told me it was a misquotation. You would have said, "Why, my dear Sir, that has nothing to do with the disciples going their way or not!" Ah, but you would be quite in error if you talked like that! God's Spirit knows how to quote, if we do not. Very often we refer our hearers to a text which we think is exactly adapted and pertinent to the point before us when it has really nothing to do with the matter. And, often, the Holy Spirit quotes a text which we think unsuitable, but, on closer examination, we find that the very gist of it bears directly upon the subject. This was the beginning of Christ's deliverances which He would, through eternity, vouchsafe to all His children. Inasmuch as He then said, "Let these go their way," *it was the foreshadowing, the picturing of the greet deed of Substitution* whereby Christ would be able to say, "If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way." This point will appear dearly if we look at how Christ treats His people in Providence and at the bar of Justice.

It has always seemed to me as if *Christ had borne the brunt of Providence for His people* so that now all things work together for their good! When Christ came into the world, He did, in spirit, say something like this, "You wild beasts of the field, you are against My people—come, now, be against Me and, then, let these go their way." This was according to the ancient prophecy—"I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field and with the fowls of Heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground." Christ seemed to say, "Stones, you are enemies to My flock—take Me for their Substitute and be at enmity against Me. And then it shall be written, 'The stones of the field shall be in league with them.'" Christ, as it were, said to Providence, "Your black and bitter face shall look on Me. Your quiver, full of fiery darts, shall be emptied, and

they shall all find their target here in My bosom. Your dread aspect shall be seen by Me, but, 'Let these go their way.'"

Providence has indicted its evils on Christ and has now only good for God's people! "What? Only good, Sir?" you say, "why, I am poor, I am sick!" Yes, but it is only good, for that is good which works good. "All things work together for good to them that love God." Christ even says to kings, "Touch not My anointed and do My prophets no harm." "Let these go their way." The kings of the earth have been seeking Christ's Church, to destroy and to devour it, so Christ lets them find Him and put Him to death! And before He dies, He turns round to the kings, and says, "Touch not My anointed and do My prophets no harm." He speaks to trouble, to trial, to grief, to accident and to peril as He says, "You have sought Me, now let My people go their way." We would never have known the sweetness of the Psalm—

"He that has made his refuge God,
Shall find a most secure abode"—

if Christ had not died! The only way that you and I can have a refuge is by Christ bearing the brunt of our trouble. How does a shield save me? It saves me by bearing the blows, itself. The shield does, as it were, say to the swords of the enemy, "If you seek me, let this warrior go his way." So Christ, our Shield and God's Anointed, bears the brunt of Providence, the evil and the woe, thereof, and He now says to the mysterious dispensations of God concerning all the children of the Lord, "'Let these go their way.' Never, never work ill to them, but let them have only good."

The other thought is, *Christ has said this of His people even to Justice*. Before the Throne of God, fiery Justice once drew his sword and went out after sinners, to find many and to cast them into the Pit. His sword thirsted for the blood of all that had sinned. But there stood a chosen multitude, reserved by love and chosen by Grace, and Justice said, "They are sinners. I will have them, I will sheathe this sword in their hearts, for they are sinners and they must perish." Then Christ came forward and asked him, "Whom do you seek?" "Sinners," answered Justice. Then Jesus said, "They are not sinners. They were sinners, once, but they are now righteous, clothed in My righteousness. If you seek the sinner, here am I." "What?" said Justice, "are You the sinner?" "No, not the sinner, but I am the sinner's Substitute. All the sinner's guilt was imputed to Me. All his unrighteousness is Mine and all My righteousness is his. I, the Savior, am the sinner's Substitute. Take Me." And Justice accepted the substitution, took the Savior, crucified Him, nailed Him to that Cross whose agonies we commemorate at the Communion Table. In that hour Jesus cried, "If you seek Me, let these go their way." Who are they that are to go their way? Why, the very men whose former way was one of iniquity and whose end would have been destruction if the curse had not been made to fall upon the head of Jesus!

"Let these go their way." Oh, that a wonderful sentence! I never knew its sweetness till I found the Lord, but I did know something of its power. Do you ask, "How was that?" Why, long before you know the Lord, you

have some of the power of the blood of Christ resting upon you. "How so?" do you ask? Why, do you not know it to be a fact that—

"Determined to save, He watched o'er our path,
When Satan's blind slaves, we sported with death"?

And so, some of the benefits of Christ's death were ours before we knew Him and before we loved Him! The reason why I was not damned before I knew the Savior was that He had said, "Let him go his way. I have died for him." You would have been in Hell these 20 years, Saint, for you were then unregenerate. But Christ said, "Let him go his way. If you seek Me, he shall go his way, sinner though he is." And now, when gloomy fears arise, and dark thoughts roll over our mind, let this be our comfort! We are still sinners—guilty and vile—but the same voice says, "Let these go their way." It is the "let" of *command*—and who can hinder when God lets in this sense? "Let these go their way." You are going up Bunyan's Hill Difficulty and there are lions at the top. Christians remember this message, "Let these go their way." You will, perhaps, get into Giant Despair's dungeon. Here is a key that will fit the lock—"Let these go their way." You will be tumbling about in the Slough of Despond—here is a stone to put your foot on to help you to get out—"Let these go their way." Why? Because they pray? No. Because they serve God? No—the mandate was given before they did either the one or the other. "Let these go their way" because Christ died in their place!

The day is coming, and shall soon be here, when you and I shall stretch our wings and fly away to the land that is very far off. I think I might picture in my imagination the soul when it has left the body. The Believer speeds his way up to his native city, Jerusalem, "the mother of us all." But at the gate one stands and he says, "Have you a right to admission here? It is written, 'He that walks righteously, and speaks uprightly; he that despises the gain of oppressions, that shakes his hands from holding of bribes, that stops his ears from hearing of blood, and shuts his eyes from seeing evil; he shall dwell on high.' Are you such an one?" "Ah," says the soul, "I hope by Grace I have been made so; but I cannot claim to have always been so, for 'I the chief of sinners am.'" "Then how came you here? This gate gives no admission to those who are sinners." While the angel is thus parleying, I hear a Voice crying, "Let these go their way" and, forthwith, the gates of Heaven are opened and every soul for whom Christ died enters into Paradise!

Come, Saint, close up this simple meditation by looking yonder. See Christ, with Justice, Vengeance, Wrath, all seeking Him. Lo, they have found Him! They have slain Him! He is buried! He has risen again! Oh, see them seeking Him and, as you sit down at His Table, think, "When they sought Him, they let me go my way." And what a sweet way it is! I am allowed to come to His Table of Communion. Why? Because they sought *Him*. I am invited to hold fellowship with Jesus. Why? Because they sought Him. I am permitted to have a good hope through Divine Grace and, more than that, "I know that when this earthly house of my

tabernacle is dissolved, I have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Why am I to go that way? Why? Because they sought *Him* and found Him! Otherwise, where had I been now? My place might have been on the alehouse bench, or, perhaps, in the seat of the scorner. And what would have been my prospect? Why, that, at the last, I would be in Hell among the fiends and the lost spirits of the Pit! But now I tread the paths of righteousness and the ways of Grace. Oh, let me remember why I do so—it is because they sought You, O precious Lord of mine! They sought You, my dear Redeemer and my God! They sought Your heart and broke it! They sought Your head and crowned it with thorns! They sought Your hands and nailed them to the tree! They sought Your feet and pierced them! They sought Your body, they slew and buried it! And now, though the roaring lion may seek me ever so much, he cannot devour me! Never can I be torn in pieces, never can I be destroyed, for I carry with me this sweet passport of the King of Heaven, "Let these go their way."

O child of God, take this with you for your safe conduct everywhere! When men travel abroad, they carry with them a permit to go to this town and the other. Take this little sentence, Brother or Sister in Jesus, and when Unbelief stops you, draw it out, and say, "He has said, 'Let these go their way.'" And when Satan stops you, hold out to him this Divine Mandate, "Let these go their way." And when Death shall stop you, take out this sweet permit from your Master, "Let these go their way." And when the Throne of Judgment shall be set and you stand before it, plead this sentence, plead it even before Your Maker, "My Master said, 'Let these go their way.'"

Oh, cheering words! I could weep them all out, but I will say no more. I hope many of you will enjoy the sweetness of them while we gather around the Lord's Table, in obedience to His gracious command, "This do in remembrance of Me."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 17; 18:1-9.

John 17:1. *These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to Heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Your Son, that Your Son may also glorify You.* Jesus is going forth to die and He knows it, yet He prays to His Father, "Glorify Your Son." There was no way of His coming to that Glory except by passing through tears, blood, agony and death. He only asks that He may be glorified in what He is about to do and suffer—and He is ready for it all—"Father, the hour is come; glorify Your Son, that Your Son may also glorify You."

2. *As You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.* In that saying of our Lord's we have an explanation of what He did by His redemption. There was a universal aspect of it—"You have given Him power over all flesh." There was a special design in it—"That He should give eternal life to as many as

You have given Him." Sometimes, two views of the same thing may appear to contradict each other, but when we are taught of God, we soon discover that they do not really do so, and that a grand Truth may be contained in the two descriptions of it. Christ had, by virtue of His death, power over all flesh, but it was for a distinct purpose—"that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him."

3. *And this is eternal life, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.* By this, then, dear Friends, we can know whether we have eternal life or not. Do we know the Father? Do we know Jesus Christ as the Messiah, the Sent One? Are we resting in that blessed knowledge? If so, He has given us eternal life.

4, 5. *I have glorified You on the earth: I have finished the work which You gave Me to do, And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself with the Glory which I had with You before the world was.* In deep humility, Jesus had laid that Glory aside for a while. He had tabernacled in human flesh—and when He spoke these words, the time was approaching when—

"All His world and warfare done,"

He would go back to His pristine Glory with something more added to it.

6. *I have manifested Your name unto the men which You gave Me out of the world.* They had not, all of them, clearly seen that manifestation. Jesus had to ask the question, "Have I been so long with you, and yet have you not known Me, Philip?" Still, that was not the fault of the manifestation. Christ had manifested the name—that is, the Character—of God unto those who had been given to Him out of the world.

6. *Yours they were and You gave them to Me; and they have kept Your Word.* We might have expected that the verse would end, "and I have kept them." But their keeping God's Word is the evidence that Christ *has* kept them! Whenever a soul loves the Word of God, delights in the teaching of Christ, glories in those things which the world calls dogmas—as if they were so much dog's meat—when you and I can feed upon these things—when every utterance of Christ is dear and precious to us—that is good evidence of our being called out of the world and separated unto Christ! It is one of the marks of Divine Grace which Jesus works in those whom the Father has given Him. "Yours they were and You gave them to Me; and they have kept Your Word."

7. *Now they have known that all things whatever You have given Me are of You.* The Father gives Christ the Truth which Christ gives to us. The Father gives Christ the souls which Jesus keeps until the day of His power. There is mutual communion between God the Father and His blessed Son—let us never say a word that might look as if we did not understand the Oneness, the everlasting and Infinite Oneness—which there is between the sacred Persons of the Divine Unity.

8. *For I have given unto them the Words which You gave Me.* You know how men talk against "verbal Inspiration." Yet Christ says, "I have given unto them *the Words* which You gave Me." Many are trifling with the

teaching of God's Word as if it were of no importance at all. Not so Christ! "I have given unto them the Words which You gave Me."

8. *And they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from You, and they have believed that You did send Me.* Firmly do we believe this and in our heart of hearts we accept every part of the teaching of Christ, no matter what it is. I hear people say, sometimes, "Oh, but that is not essential!" There is a great deal of mischief hatched out of that egg! O Friends, it is essential that Christ's disciples should treasure whatever He has said! Never trifle with that part of the Word of God which seems to be less essential to salvation than another portion, for if it is not essential to salvation, it may be essential to your comfort, or your holiness, or your strength, or your usefulness. And if it be essential to God's Glory, let us never trample it in the mire, or in any way dishonor it. Who am I that I should say, "This which God has spoken is important, but that other is not"? It does not do for us to presume to judge the Word of God—we should rather let the Word of God judge us.

9. *I pray for them.*—Blessed Words! Christ prays for His own people. "I pray for them." *I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me.* In that last hour, just before His Passion, His thoughts were separating the precious from the vile and His prayer ascended for His own people. "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me."

9, 10. *For they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours and Yours are Mine; and I am glorified in them.* It is a wonderful thing that Christ should be glorified in His people! Can it be that He shall be glorified in *me*? Dear child of God, you sometimes sit in the corner and think to yourself, "How insignificant I am! The Church on earth would not miss me if I were taken away. And the choirs of Heaven cannot need me." Oh, but your Lord is glorified in You! If you are one of His chosen and redeemed people, in your very weakness and need He finds opportunity to glorify His strength and His fullness! He knows the truth about this matter and He says, "I am glorified in them."

11. *And now I am no more in the world.* He was going away. He has now gone.

11. *But these are in the world.* We know we are, do we not, Brothers and Sisters? We have a thousand things, some of them very painful and humiliating, to remind us that we are still in the world.

11. *And I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one, as We are.* Oh, what blessed keeping is that—to be kept in spiritual oneness! I do not expect to see the people of God in visible oneness, but as there was a secret, invisible Union, most real and most true, between the Father and the Son, so there is, at this time, a secret union in the hearts of all Believers, most deep, most real, most true! I may never have seen that good friend before, but as soon as we begin to talk of Jesus and His love, if we are the living children of the living God, the bond of unity is felt at once by both of us! "One is your Master, even Christ; and all you are brethren."

12. *While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name: those that You gave Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled.* What a blessed Shepherd is this who never lost a sheep! Judas crept in among the flock, but he was never truly one of the flock. He was never a son of God. He was "the son of perdition" all along. Christ has kept all His sheep and all His lambs—and He will do the same, dear Friends, even to the end.

13. *And now come I to You and these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves.* What an unselfish Savior! His heart is ready to break with His impending sufferings and yet He prays for us, that we may be filled with His joy! I suppose that it is true that the Man of Sorrows was the happiest man who ever lived. "For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame." And, notwithstanding His boundless and bottomless grief, there was within Him such communion with God, love to men and the certainty of His ultimate triumph that kept Him still joyous above the seas of tribulation! He prays that that same joy may be fulfilled in us. May God graciously grant it to all of us who believe in Jesus!

14, 15. *I have given them Your Word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the Evil One.* There is a reason for God's elect being allowed to remain in the world. They are never left like wheat in the field, to perish through the damp and cold, or to be devoured by the birds of the air. Oh, no! We are left for God's Glory, that men may see what the Grace of God can do in poor frail bodies. We are left for the service of Christ's Church, that we may be here for a while to carry on the cause of God, to be the means of comforting the little ones and to seek the conversion of sinners. We are to be like salt to prevent putrefaction. We are God's preventive men, to prevent as much of the evil as we can—and we are to fight with the evil that cannot be prevented and to seek to overthrow it in Christ's name.

16. *They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.* Many, nowadays, say that we ought to blend the Church with the congregation and that it is a great pity to have any division between them. A great many good people are outside the Church—therefore try to make the Church as much like the world as you can! That is a silly trick of the devil which the wise servants of God will answer by saying, "To whom we give place for subjection? No, not for an hour!" There must always be a broad line of demarcation between the Church of Christ and the world—it will be an evil day when that line is abolished. The sons of God took to themselves wives of the daughters of men, but that kind of union brought mischief with it, and it will always do so.

17. *Sanctify them through Your Truth: Your Word is Truth.* We cannot afford to give up God's Inspired Word because it is a means of our sanctification. If this is taken away, it is not such-and-such a dogma, as they call it, put into the background, but it is the Truth of God that would

sanctify us which is discarded, it is God's own Word that is flung to the dogs! And that must never be.

18, 19. *As You have sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they, also, might be sanctified through the Truth.* "I set Myself apart unto holiness, that they, also, might be set apart unto holy uses through the Truth."

20. *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them, also, which shall believe on Me through their word.* Our Lord knew that the little circle around Him would grow into a multitude that no man can number, out of all nations, kindreds, people and tongues—so He prayed for all whom His Father had given Him.

21, 22. *That they all may be one as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that You have sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are One.* The Church will never know her true Glory till she knows her perfect oneness—the One Church will be the glorious Church!

23. *I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.* That is a grand expression—"You have loved them, as You have loved Me." What? With the same love? It is even so—*a love without beginning*, a love without change, a love without bounds, a love without end! "You have loved them as You have loved Me."

24-26. *Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory, which You have given me: for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world has not known You: but I have known You, and these have known that You have sent Me. And I have declared unto them Your name, and will declare it: that the love in which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them.* This blessed prayer was heard by the Father. All of it must be fulfilled—and untold blessings do and shall come to us through this intercession of our Lord. Blessed be His holy name!

John 18:1. *When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the brook Kidron, where was a garden, into which He entered, and His disciples.* Our Lord could not cross that "brook Kidron" without being reminded of the time when David went that way in the hour of his sorrow, though He knew that He had to face a far greater trial than that of David. The very brook would remind Him of His approaching Sacrifice, for through it flowed the blood and refuse from the Temple.

2. *And Judas, also, which betrayed Him, knew the place: for Jesus often resorted there with His disciples.* The place of our Lord's frequent retirement for private prayer was well known to Judas, who had often gone there with his Lord and his fellow disciples.

3. *Judas, then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons.* How completely the traitor must have been in the power of Satan—and how hardened and callous he must have grown, that he could

lead, "there," the men who were going to arrest the Savior! Truly it was by wicked hands that Christ was taken, crucified and slain! Yet, unconsciously, these evil men were carrying out "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." How strangely were they equipped for their deed of darkness! "With lanterns and torches and weapons." They were coming to the Light of the world bearing "lanterns and torches!" And armed with "weapons" that they might use against "the Lamb of God." If He had wished to deliver Himself, all their "weapons" would have been in vain—and their "lanterns and torches" would not have revealed Him, even with the help of the full moon, which was probably shining at the time.

4, 5. *Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth and said unto them, Whom do you seek? They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said unto them, I am He. And Judas also, which betrayed Him, stood with them.* Notice, dear Friends, that the word, "*He*" is in italics, showing that it is not in the original. Our Lord here twice used the name of Jehovah, I AM—as He did on certain other memorable occasions. It was most fitting that, as He was going out to die, He should declare that it was no mere man who was about to suffer on the Cross, but that, while He was truly Man, He was also "very God of very God."

6. *As soon, then, as He had said unto them, I am He, they drew back and fell to the ground.* The simple utterance of His name drove them from Him and drove them to the earth! What would have happened if He had put forth His almighty power?

7-9. *Then He asked them again, Whom do you seek? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told You that I am He. If, therefore, You seek Me, let these go their way: that the saying might be fulfilled, which He spoke, Of them which You gave Me, I have lost none.*

—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.

SHINING CHRISTIANS
NO. 2617

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 9, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 1, 1882.

"Arise shine; for your light is come, and the Glory of the LORD is risen upon you."
Isaiah 60:1.

I BELIEVE that this text refers to the Church of God. I am aware that it is considered by some to have a special reference to Israel, but I also know that "no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation," and that this particular Scripture may be most justly and fitly applied to every child of God. I pray the Holy Spirit to bear witness to that fact, even while I am speaking, by applying the text to all Believers who are assembled here. The first word of it is, "Arise." There is much need, dear Friends, that we should be, sometimes at least, awakened. Here are persons in the light—the day has dawned upon them, but they are fast asleep—so the trumpet is sounded in their ears and the watchman shouts aloud, "Arise, shine; for your light is come." I believe that there are some Christians who have wasted a large part of their lives for need of somebody or something to wake them up. There is more evil worked in the world by lack of thought than by downright malice and there is more good left undone through lack of thought than through any aversion to the doing of good! Some Christians appear to have been born in the land of slumber and they continually live in their native country of dreams. They occasionally rub their eyes and suppose themselves to be wide awake, but they are in the Enchanted Ground and though they know it not, they are little better than sleepwalkers most of their days.

All of us may be conscious that, at times, we are startled into something better than our ordinary mode of life. We have been going on quietly, doing some good, but, all at once, we have been impressed with the value of an immortal soul—we have been struck with the nearness of eternity by the sudden death of a friend, or we have been awakened by the special application to our conscience of some eminently-powerful Scripture—or even the sight of some grievous sin has shocked us into holy action.

For a time we have been quite different from our ordinary selves and those who have observed us have thought that there was more in us than they ever expected to see. Certainly more came out of us than we had ever seen before, but, alas, we have soon slipped back into our former quiescent state until, perhaps, something else of an unusual character has happened and startled us again. I have known some in whom, happily, the process of awakening has been a really effectual one. There

came, once, to a meeting I was addressing, a Brother who had been, for years, earnest after the ordinary fashion of Christian young men—and the Lord so guided me that I spoke about the usefulness that some men might acquire if they would but bestir themselves. I urged the desirability of some attempting to preach in the street, who might find their gifts abundant for that work,

Well, this young man went back and tried what he could do for Christ and God greatly blessed him. That young man was Mr. W. P. Lockhart, of Liverpool, who is, at this moment, pastor of the church meeting in the Toxteth Tabernacle, a large edifice erected by the people whom he gathered by his preaching! Our friend has, with much acceptance, occupied this pulpit and been of great service to our denomination. But, if it had not been for God's awakening him under that particular address, he might have remained just the ordinary trader that he was, serving the Lord in a very proper way, but nothing noteworthy might have come of it. I wonder whether there is anybody here who needs, as it were, to be dragged out and impressed into the service of Christ—some Brother, perhaps, from Liverpool, or Manchester, or Birmingham, or Glasgow, or from this great London, itself—someone who is "not slothful in business," yet not "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Such a man may be, really, a fine fellow with great capacity, but most of his talent is latent and dormant so far as the Word of Cod is concerned.

My dear Friend, you have been sluggish quite long enough. Is it not time for me to cry to you, "Arise," and is it not time for you to lift yourself up from that couch of indolence, and say, "Yes, I have been hearing sermons for a good long while. I have been a member of a Christian Church and have been attending communions for many years. It is high time that I ceased from sloth and began to do something to show that God is with me and in me and, by His Grace, so it shall be"? Happy will the preacher be if that shall be the result of calling your attention to this first word of the text, "Arise." We all need to hear the clarion call of Charles Wesley's hymn—

"Soldiers of Christ, arise
And put your armor on!
Strong in the strength which God supplies
Through His eternal Son!"

It is high time that all of us did arise. "Let us not sleep, as do others." Loved by our God from all eternity, predestinated unto everlasting life, bought with the precious blood of Jesus, helped by the Spirit of God, and indwelt by Him, it is, indeed, time that we did something worthy of our pedigree, something worthy of the price with which we have been bought, something worthy of the love which set us apart unto itself before the world was! I have no doubt that I am addressing some who do not lack grace—God has given them that. They are not without a saving knowledge of the truth—they do know Christ, but what they need is somebody to start them on a higher and nobler career. There are some who are just like Elijah's sacrifice, with the wood all laid in order on the altar, and the bullock on the wood. O Lord, send the fire from Heaven, that the sacrifice may be completely consumed! Let the man be given to you as a whole burnt offering unto the Most High! It may be that this poor weak hand

may strike the match that shall set that sacrifice on a blaze. So may it be, and God shall have all the Glory!

The text says, "Arise," but then it goes on to say, "Arise, shine; for your light is come, and the Glory of the Lord is risen upon you." In these words I see three things for me to do. First, *to remind you of your privilege*—"your light is come." Secondly, *to awaken you to your service*—"Arise, shine." And then, thirdly, *to rally you to your work*, by a few remarks which the context will suggest.

I. I am now speaking only to the people of God. There are some of you whose light has never come, but you are in darkness even now. The Lord have mercy upon you, but, to God's own people who have believed in the Lord Jesus, this is my first message, REMEMBER YOUR PRIVILEGE. Your light has come!

Remember, first, *out of what darkness that Light of God has delivered you.* You are no longer in the darkness of sin, the darkness of spiritual ignorance, the darkness of spiritual death. Neither are you any longer in that darkness of distress and despair which might be felt. You are now in the Light of God, but think a little while of what your state of darkness used to be. It is not so many years ago that there was a young man who did not know his right hand from his left in spiritual things. He put darkness for light, and light for darkness, bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter—but that man, not as young now, knows the Savior—he has learned the evil of sin and he has rejoiced in all the delights of pardon! Was that young man yourself? If so, you may well prize your present privileges. It is not so long ago that there was a man who was in the darkness of soul-agony. His sin was heavy upon him. God's hand pressed him till all the moisture of his being seemed to exude and he was like a plant withered in the long droughts of autumn. He cried to the Lord, but for a while he received no response to his petitions. He begged for mercy, but it did not come.

Now, that same person is sitting here, thankful that he is pardoned and that he knows how he has been delivered from the wrath of God! And he blesses that Divine Substitute who took upon Himself his sin and with it that sin's penalty, and so delivered the guilty one from the wrath to come. Oh, what a change there is in that young man! That young man is yourself, is he not? Sister, it has been the same with you, too! Oh, what a difference there is between the knowledge which God the Holy Spirit has imparted to you—and the blindness in which Satan held you captive! Oh, the difference between the misery into which conviction and despair had brought you—and the peace and restfulness which you feel at this moment through faith in Jesus Christ, your Lord and Savior! Is it not true that your light has come, and do you not bless God for it? Oh, I think you must and that you will use that blessed fact to help me in my argument when I come to enforce the lesson of the text—"Arise, shine; for your light is come." If God has given you light out of such horrible darkness, it well becomes you to shine to His praise as brightly as you can!

Please notice, next, that *this light, which God has given you, is His own Glory* . "And the Glory of the Lord is risen upon you." Oh, but that is wonderful—that God would not only give us light, but that that light should be His own Glory! Creation is a part of God's Glory, but it is only

a moonlight Glory compared with that of Redemption! God, in the gift of Jesus Christ, displayed the whole of His Nature. Creation is not a canvas large enough for the whole image of God to be stamped upon it. Byron speaks of God's face being mirrored in the sea, but there is not space enough for the face of Deity to be fully reflected in the broad Atlantic, or in all the oceans put together! The image of God is to be fully seen in Jesus Christ, and nowhere else, for there you behold attributes which Creation cannot display. Creation can manifest love, power, wisdom and much else, but how can Creation manifest justice, and justice lying side by side with mercy, like the lion and the lamb? It is only in Christ that you can see this wondrous sight—God hating sin with perfect hatred, but yet loving sinners with much more than the tenderness of a mother towards her child!

It is upon you, dear Friend, that this light of the Glory of God has fallen. In your history, in your case, the Glory of God's attributes has been illustrated. You have seen it, yourself, in a measure, and others are also to see it in you. Your light has come, the Glory of the Lord has risen upon you. Therefore, God's Glory is to shine through you and in you, and by you, and through you God shall manifest Himself to angels and principalities and powers in the ages yet to come! I confess that I am talking about what I do not fully understand. I am quite out of my depth here. I see the light of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, but to describe it is quite impossible. When I first saw the electric light, if you had asked me what it was like, I could have only told you something about its candle-power or its brilliance in comparison with gas, but I could not have made you understand it. But what is the electric light compared with the glory of the sun to one who sees it for the first time? And what are all the suns that could ever be created compared with the wondrous blaze of the Glory of God? Yet such a marvelous light as that has fallen upon you, my Brother, my Sister—"the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

There is also this blessed thing to be said about this Light of God—*you will never lose it*. I dwell upon that thought for a minute, that you may rejoice in it. Read the 30th verse. "Your sun shall no more go down, neither shall your moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended." The light that God has given you will never be taken away from you! Ah, you have feared a good many times that it would be, but it never has and it never will! You have put your hand before your eyes and then you have thought that the sun was blotted out, but it was not. Clouds have sometimes arisen between you and your God, but the light of His everlasting love has gone on shining all the while and so it always will. We bless God that we have not to preach to you of temporary salvation, a salvation that saves people for a quarter of a year, or that saves them for a few years and then away they go back, again, to the world! No, no, our comforts may be slower in the making than are those of others, but they last when they are made, for they are made by the Grace of God! We are not saved by a sudden jump into something—we know not what—but by a new creation, by a new birth, by a total and radical change. Now, if the Light of God has risen upon you in that way, so as to change your very heart

and the whole nature of your being, that Light will go on shining forever! Drink in that thought. You have, by Grace, laid hold of that which you will never lose and One has laid hold of you who will never let you slip out of His grasp, for it is written, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand."

I must not get on that glorious theme of the Final Preservation of the Saints because it is one that always sets my heart leaping with delight whenever I turn to it! But I say to you that if you take away from me the Doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints and all that is involved in it, I have not anything left that is worth keeping! I should not care about the Gospel if that essential feature of it were gone. That Truth of God seems to me to be the very soul of it—everlasting love making an everlasting covenant and taking the objects of that everlasting love into everlasting union with Christ and giving them everlasting life by virtue of that union with Him! So, Believer, that light of yours will never burn out—it shall shine on forever and ever. "Your light has come" and it shall never go away. Oh, joy, joy, joy! Let God be praised continually for such a blessed gift as this!

Now I must leave that part of my subject, only asking you to turn it over in your minds and to rejoice if the text is true of you, "Your light is come." I wish that some here who have been in the dark till now, might know it to be true in their case, and each one be able to say, "I do believe! I will believe in Christ Jesus as my Savior." If you do, your light has come!

II. But I am going to speak further to those who know that their light *has* come. Dear Friends, as soon as you have received this light of the Glory of God—this very same light that makes Heaven what it is—this light which never will be dim and which you will never lose—I want to push you on to my second point, which is this, TO AWAKEN YOU TO SERVICE. "Arise, shine; for your light is come." A man cannot shine if he has not any light, but as soon as ever he has the Light of God, what is he to do? Why, shine, of course! He must not put away his light as in a dark lantern, but the moment he receives it, he is bound to show it!

First, my dear Friend, since your light has come, shine *by holy cheerfulness*. I am very sorry whenever I meet with Christians who have no joy. I am most of all vexed with myself whenever my own joy burns dimly, for we who have the light of the Glory of God ought to have shining faces. We have been forgiven! We are God's children! We are on the way to Heaven! Then, surely, if anybody's mouth ought to be full of laughter and if any tongue should be tuned to sweetest music, it should certainly be ours! There are none who have such a right to lead perfectly happy lives as Christians. I know that there are some who I cannot doubt are good people, but who are a very surly sort of folk. Dear Hearts, they will be all right when they get to Heaven, but I would not like to meet a Heaven full of them if they are in Heaven as they are here! There are some persons who never can be content. Providence never pleases them. The weather is always wrong. Their dinners are always ill cooked—nothing goes right, nothing has gone right with them for years—and they are very snappish and snarling.

This style of living will not do, my Brother! "Arise, shine." I would like to lay those words on your breakfast plate tomorrow morning. Before you go out to business, put this passage between two pieces of bread and butter, "Arise, shine; for your light is come." It may be that you will wake up in the morning rather gloomy and you will say to yourself, "I have to go out and battle with the world again." Take this text, "Arise, shine; for your light is come," and say to yourself, "I must shine. Come, come, come, come, come! I must not let myself get down in the dumps, I must not begin the day mourning. God has given me light, so I must and I will shine to His praise and Glory." May God help you to do it, for that is one way in which we can adorn the Gospel of Jesus Christ, our Savior, by the cheerfulness of our deportment!

The next way of shining is *by a gracious godliness*. True Christians ought to shine by their lives. The stars do not say anything, but they keep on shining. Did you look up at the sky, the other night, and see Jupiter hard by the moon and Saturn apparently just a little way off? There has been a wonderful beauty about various planets during the past month—perhaps never was the sky more interesting than it has been of late, but never a word was said among the shining bodies in the heavens! I kept company with the pole star, I think, for 12 long hours as I was traveling home from the South of France I kept seeing him out of the carriage window. He never said a word to me all the time, but one thing he did do, he continued shining! And I also gazed at all the stars of Ursa Major, as I remained wakeful the whole night long, but not a syllable did they say to me. They do not need to speak, for they shine! In like manner, you Christian people who cannot talk—the women especially. I mean that you cannot *preach*, you are not allowed to preach—I want you to shine. Some people seem to think that there is no shining without talking, whereas the very best shining is that of Christian women, who, if they have little to say, have a great deal to *do*. They make the house so bright with heavenly grace and decorate it so sweetly with the flowers of their cheerful piety, that those round about them are won to Christ by them! Therefore, shine, dear Brothers and Sisters, by your gracious godliness, for so you will bring Glory to God!

Then, thirdly, shine *by zealous earnestness*. We do not often meet with people who are too much in earnest. I can only thank God that I hear, in certain places, an outcry against fanaticism. We have been such a long time without it, so we may be almost glad to have a little of it, especially as the so-called fanaticism is probably only zeal thoroughly awakened. If there are some people who seem to be wildly enthusiastic, let us imitate them! We have had so much slumbering, so much coldness, so much death, that we can put up with a little extravagance and excess. Still it would be better if, judiciously, one went steaming straight ahead in the service of God with a resolution never to be beaten, never to cease every earnest endeavor to make known the Gospel of Christ—and to reflect the Light of God which has shone upon us from above! Oh, for a zealous earnestness! May God pour it out upon this Church yet more abundantly! May you go into your Master's service with all your might and main, and may the Spirit of God, as a spirit of burning, rest upon everyone of you far more abundantly than in the past!

This would lead, dear Friends, to your shining *by a secret bravery*. There are some dear people whom I must encourage to be a little more bold. We have some friends, here and there, to whom I could hint, only very gently, that they are quite forward enough, but there are many good people who always keep in the background. They might do so much for Christ if only they had a little courage! Do, dear Friends, break through the ice this year! If you have felt that you ought to do something for your Lord, and yet have never begun to do it, begin at once! Do you ask, "What is the best way to try to serve Christ?" Well, I think the best way is to *do* it. "But how should I begin?" Well, I would begin by *beginning*! "When shall I begin?" Begin now! This very hour. "But in what way?" In the first way that comes to hand—"whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might," for our text says, "Arise, shine." If you have the Light of God, emit it, distribute it, scatter it somehow or other! Have pluck—that is a plain English word, but I do not know how to put my meaning better. Have pluck enough to come out and be a Christian—do not always be like a rat behind the wall, but come out and acknowledge yourself on Jesus Christ's side and promote the everlasting Gospel wherever you have the opportunity!

So runs the text, "Arise, shine; for your light is come."

III. Now, in closing, I want TO RALLY YOU TO THIS SHINING BY ONE OR TWO ARGUMENTS.

And, first, *by the world's great need*. Read the second verse of this chapter—"Behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon you, and His Glory shall be seen upon you." Oh, the darkness and the death shade still over the people! Over this London of ours there hangs a pall of deadly nightshade, a darkness that may be felt! Then, little glowworm, even you must not hide your light! Sparks, tiny sparks, you that have but one little flash, you must not conceal it, for the night is dark, and the darkness deepens! The devil, drunkenness and lewdness, Romanism in all its forms, false doctrine, infidel teaching, skepticism in a thousand shapes—all these make night hideous and further deepen the dense shades of darkness! You who have the light—show it! If it is not the Light of God, say so, and renounce it. But if it is the Light of God, in the name of the eternal God, good man, I pray you, let your light be seen! Arise, shine; for darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people!

Shine, next, because of *the great results that will surely come of it*. If all Christians were once to shine—and that means if you were to shine, and your neighbor, and I and my neighbor—if all of us were to shine, then it would come to pass that Gentiles would speed to the Light of God, and kings to the brightness of the rising! Then, from all lands and from the sea, would converts come, till nations should crowd to Christ like flocks of doves flying to their dovecotes. And the Church of God would be multiplied beyond all count. We often keep from work for Christ because we despair of its success. We neglect effort because we are afraid that effort will be useless. Doubt no longer! He that bids you sow intends to give a harvest and He will bless your sowing if you will but sow in faith. We may well be encouraged to do so when we think such thoughts as these, "Shine, for your light shall be seen; shine, for your light shall be useful to

save lives like a lighthouse on the rock—useful to direct others home, like the cottager's candle in the window to guide her husband to his resting place." Shine, then, because of the good that will come of it to the world.

Shine, next, because of *the great blessing that it will bring to the Church,* for, if all Christians rally to serve God as they should, then shall the Church have the days of her great glory—"The glory of Lebanon shall come unto you, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of My sanctuary; and I will make the place of My feet glorious. The sons, also, of them that afflicted you, shall come bending unto you; and all they that despised you shall bow themselves down at the soles of your feet; and they shall call you The City of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through you, I will make you an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations." A shining Church will be a happy Church, but if we do not shine, we will be miserable. But if we will shine for Christ, we shall see great prosperity for the Church of the living God!

And, best of all, we must do this because of the argument used in the 21st verse. I will not speak upon it, I shall leave it with you—"*that I may be glorified."* It is God your Father who says that! It is Christ who has bought you with His blood who says it! It is the Holy Spirit who is your indwelling Comforter who says it! There is no argument that eloquence could state, or that reason could suggest that can have such force with a loyal heart as this—"that I might be glorified." Do you not pray, "Father, glorify Your Son"? Now, in the power of the Holy Spirit, prove the sincerity of your prayer by giving out whatever light God has given to you and, since your light has come, arise and shine, as you have ability, from this very hour! The Lord grant it, dear Brothers and Sisters, to me and to you, for His name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 103; ISAIAH 59:16-21; ISAIAH 60:1-16.

What more appropriate passage than the 103rd Psalm can we read, on this first Sabbath night of another year, to express the gratitude of our thankful hearts? I will only interject a sentence here and there, but let me beg all to try to worship God in the spirit while we once more read together the familiar words of this much-loved Psalm.

Psalm 103:1. *Bless the LORD, O my soul.* O my Soul, be not thoughtless and wandering, but give this holy hour to the sacred employment of praising and blessing your God!

1. *And all that is within me, bless His holy name.* Let every string of my heart be now touched by the fingers of the Holy Spirit, let every faculty of my being wake up to praise the Lord—"and all that is within me, bless His holy name."

2. *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.* They are very memorable. They deserve to be "engraved as in eternal brass." To be forgetful of them will be a base form of ingratitude. Come, my memory, wake up! "Forget not all His benefits." Here are a few of the choicest of

the gems in this cabinet—the jewels are too many for me to exhibit them all.

3. *Who forgives all your iniquities.* The Lord has done it and continues to do it—"who forgives"—not some of your iniquities, but all of them, so that you can sing, "The depths have covered them: there is not one of them left." Why, there is enough to sing of in that, alone! We need never leave off praising God for that one mercy of forgiven sin —it is the first of God's favors and prepares us to enjoy the rest.

3. *Who heals all your diseases.* Many times has my heart had to sing about the gift from my God of this precious pearl, "who heals all your diseases," and some of you have also had occasion, in your restored health, to praise the Lord for this privilege. But, oh, to think that, every day, He is healing us of the great disease of *sin*—our very afflictions being, often but the lancet and the knife with which He is removing from us the foul taint of evil. "Who heals all your diseases."

4. *Who redeems your life from destruction.* You have a life that can never die, for He has redeemed it. Then, bless your Lord for Redemption! If you do not sing for this cause, the very stones in the street will cry out against you!

4. *Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies.* What a crown! What gems are on it! No gold or silver can ever equal this—"loving kindness and tender mercies." Every child of God is a crowned king—shall we not, for this, also, sing aloud, "Bless the Lord, O my soul"?

5. *Who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.* If you enjoy sweet inward contentment and satisfaction with your God, you must praise Him, "who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's" With renewed strength, can you, will you, be silent? I am sure you cannot, but you must use all the strength that God has given back to you to His praise and Glory.

6. *The LORD executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.* Blessed be His name for this! He is the supreme Governor of the world and He will rectify all its wrongs in His own time and way. There is a great power that makes for righteousness and that power is on the Throne of God. "The Lord reigns."

7-9. *He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel. The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will He keep His anger forever.* Let your heart keep praising the Lord as we read every one of these sentences, for there is a theme for everlasting music in each line of this Psalm. "He will not always chide," Hallelujah! "Neither will he keep His anger forever." And again we say, "Hallelujah !"

10. *He has not dealt with us after our sins.* Blessed be His holy name!

10. *Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.* Forever adored be His long-suffering and His tender mercy.

11. *For as the Heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.* Therefore praise Him—

"Loud as His thunders, shout His praise,
And sound it lofty as His throne!"

If He is such a God as this, you can never overdo His praises. It is impossible to exaggerate your exaltation of Him!

12. *As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.* They are gone! They are removed to an infinite distance—they will never come back. It is not possible that they should ever again be laid to our charge.

13. *Like as a father pities his children, so the LORD pities them that fear Him.* Do not stop the music of thanksgiving. Let your hearts, if not your voices, keep on saying, "Bless the Lord! Bless the Lord!" Oh, what pity you and I have needed! What tenderness and compassion! And—

"Such pity as a father has
Unto his children dear"—

such pity has God had upon us!

14-16. *For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.* As a congregation, we have had most grievous proof of this Truth of God during the last two or three months. It has seemed to me as if everybody was dying. Our ranks have been thinned wondrously—

"And we are to the margin come,
And we expect to die."

17-19. *But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep His Covenant, and to those that remember His Commandments to do them. The LORD has prepared His Throne in the heavens; and His kingdom rules over all.* Do not believe the people who attribute sickness and death to the devil, and so try to make it appear that God has left His Throne. He still reigns! He reigns forever, "King of kings, and Lord of lords, Hallelujah!" "Bless the Lord, O my soul!" "The Lord has prepared His Throne in the heavens; and His kingdom rules over all."

20-22. *Bless the LORD, you His angels, that excel in strength, that do His Commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His Word. Bless you the LORD, all you His hosts; you ministers of His that do His pleasure. Bless the LORD, all His works in all places of His dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.* For well you may, O my Soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you! Lead the song and may the whole world join you in joyful adoration of the Triune Jehovah, Father, Son and Holy Spirit! Now we will read the passage that especially relates to the message I have to deliver to you presently in my Master's name. Turn to Isaiah 59, verse 16—

Isaiah 59:16. *And He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore His arm brought salvation unto Him; and His righteousness, it sustained Him.* Man's extremity was Christ's opportunity. There was no one left to save poor fallen manhood, no one who could lift a hand or a finger for our rescue. Therefore, Jesus came, and fought, and bled, and died, and conquered on our behalf.

17-19. *For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon His head; and He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak. According to their deeds, accordingly He will repay fury to His adversaries, recompense to His enemies; to the islands He will repay recompense. So shall they fear the name*

of the LORD from the west, and His Glory from the rising of the sun. Christ came once and He is to come a second time because He will be again needed here. And when He returns, He will ease Himself of His adversaries, and speedily win the victory for truth and righteousness. Then shall the whole earth know what Christ can do.

19-21. *When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him. And the redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, says the LORD. As for Me, this is My Covenant with them, says the LORD; My Spirit that is upon you, and My Words which I have put in your month, shall not depart out of your mouth, nor out of the mouth of your seed, nor out of the mouth of your seed's seed, says the LORD, from henceforth and forever.* The Church of God shall have the Spirit of Truth and the Word of Truth ever abiding in her midst. God will not break His Covenant by withdrawing His Spirit from His Church. The Redeemer has come and His work of Redemption is accomplished. The Spirit also has come, but His work is not as yet done—it is being performed from day to day and the Spirit will never be withdrawn while any part of His ministry remains unfulfilled. The consequence of all this is the Glory of the true Church of the living God. There are better days coming for the cause of Christ and of His Truth. Listen, and be encouraged, all you that are heavy of heart!

Isaiah 60:1-3. *Arise, shine; for your light is come, and the Glory of the LORD is risen upon you. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon you, and His Glory shall be seen upon you. And the Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.* The Church of God is one, whether it is among Jews or Gentiles. That poor Church seemed abandoned and forsaken. Dark days came and it looked as if the Church must even cease to exist, but it did not. Now God has brought in many sinners of the Gentiles and He will bring them in much more numerously in the future times of refreshing. They shall come in armies, in hosts, in nations—and the Church of God shall be exceedingly glorious!

4,5. *Lift up your eyes round about and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to you: your sons shall come from far, and your daughters shall be nursed at your side. Then you shall see, and flow together, and your heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto you, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto you.* All the strength of the land and of the sea—the armies and the navies shall come and prostrate themselves before the Church of God. The supreme power on earth shall yet be the Christ in the midst of His Church.

6. *The multitude of camels shall cover you, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come.* The Easterns shall bow before the King; they that of old had some light shall come to the yet greater light. In those holy lands which afterwards became so unholy, there shall yet be a return to the Truth of God and all the false prophets shall be expelled. Where Mohammed's crescent has cursed the nations, there shall shine again the Sun of Righteousness, with healing in His wings.

6, 7. *They shall bring gold and incense; and they shall show forth the praises of the LORD. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto*

you, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto you: they shall come up with acceptance on My altar, and I will glorify the house of My Glory. Wandering tribes of wild Arabs shall come and bow before Christ, and lay their wealth at His feet.

8. *Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?* The growing Church sees a greater multitude coming to her than even the populous East could muster. From where do they come? Listen, Brothers and Sisters, and look around and see for yourselves.

9. *Surely the isles shall wait for Me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring your sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD your God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because He has glorified you.* In ships from these remote islands, and from countries that were dimly spoken of, in the East, as, "lands of Tarshish," far away, great multitudes were to come to Christ. Are they not coming today from this Ultima Thule, this distant land beyond the pillars of Hercules, are they not coming to Christ "as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows"?

10-16. *And the sons of strangers shall build up your walls, and their kings shall minister unto you: for in My wrath I smote you, but in My favor have I had mercy on you. Therefore your gates shall be continually open; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto you the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve you shall perish; yes, those nations shall be utterly wasted. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto you, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of My sanctuary; and I will make the place of My feet glorious. The sons, also, of them that afflicted you shall come bending unto you; and all they that despised you shall bow themselves down at the soles of your feet; and they shall call you, The City of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through you, I will make you an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. You shall also drink the milk of the Gentiles, and milk the breast of kings: and you shall know that I, the LORD, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.* In God's good time, all this shall come to pass.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK— 103 (VERSION III), 889, 957.

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

"STRAIGHTWAY"
NO. 2618

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 16, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 15, 1882.

"They straightway left their nets, and followed Him."
Matthew 4:20.

"THEY straightway left their nets." Immediately, without hesitation, without question. At once, on the spot, then and there, instantaneously—at the Master's call they "left their nets, and followed Him." It was one mark of our Savior's authority and power that. when He commanded, men obeyed. Your memories will help you to recall many instances in which persons and even inanimate things instantly obeyed when Christ gave them the word of command. Satan and legions of demons, diseases of every kind and even winds and waves—those things which usually seem to be lawless and wild always gave heed to the Law which issued from His lips. When He spoke, it was done, for His Word was with power.

This is a mark of the effectual calling by Divine Grace—whenever it comes, men are led "straightway" to obey it. I may call you as long as I please, yet you will not come to Christ for all my calling. But if Christ shall call you by His Spirit, you will come. Yes, and come "straightway." When the command of Christ is applied to the soul with Divine energy, there is an immediate yielding of the heart to Him and His Law is obeyed. Judge yourselves, therefore, dear Friends, whether the Word of God has come with power to you or not, for if it has not come with almighty power, but you merely hear it as I speak it, you will say to me, as Felix said to Paul, "Go your way for a time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for you." But if the Truth of God proclaimed shall be accompanied with the energy of the Holy Spirit, then, as soon as the Lord says, "Seek you My face," your heart will respond to Him, "Your face, Lord, will I seek." Pray to the Lord, you who have heard and answered the call of His Spirit, that the same call may be given to others, and be effectually applied to them, to the praise of the Glory of God's Grace.

I am going to use, in two ways, one word in my text—"straightway." First, I suggest that this word, "straightway," should be a motto for all Christians. All disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ should take that word as their guiding star! Secondly, *let all seekers take if as their motto, too*—"straightway." If you would find Christ, seek Him at once—"straightway."

I. First, then, let this word, "straightway," be THE MOTTO OF EVERY DISCIPLE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

When I preached, many years ago, in the cathedral at Geneva, after the service was ended, the Brothers presented me with a large bronze commemorative medal of John Calvin, on which is this passage, "He endured, as seeing Him who is invisible," which was a most suitable motto text for him. Upon the covers of his works are these words, which are also truly descriptive of the man, *"Prompte et sincere in opere Domini"*—"Prompt and sincere in the work of the Lord." I was pleased with both those mottos and my prayer, then, was, and still is, that they may both be mine as well as Calvin's. I pray that I may endure, as seeing Him who is invisible, and that I may also live to earn that other commendation, "prompt and sincere in the work of the Lord." Sincere, I trust we all are, who love the Savior, but we are not all as prompt as we are sincere! You know, in business, people like a man of prompt payments upon whom they can always depend. We also like persons to be prompt in carrying out their promises, but, oh, to be prompt in the work of the Lord, so as to not only do the right thing, but to do it at the right *time*—and that right time almost always is the time suggested by my text, "straightway." "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might," and do it at once. Leave it not to lie by among the lumber of good intentions, but if you are prompted to do it, set to work and do it immediately!

"Straightway," then, is to be the motto of the Christian, first, *in obeying Christ's Laws*. The moment, my dear Friend, that you find yourself in the Kingdom of Heaven by faith in Christ, endeavor to be a loyal, Law-keeping subject. Mary said to the servants at the marriage feast of Cana, concerning her Son, "Whatever He says unto you, do it." And I say the same. "Whatever He says unto you"—He whom you have now taken to be your Lord and King—do not merely talk about it, or think of it, but do it and do it at once! "I counsel you," said Solomon, "to keep the King's commandment." Take Solomon's advice and let me add as a rider to it, "Keep the King's commandments *straightway*." As soon as ever a man becomes a Believer in Christ, the next step for him to take is to be *baptized*. The two things are constantly joined together in the New Testament. Our Lord said, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." When the eunuch came to a certain water, he asked Philip, "What does hinder me to be baptized?" Philip answered, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." I add to that, "If you believe with all your heart, you not only *may*, but you are *bound* to do it according to the Law of the Kingdom of Christ!" Do you tell me that you cannot see it to be your duty? I would advise you candidly to search the Scriptures and find out the teaching and practice of our Lord and His Apostles concerning Believers' Baptism. If, after that, you still say the same, I must leave you to your Master—I am not your judge.

I hope there will be no question with any of you who love the Lord about the next point. It is the duty of every Believer in Christ to come to His Table. He said, "This do in remembrance of Me." He bids us gather in His name and commemorate His death in the breaking of bread and the pouring out of wine. So how can you say that you are His obedient disciple if you have lived, to now, in total negligence of that great commemo-

rative ordinance? "Straightway," Friend—"straightway" obey *both* the ordinances of the Kingdom—and delay no longer!

"Straightway," also, unite yourself with the people of God. Christ's servants—Christ's blood-bought ones—are called "sheep." Sheep are gregarious creatures—they always go in flocks. Join yourself to your Brothers and Sisters somewhere. If they are evilly spoken of, go and be evilly spoken of with them. Do not attempt to fare better than the rest of your Master's servants, but take up Christ's Cross and follow Him. Give yourselves first to Christ and afterwards to us, or to some other Christian Church, according to the will of God. And do this "straightway!" And whatever else appears to be the Law of the House—and the Law of Christ's House is very plainly written in the Gospels and the Epistles—obey the Law of the House—and obey it "straightway."

Next, dear Friends, make this word, "straightway," your motto *in entrance upon Christian service*. Do you ask, "When should a Believer begin to work for Christ?" I answer, "Straightway." There are no laborers for the Master who are so useful as those who begin to be useful while they are young. Sometimes God converts men in mid life, or even in old age, and uses them in His service, but, still, I venture to assert that Church History will show that the most useful servants of Christ were those who were caught early and who, from their youth up, bore testimony to the Gospel of Christ. At any rate, as soon as *you* are converted, I pray you to begin to do something for Jesus so as to get your hand in for future labor. In the case of some old people who have been professors of religion for years, but who have done next to nothing for Christ, I find it very difficult to ever stir them up at all. When I do get a saddle on them, they are very restless creatures, like a horse that has never been broken in—but if I break them in while they are colts, they get used to their work, it becomes a delight to them and they would not be happy unless they had something to do for the Lord Jesus! If Christ has redeemed, you, Beloved, and you know it, get to His service "straightway." Let there be no delay whatever, but at once commence to labor for your Lord!

I remember having a considerable share of sneers and rebukes from some who thought themselves very wise men because I began preaching at the age of sixteen. I was recommended to tarry at Jericho till my beard had grown, and a great many other pieces of advice were given to me, but I confess that I have never regretted that I was a "boy-preacher" of the Word of God—and if I could have my time over, again, I would like to do just the same as I did then. O you young men who are just converted, try to serve God at once, for, if you idle away your years until the boy has ripened into a full-grown man and his beard adorns his chin, I question whether he will not be "a lazy-beard" all the rest of his life. No, no—get to work at once—"straightway!" Find out your niche and stand in it. Ask the Master to allot you your portion of the great harvest field and go to work in it with all your might. And keep on at it, God helping you, till your dying day. "Straightway," then, is to be your motto concerning the service of the Master.

And while I give this motto for the commencement of our whole life-work, I beg to propose it to all Christian friends as a suitable motto for each work as it arises. If there is anything good to be done, when shall I do it? "Straightway." There is no time like the present for the fulfillment of a good design. How many excellent projects have been postponed for a time and, therefore, never carried out for the benefit of men! Now, dear Friends, especially you who have your children around you, if you ask me, "When shall I commence to train them for God?" I answer, "Straightway." "But they are so young." Well, never mind how young they are, you will find bad tempers and many other evils springing up from the hearts of even the smallest children! And the time to repress them is as soon as they appear. You will find that Satan will take the earliest hour that he can find for doing his deadly work. He is always up early in the morning and he will try, if he can, to sow the tares in that little plot of ground. Take as early an hour as Satan takes and ask God, by His Grace, that you may teach your child the things of eternal life "straightway." I would say to you, dear Mother, if you have never talked with your daughter about her soul, do it this very night. "But," you reply, "when I get home, she will be in bed." If so, then wake her up, but do talk and pray with her tonight! And then let her fall asleep again. Begin this holy service at once if you have neglected it until now.

And you, dear Father, if you have never yet personally spoken to your children about the Savior, you cannot tell the power you might have over them if you would do so. I shall never forget when my father spoke to me, as a boy, about my soul, and asked me to pray. I remember with what shamefacedness I declined the attempt—and how wounded I felt, in my heart, to think that I was not able to pray. I had my groans and crying unto God in secret, but they were deepened and intensified by the question that he had put to me. O dear parents, do begin at once, that they may become God's children while yet they are your children! A little boy once said, "Father, please take me to Chapel with you tonight." "My Dear," the father replied, "you are too young. I will take you when you grow older." "Father," answered the child, "if I don't go now, very likely when I get older, I shall not want to go at all." And, alas, that is often the case! Take them, therefore, while they are yet little, where they may get a benefit to their souls and "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Then, with regard to any individuals with whom you may meet, take care to speak to them about the Savior. If you ask me when you shall speak to them, I answer, "Straightway"—tomorrow morning, across the counter, or in the workshop, or whenever there is a quiet minute or two that you can use. Perhaps the friend to whom you think of speaking may be dead if you delay until the end of the week, so go to him "straightway." There is a minister now preaching the Gospel, and God is greatly blessing him, who says he owes his earnestness to a remark I made in a certain College that I visited. I was asked, as we say, "on the spur of the moment," to speak a word to the students, and I said, "Well, Brothers, I have nothing to say to you except this—whenever you see the devil, have

a shot at him." The young man told me that he remembered that sentence and it had often been of service to him. So I say it again to every Christian here—Whenever you see the devil, have a shot at him! If you see sin, rebuke it! If you see doubt, try to remove it! If you see darkness, bring the Light of God to bear upon it—and do it "straightway," for opportunities are flying and will soon be gone unless we seize them as they come near us!

There is a lamentable story told of a man in a boat being carried down a waterfall and drowned and, an hour after, one who had been standing with others on the shore said, "I could have saved him if I had thought of it before." They asked him, "How would you have done it?" And he laid before them a perfectly feasible commonsense plan that might have been easily carried out and, I think, he went home very miserable, for all the spectators of the disaster seemed to say, "Why did you not think of it before? You are wise too late." So, when certain men have died, I think some of you must have known what it was to say, "Oh, I wish I had spoken to him! That Gospel which saved me might have been a blessing to him, but now he is gone and I have thought of the remedy too late!" Do not let it be possible to have such regrets, but, whenever you find an opportunity of speaking about salvation to others, do it "straightway."

And, once again, let this word, "straightway," be your motto with regard to your own soul. Whenever you find your spiritual life declining, your faith growing weak and your love getting cold, go back to Jesus and ask for quickening—and do it "straightway." Always nip these things in the bud! Most diseases must have the remedies applied at once if they are to be cured. If they are allowed to remain unchecked for a time, they gather strength to the great injury of the patient. The moment you feel that you have not the power in prayer that you once had, go "straightway" to Jesus! The instant you realize that you have not the love for souls that you once had, fly away to Jesus and tell Him all about your sad condition. Oh, if we always took heed to our backsliding as soon as it began, how much of sorrow and how much of sin might be spared! So, dear Friends, if I am describing your case, I implore you to renew your communion with your Lord—get back to Christ, ask for pardon at His hands—and do all this "straightway."

Dear Christian Brothers and Sisters, this is the motto for you, "STRAIGHTWAY!" Let it flame like a lightning flash through the place! Whatever ought to be done, let it be done at once, without even a second thought. O Beloved, will you still delay in such a matter of urgency as this? Then let me further plead with you for a minute or two before I turn to the other part of my subject. Imagine the day of battle and a colonel issuing the order to his regiment to march into the midst of the fray. Do the men hesitate? Do they stand still? Then there is mutiny in the ranks! "Forward!" he said, but the troops stay where they are. They are disloyal. How can the battle be won by men who act like that? But see how the faithful soldiers in the army behave. The command is given, "Charge!" It matters not how many are their foes—away they go like a whirlwind—who can stop them? Let it be so with you, dear Friends. Good soldiers of

Jesus Christ must not hesitate, but must obey the Captain of their salvation "straightway."

Have you a vivid imagination? Can you, in your mind's eye, picture an angel up yonder before the burning Throne of God? The voice of Jehovah has said to him, "Descend to earth." Can you imagine Gabriel staying there, with his finger on his lips, deliberating whether he shall fly or not? Do you not often ask that you may do God's will on earth as angels do it in Heaven? Then, how can you hesitate, even for an instant, to do what you are clearly commanded by Christ to do? Let me ask you another question—Did Christ delay His great mission of mercy? No, for it was with Him as good Dr. Watts sings—

"Plunged in a gulf of dark despair
We wretched sinners lay
Without one cheerful beam of hope,
Or spark of glimmering day.
With pitying eyes, the Prince of Grace
Beheld our helpless grief.
He saw, and oh, amazing love,
He ran to our relief!
Down from the shining seats above
With joyful haste He fled,
Entered the grave in mortal flesh,
And dwelt among the dead."

There was no hesitating in Christ! Then, shall there be any in you who are called by His name?

Further, did God lose any time before He saved you when you cried to Him? Does He delay to bless you now? If there is a seeming delay, it is Infinite Wisdom that makes you wait, only that the blessing may be all the more valued by you when it comes! But He is always ready to bless you. He stands prepared to give you all that you need. I charge you, therefore, by all these reasons, take this word, "straightway," as your motto. You are, yourself, a dying man, and if you do not accomplish your life-work "straightway," when will you perform it? Others are dying all around you! If you are not made a blessing to them "straightway," when may you hope to do them good? If anything is right, do it at once—there cannot be a good reason for any delay! Why should you ask for second thoughts about a plain duty? In such a case, first thoughts are best, and those first thoughts should be followed by immediate and energetic action. "Straightway!" Write it on your banners! Let it wave in the breeze, for victory will be given to the Church of Christ when she advances to the fight with all her hosts "straightway!"

II. Now I ask the prayers of all Believers while, during the rest of my discourse, I try to speak to those who are "out of the way." In this large congregation there must be many who are not saved. It is idle to suppose that we are, all of us, the children of God and the servants of Christ, for we are not. There are some here who are not saved—but among them there are, I hope, some who wish to be saved. Well, if you really desire to be Christians. If the Holy Spirit has made you start seeking the Savior, I ask you to put this word into your bosom and bear it home with you, "straightway," for IT IS A MOST SUITABLE MOTTO FOR ALL SEEKERS.

Are you seeking the Lord? Again, I pray you, *hear the Gospel* "straightway." The Gospel is not preached everywhere. Some go to certain places of worship because the music is admirable. Others because the preacher is clever. Some because it is considered "respectable" to go to such a place. I charge you, if you have not found Christ, care for nothing but finding Him! And where will you find Him except where He is fully and faithfully preached? If He is the head and front of the minister's discourses, then go there—not where they preach the "modern gospel," which would not save a mouse—but where Christ on the Cross is lifted high as the one hope for the salvation of sinners! Go there, go at once, and make a habit of going where Christ Crucified is constantly proclaimed! Remember how the Lord gave the invitation to the heavenly feast even by the mouth of the Prophet Isaiah. "Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money; come you, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And you labor for that which satisfies not? Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

But when you are hearing the Gospel, be not content with merely hearing, but *repent* "straightway." You cannot have Christ and keep your sins, therefore, give up all evil at once! May God's blessed Spirit now separate you from your sins! Have you been inclined to drunkenness? Turn the intoxicating cup bottom upwards once and for all, and have done with it! What has been your particular besetting sin? Though it were dear as your right eye, pluck it out! Though it were precious as your right arm, cut it off and cast it from you! And do it "straightway." "Oh," you say, "I will see about it tomorrow!" Then, I know that God's Spirit is not effectually calling you, or you would be ready at once to turn from every false way, to Him, and then the time of your deliverance would have come. Therefore, I repeat—Repent "straightway." But then you must also *pray* "straightway." Plead with the Lord just where you are now in your seat, or, if you desire quiet and retirement, pray as soon as you reach your house—yes, pray in the street, on the road home! Lift up your heart to God and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" But do it at once, or, as the text says, "straightway."

Above all, *believe in the Lord Jesus Christ* "straightway." That word, "straightway," is implied in every Gospel exhortation! We are not sent to preach to our Hearers, "'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ tomorrow!" No minister of Christ is authorized to say, "Put off faith in Christ for a week." No, but our message is, "Behold, *now* is the accepted time! Behold, *now* is the day of salvation!" Believe in Jesus and believe in Him *now*! And if the Spirit of God is really working in your spirit, you will be moved to believe *now*. If it is only my talk and my persuasion, you will still say, "Tomorrow." But if it is God's Word, it will go with power to your heart and you will say, "Now, Lord, even now, bring my soul out of prison, that I may trust Your Son and praise Your holy name." For a man to delay, who

has nothing to depend upon but the breath in his nostrils, is the height of folly! For a man to delay, who stands on the brink of the grave, when that grave will conduct him to Hell, is indeed terrible!

Delay is dangerous, but I confess that I do not understand men and their criminal carelessness. I daresay you read in the papers, a short time ago, about the destruction of the Swiss village of Elm. What an extraordinary affair it was, that the people should have had it reported to them, for months, that the forest which overhung the village was often seen to tremble when the rocks were blasted at the quarry. They knew that, sooner or later, the mountain above them would inevitably come down and crush them! Yet they went to church on the Sunday morning, and were gathered together as comfortably and quietly as if nothing alarming could ever happen to them. Many of you, no doubt, remember the story and, therefore, I need not tell you how, all of a sudden, the great forest above the village seemed to come down upon them—and when stalwart men from the upper end of the village hurried to help their fellow countrymen, they had scarcely arrived before the mountain, itself, descended in one tremendous mass and buried the whole village in a moment! The people knew that such a calamity as that would certainly happen—they had been warned of it again and again—yet they persisted in living there.

I do not know how men could get so accustomed to impending danger as they did, and I must blame the foolhardiness of those who willfully ran such a risk of destruction. But it is nothing compared with the madness of man and women who see the great mountain of Divine Wrath trembling and about to fall upon them, to crush them to all eternity and yet they go on with their games and occupy themselves with their sports, just as if there were no God to judge them, no Heaven to be sought, no Hell to be shunned! They sin as if iniquity were mere child's play and there were no punishment for it in the world to come! Delay is dangerous at all times, but I feel moved to say that it is especially dangerous for some of you just now, for, as the Lord lives, unless you find salvation within another week, you will be in the world where it shall be impossible for you either to seek or to find it! If not saved soon, you will be lost forever. Delay is dangerous—therefore escape for your lives and escape at once!

Besides, delay will be a great loss to you. If I were unsaved at this moment and in my right senses, I would wish to be saved here and now. I do not know what has been done with the two men who have been lying in prison for the last two years under what is believed to be a false accusation. We heard that the Home Secretary had fetched them up from Chatham to Pentonville to Millbank and that they were brought up in their own clothes, with a view to setting them free to-morrow, but I guarantee you, if I had been in their position and had been asked, "Would you prefer to be set at liberty on Saturday, or wait till Monday?" I would have said, "Oh, set me free at once, straightway!" Any delay would be to my loss. Who wants to stay in prison on a Sunday when he can walk at large? Who wishes to be there five minutes longer than he is compelled to

be? And, in like manner, who would be unconverted five minutes longer than he needs to be? It is a loss to a man to be unsaved—even if he is ultimately saved, all the time that went before his conversion is just so long spent in prison—it is dead time, lost time! Therefore, let there be no delay in trusting Christ, for all delay is a loss.

And, besides, delay makes it more difficult to get into the way of life. A person, on a certain line of railway, wants to go North, but he gets into the wrong train and, therefore, travels South. After he has gone a little way, he puts his head out and says, "This is not the station that I ought to pass!" And, as the porters cry out a name altogether different from what he expected to hear, he exclaims, "Why, I am on the wrong train!" What does he do then? Go on and say, "Well, I will get out by-and-by"? Not he! If he is a man of business and needs to keep an appointment, he jumps out at the first station after he discovers his mistake, and he says, "Tell me, please, when is there a train back? I have evidently come South instead of going North, and I need to return as quickly as possible." My dear Friends, some of you are traveling on the wrong line and you have come to a station, tonight! It is not a station where you ought to be. Do not, I entreat you, go on to another in the same direction, but I pray God, by His Grace, that you may get out of the train in which you have been traveling on the down line, and say, "Which is the train for Heaven? I must get into it somewhere—first class, second class, third class, or in the goods wagon—I do not care where I am, as long as I do but get in, for I have made a mistake, and I would not continue to make it—for the longer I remain as I am, the more difficult will it be for me to get right."

Do you not also know, dear Friends, that every moment in which a man delays he is committing more sin? When I am not doing that which is right, I sin by omission. When a man neglects a duty for a week, how many times does he sin? "Once," you answer. Ah, no! It is his duty to do it now, but he has not done it, so that is sin. It will be equally his duty in five minutes' time, and every moment he puts it off, he keeps on committing sin upon sin! The longer he delays, he continues to sin. Have you ever heard the legend of one who had often delayed his repentance till he was taken into a forest where he saw an old man chopping sticks for his fire. He cut away till he had enough to make a large pile of firewood and then he tied the firewood up and stooped to put it on his shoulders, but it was too heavy for him to lift. The old man sighed, took his axe and cut down some more branches and added them to his bundle. But when he tried to take it up, of course it was still heavier than before! So the foolish old man, with many a sigh, went on cutting more wood and put that on the heap, and then tried to lift it, but of course it was heavier still! And the longer he delayed, the heavier the burden became. That is just your case, dear Friend, if you are delaying to repent—

"Longer wisdom you despise,
Harder is she to be won."

There is all the more sin to be repented of, there is the more hardness of heart to be overcome, so you are adding to the difficulty every moment that you delay! "Grandfather," said a little child, "the preacher talked about loving Jesus. Do you love Him?" "No, child," said the old man. "I

have never thought of those things, but I hope that you will while your heart is tender." "But, Grandfather, you will die soon. Please, won't you love Jesus?" "No, child," replied the old man, "my heart is too hard, now. It is no use for me to think about it." Many a man has said that! It is a great mistake, for the Lord can soften the hardest heart and bring the oldest man or woman to Himself. Still, there is great force in the grandfather's words and it is a blessed thing when we begin to serve the Lord early, for there is a hardening process that goes on every hour of delay, which I pray God, of His Infinite Mercy, to prevent by bringing every one of you to Jesus Christ "straightway."

Shall I tell you one thing more before I finish? It is this—whenever a man will not have Christ "straightway." Whenever he will not give up his sin "straightway." Whenever he will not believe in Jesus "straightway," that is a roundabout method of saying, "No," to Christ! The father in the parable said to the son, "Go, work today in my vineyard," and he replied, "I go, Sir." That is to say, "I am going, Sir. I mean to go. Give me just a little time to think it over. It is all right, Sir, I will go." But how does the parable put it? "He said, I go, Sir, and went not." It was an indirect way of saying that, after all, he did not mean to go. Alas, that is what I fear some of you will do tonight. You will say, "Yes, what the preacher says is quite correct. We should seek Christ and plead for mercy—and we will do so—by-and-by. Soon—not immediately. Of course we cannot be in a hurry about these things, but we will attend to them some day." I tell you, Sirs, plainly, that you will not! You are the sort of people who will not come to Christ! You have not the moral courage to say, "No," but you mean, "No," all the while! And if you said, "No," I would have more hope of you, for the rest of the parable runs thus—"He said to the other son, Go, work today in my vineyard. And he said, I will not." That was pretty plain. "But afterwards he repented, and went." Now, I would rather have you say, "I will not," and then afterwards go home and repent and come to Christ, than I would have you beat about the bush and say, "Oh, yes, yes, yes," thinking that you are complimenting Christ with your lying—I dare not use a milder term! That "yes, yes, yes," means that you will not!

Have you never noticed, when you have been collecting subscriptions, if you go to a person who does not say, "No," straight out, but says, "Well, let me look at your list—yes, what is the objective of it?" that he usually adds, "I have many calls. I will think about it"? I have known such people, "think about it," a very long while, but nothing ever came of all their thinking! You smile at what people do with regard to a subscription list—and it is, in some respects, a thing to smile over. But beware lest you do the same with your soul! Do not, I pray you, act like that towards the Lord Jesus Christ! Do not merely think about it, but *do* it! Go straight to Him and think of it afterwards—and you will then have to think, with joy—and delight, that the best day's work His Grace ever enabled you to do was this getting away to Christ and casting yourself on Him!

God bless you, dear Friends! May we all meet in Heaven, through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 25:1-13.

Verses 1, 2. *Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten virgins which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.* What a division this makes in the visible Church of God! Let us hope that we are not to gather from this that as many as half the professors of Christianity at any time are like these foolish virgins! Yet our Lord would not have mentioned so high a proportion if there were not a very large mixture of foolish with the wise—"Five of them were wise, and five were foolish."

3. *They that were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them.* They thought that if they had the external, it would be quite enough. The secret store of oil they judged to be unnecessary because it would be unseen. They would employ one hand in carrying the lamp, but to occupy the other hand by holding the oil-flask seemed to them to be doing too much—giving themselves up too thoroughly to the work—so they "took their lamps, and took no oil with them." They might just as well have had no lamps at all!

4. *But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.* Oil *in* their lamps and oil *with* their lamps. Lamps are of no use without oil, yet the oil needs the lamp, or else it cannot be rightly used. The light of profession cannot be truly sustained without the oil of Grace. Grace, wherever it exists, ought to show itself, as the oil is made to burn by means of the lamp, but it is no use to attempt to make a show unless there is that secret store somewhere by which the external part of religion may be maintained.

5. *While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.* Both the wise and the foolish fell into a state which seemed alike in them both. In the case of good men, Christ's delaying His coming often causes disappointment, weariness and then lethargy. And even the true Church falls into a deep slumber. In the foolish—the mere professors—this condition goes much further. There being in them no true life, the very name to live becomes abandoned and, before long they give up even the profession of religion when there is no secret oil of Grace to sustain it.

6. *And at midnight when things had come to the worst.* "At midnight"—the coldest and darkest hour, when everybody was asleep.

6. *There was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom comes; go you out to meet him.* That was a cry which startled everybody! None of the virgins could sleep when once it was announced that the bridegroom was coming. I wish, dear Friends, that we thought more of the great Truth of the Second Advent. The more often it is preached in due proportion with other Truths of God, the better. We still need to hear that midnight cry, "Go you out to meet Him."

7. *Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.* They could not sleep any longer. They were fairly startled and awakened.

8. *And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us some of your oil.* Ah, me! Now they began to value what they had, before, despised! They were foolish enough to think that oil was unnecessary, but now they saw that it was the one essential thing, so they cried to the wise virgins, "Give us some of your oil." And hear the dreadful reason—

8. *For our lamps are gone out.* I do not know any more terrible words than those, "Our lamps are gone out." It is worse to have a lamp that has gone out than never to have had a lamp at all. "'Our lamps are gone out.' We once rejoiced in them. We promised ourselves a bright future. We said, 'All is well for the marriage supper.' But 'our lamps are gone out,' and we have no oil with which to replenish them." O Sirs, may none of us ever have to lift up that mournful cry! On a dying bed, in the extremity of pain, in the depth of human weakness it is an awful thing to find one's profession burning low, one's hope of Heaven going out like the snuff of a candle!

9. *But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go you rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.* It is no easy matter to go and wake up the seller of oil when the midnight hour has struck. O you who are putting off repentance to a dying bed, you are foolish virgins, indeed! Your folly has reached the utmost height! You will have more than enough to do when you lie there with the death-sweat cold upon your brow, without then having to seek the Grace which you are neglecting to obtain today, but which you will value then!

10. *And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came.* While they were not there.

10, 11. *And they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.* Too late! So that they could not enter.

12. *But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.* "I never knew you," says Christ in another place, and this knowledge of His is always bound up with affection. He loves no heart that He knows not in this sense. Those whom He knows, He loves. Will He ever say to me or to you, dear Friend, "I know you not"? God grant that He never may have cause to do so!

13. *Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man comes.*

HYMN FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—416, 520, 492.

—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 CAPTAIN OF OUR SALVATION
NO. 2619

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 23, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 19, 1882.

"For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to Glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."
Hebrews 2:10.

OBSERVE, dear Friends, how glorious God is. The description given here by the Apostle contains but few words, and those nearly all little ones, but how full of meaning they are! "Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things." Here you have God set forth as being both the beginning and the end of everything! All things are *for* Him—to do His bidding, to accomplish His purpose, to act forth His Glory and this because all things are *by* Him—in their first creation, in their subsequent preservation and in all that is yet to come of them! Of whom speaks the Apostle this but of the Triune God, to whom be glory forever and ever? Of whom speaks He this—if we would be still more exact—but of the Father who has made His Son perfect in bringing many sons to Glory? It is the Father "for whom are all things, and by whom are all things."

And, my dear Brothers and Sisters, the Apostle was wisely guided by the Holy Spirit to give this title to the Father in this particular place. Sometimes, in prayer, men call God by one or another of His names and each name may be correct, yet it may not be well chosen for that special occasion. But you will notice that if the Holy Spirit describes either God the Father or the Lord Jesus by any term other than His usual name, the title is always very wisely chosen and is most appropriate in that place. Now, in the matter of our salvation, we need One, "by whom are all things," for none but the Creator can create us anew in Christ Jesus. No one who has less power than the Divine Preserver of men can keep us from falling. And none but the Divine Being who encompasses all things within the range of His Infinite mind, can guard us against the many terrible perils on the way to Heaven. If ever we are to be brought to Glory, it must be by the God "by whom are all things." And certainly, if we are brought there, as I pray that we all may be—it will be by Him "for whom are all things"—and we shall forever adore the mystery of His Grace which landed us safely on the heavenly shore!

Every part of the great plan of salvation sets forth the splendor of the Grace of the Most High God. What do we see in our election but His Grace? What do we see in our redemption but His Grace? What do we

see in our conversion but His Grace? What do we see in our justification, sanctification, adoption and final preservation but His Grace? By Him, in Grace as well as in Nature, are all things—and for Him, in Grace as well as in Nature, are all things. Unto Him belongs both the power and the glory, the two must always go together. He works all our works in us and to Him be all the praise, world without end!

We start, then, with this as a sort of keynote—that the great Father, who has purposed our salvation, is able to fully carry out what He has planned, for by Him are all things. And He also has an admirable reason for accomplishing it, because it will bring Him glory, and for Him *are* all things. If our salvation would degrade His name in any sense or respect. If the salvation of sinners would even obscure the severity of His justice, it might be a question as to whether it would ever be accomplished. But, since there is nothing about this work but what will bring Him honor and glory, we rest assured that, having put His hand to it, He will not withdraw His arm until He has fully accomplished His eternal purpose to the praise of the glory of His Grace!

Our text sets before us some most precious Truth concerning our Lord Jesus Christ and His people. First, here is *a high enterprise*—the bringing of many sons to Glory. In the second place, this enterprise is being carried out by *an ordained Captain*—there is a Captain of our salvation through whom the many sons are to be brought to Glory. And, thirdly, we are to notice *the becoming work of the Father upon Him who is Captain*. "For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to Glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

I. First, then, here IS A HIGH ENTERPRISE—the bringing of many sons to Glory.

I think that you will find the historical parallel of this enterprise in the Lord's great work of bringing the tribes of Israel out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, through the wilderness and into Canaan. The Lord, in His deliverance of His ancient people, gives us a type of what He is doing and will do for all His chosen. The exodus was not merely the bringing of the people out of Egypt into the wilderness, for then they might truly have said to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness?" But the whole transaction was not completed, the enterprise was not finished, until all those whom the Lord intended to bless had actually crossed the Jordan and had taken possession of the promised land. He led not the children of Israel merely out of Egypt, but He led them into Canaan—and His leadership of them through the desert is a picture and emblem of Christ's leadership of the many sons whom He is bringing to Glory. I want you to think of the salvation of the redeemed in that light.

To begin at the end, *the Lord Jesus is bringing many sons to Glory*, just as God brought His ancient people into Canaan. The ultimate destination of every Believer is eternal Glory. There is not one of us who will be perfect and complete until we stand at the right hand of God, even the Father. There is no secondary position where some of the redeemed may be satisfied to remain, but the many sons are all to be brought to "*Glory*."

That is the word—one of the biggest words that can be spoken by any mortal mouth. Do you know all its meaning? No, my Brothers and Sisters, you do not, and there is another word that comes before it—"The Lord will give *Grace* and Glory." Do you know all the meanings, even, of, "Grace"? No, you do not—yet you have tasted of God's Grace and if you know not all the meaning of that of which you daily partake, I am sure you do not know the meaning of that, "Glory," which you have not yet obtained.

Heaven is rightly called, "Glory." I do not doubt that it is a very glorious place. People have written books in which they have sought to give us some idea of Heaven as perfecting all the joys of our earthly domestic life. And artists have tried to depict the plains of Heaven, but the books and the works of art are equally worthy to be burnt, for they fall so infinitely short of what the reality must be that they are only a caricature and a mockery of what "Glory" must really be. No, Beloved, no tongue can tell what it is, and no pencil can depict the Glory of the place, itself, the Father's House, where the many mansions are—

"Eye has not seen it, my gentle boy—
Ear has not heard its sweet songs of joy!"

Nor shall your imagination be able to bring these things down to you, for there is a *spiritual* Glory which must far exceed all the glories of which you know anything on earth!

I think, also, that Heaven is called, "Glory," because its inhabitants follow glorious pursuits. What they are doing there all day long, I shall not attempt to guess, but we are told that "the Throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face and His name shall be on their foreheads." They will have enough to do to cast their crowns at His dear feet who gave them all the joy they have—and to make known to principalities and powers in heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God! Of this we are quite sure—all their pursuits will be glorious, there will be nothing low, nothing groveling, nothing selfish done in Heaven—certainly, nothing wearisome, nothing laborious that can bring sweat to the brow, again, that comes here because of the Curse. No, it is a glorious place where the happy dwellers are engaged in glorious pursuits!

And they also have glorious pleasures. They realize to the fullest what David said, "In Your Presence is fullness of joy. At Your right hand there are pleasures forevermore." Did you ever think—have you the power to conceive—what the pleasures of God must be? What is the joy of the Lord—the infinite satisfaction of the Eternal—the profound bliss of Him who is most blessed forever? It is that joy, that bliss, that peace of which they shall have a share, as the Master says to each one of them, "Enter you into the joy of your Lord." As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high is God's joy above our joy. Therefore we cannot attempt to describe it, but we can only say of it that the joy of Heaven is Glory! The bliss of Heaven is "from Glory to Glory" forever and ever!

And, as Heaven is a glorious place for glorious pursuits and glorious pleasures, so all there will be glorious persons. There is not one low or mean inhabitant of Heaven! There are many there who were despised on

earth—the lowly and the suffering and the persecuted—but they are no longer despised. God has put eternal honor upon them. They are all priests and kings unto God! The priestly garments they wear are more grand than Aaron's raiment of glory and beauty and in their royal robes they keep high holiday, where the sun goes down no more, and the days of their mourning are forever ended. It is all glorious and I do not wonder that Heaven is called, "Glory," and that we have so little said about it. There is just this great word—"Glory"—which by itself says more than I would be able to say if I kept you here till the clock tolled out the midnight hour!

This is the high enterprise of God, to bring His many sons to Glory. I call it a high enterprise, and so it is, for *He will bring them to Glory despite all difficulties*. Where do the redeemed begin their march? Down there, at the iron furnace, where they have lain among the pots, and where their slavery has been hard and cruel. Their march begins with Pharaoh to oppose them, but, with a high hand and an outstretched arm, God brings them up out of the bondage of Nature, and out of the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God! How gloriously does He lead them through the Red Sea and destroy their adversaries with the precious blood of Jesus, till the depths have covered them, and there is not one of them left! And the rest of the passage of His people, from that high day at the Red Sea onward till they reach Glory—what is it but a march of miracles, an ever-moving panorama of wonders? I do but speak of the experience of the true Christian when I say that he is opposed from within and from without and that he is his own greatest enemy—and that is not saying a small thing when I remind you that the world, the flesh and the devil are all leagued against him!

It is with push of pike that I make my way to Heaven, disputing with my fierce foe every inch of the road. Yet I shall win the day, for He, "by whom are all things," has undertaken to lead His sons to Glory—and He *will* lead them there! If they had to cut their way through a whole legion of devils, as when men reap their path through a thick cornfield, yet should they, everyone of them, pass through unharmed! If there were seven thousand Hells between them and Heaven, yet they would reach it in safety because He, "for whom are all things, and by whom are all things," has determined to bring them there! Yet it is no easy march and it will be no little glory that shall redound to Him who will lead us all through the wilderness and bring us to the Canaan which is above, that is, to "Glory."

I want you to notice, next, that this high enterprise on God's part is concerning *the bringing of "many sons to Glory*." In the second part of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, we read about Mr. Great-Heart, who had a tough task to lead those women and children all the way to the Celestial City. They caused him a deal of trouble and he is a picture of many a Christian minister. Some of us have not to go before a few faint-hearted pilgrims, but we have to lead hundreds, or even thousands! Every morning before breakfast, I have to kill a giant for somebody or other, and hard fighting it is! And as soon as ever I have killed him, I hear one of the dear children crying out that he is going to be eaten up alive by another, so that I

have to keep my sword always drawn! It is no easy task to be, under Christ, helping to bring some of these sons to Glory!

But think of the work that God has undertaken—to bring many sons to Glory—untold millions of them! I shall not attempt to use figures to represent the numbers of the saved, for I believe my Master's redeemed ones will be as the dew of the morning, as the drops of the spray, as the sands on the seashore and far excelling the starry hosts marshaled on the midnight plains. Many sons will be brought to Glory by the great Father. Sometimes, in the old days of war, there used to be a number of little ships wanting to cross the sea, but the privateers were on the watch, so the seamen were afraid to hoist the sail and get away from the shelter of the shore, for they would soon be caught by their enemies, like doves by the hawk. Well, what was done? There they lay, in port, until His Majesty sent down a man-of-war, perhaps two or three, to be a convoy. Then the little ships would all be safe—their crews need not any longer be afraid of the Frenchmen or the Spaniards. So is it with those who are under the protection of God. We, weak little vessels, could never, by ourselves, reach our desired haven, but, lo, the Lord High Admiral of the seas and the great Emperor of the land has come forth in the majesty of His power to conduct us to Glory! And we shall get there safely, even though our enemies should be beyond all count. It was a grand thing when those convoys brought many little ships into harbor, but what a fleet the Lord will bring into the Fair Havens of eternal happiness! We read that on one occasion, when the Lord Jesus was crossing the Sea of Galilee, "there were also with Him other little ships." And there are still with Him many other little ships, but He will bring them all safely into the harbor. Let the enemy attack them if he dares to do so, but their Protector will preserve them all, for it is His purpose to bring many sons to Glory.

I have not yet said all I need to say about this high enterprise, for perhaps the chief wonder of it all is that He, "for whom are all things, and by whom are all things," *has resolved to bring to Glory many sons.* They shall, all of them, be His sons! Oh, what a marvel it is that they should be His sons! Who will have them for sons? I am sure that there is many a man who might be ashamed to take for sons those whom God takes—the most depraved, debased and fallen—whom men have passed by, as those to whom they could not even speak. The Lord, in Infinite Love, has taken them to be His children and He has said of them, "I will be a Father to them, and they shall be My sons and daughters." But, oh, what a work is needed in order to turn these rebels into children! What a wonder of Grace it is that they should first be regenerated and so get the nature of children! And then that they should be adopted and so have the status of children! And then that they should be sanctified and so exhibit, from day to day, those qualities that must be found in the children of a holy God! To make them sons is, indeed, an amazing work!

God did not do as much as that for the people in the wilderness. In that respect, the type broke down, for the Israelites would not be God's sons. He acted as a father towards them, but they were rebels against Him and, therefore, the carcasses of that first generation fell in the wil-

derness. What a mercy it is that God does not now write the Law on tablets of stone, but on the fleshy tablets of our hearts! And the Law of God being written there, He gives us the Grace to obey it and, especially, He gives us Grace to believe in Jesus and to receive Him! John wrote, "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." And it is still true of all who receive Him and believe on His name! Oh, what a mercy it is that guilty sinners may so receive the adoption of children! What a blessed thing it is that God will not only bring us to Glory, but that we shall be sons when He gets us there! He will bring us to Glory as *sons*—we shall be His sons while on the road and we shall be acknowledged as His sons in the presence of the entire universe in that day when the righteous shall "shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father," for that is the glorious Kingdom to which He is going to bring us!

Blessed be His name that He should ever make us sons and resolve to bring us to Glory! Ah, well, He has set His heart upon doing it and He can do it—therefore let us again bless and praise His holy name!

II. Now I turn to my second point, which is concerning THE ORDAINED CAPTAIN. God intends to bring "many sons to Glory," but He means to do it by the hand of a chosen Captain, greater than Joshua, who will fight for His people and conduct them safely into the Canaan of "Glory."

The word here translated, "Captain," is, in another place, rendered, "Author," and, in yet another passage, "Prince." In fact, it is twice translated, "Prince." But I feel perfectly satisfied to take the term as our Authorized Version gives it and to say that *the Lord our God leads His people to Glory by a Captain*. He might have done it, if so it had pleased Him, by His own power and might, apart from a Mediator, but He has not done so. He has ordained everything by the hand of a Mediator and it is an essential part of His arrangement of the whole system of Grace that the Father should work by the Son to bring the many sons to Glory, that the Son should bring them there by being the Captain in their midst, representing Him among men, being clothed with His power, effecting His Divine purpose for them. God will bring no sons to Glory except through this Captain! None may ever hope to enter Glory except by Christ Jesus! He Himself has said, "I am the way." And He is the only way. Therefore, woe be to those who refuse to come to God by Him! God will bring all His sons to Glory, but it must be by the Captain whom He has ordained. Let us think for a little while what a captain is and what a captain has to do, for that will help us to understand the office and work of the Captain of our salvation.

First, then, the Lord Jesus Christ has come to conduct us to Glory by *making all arrangements for the march*. There is a great deal of responsibility connected with the leader of an army, not only in deciding as to where his troops shall encamp for the night, but where they shall march on the morrow, and in what direction they will be likely to be needed many days ahead. The commissariat of an army requires great thoughtfulness and care on the part of the leader and our Captain, the Lord Jesus Christ, has made all necessary arrangements for His people between

here and Heaven! I am quite sure that we shall never come to a halting place between here and Glory, of which we shall be able to say that no provision has been made for us there. *Providence*, or seeing beforehand, is always at work on behalf of the Lord's people. God is always looking ahead and Christ makes every arrangement for the salvation of all His people, even down to the minutest details. He is a most blessed Captain.

A captain's work, after he has arranged for the march, is, next, to *give the word of command.* "Go," he says, or, "Stay." "Do this," or, "Be still." The soldier's one business is to obey his orders. He has not any right to choose what he will do. His marching orders are to be his law. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ will lead many sons to the Glory of His Father by giving those gracious commands which always bring a blessing with them whenever they are obeyed.

Captains, however, do more than command, for, if they are wise, they *lead the way*. I have heard that a Turkish officer says to his men, "Go along," and stays behind and watches the soldiers. But when a British officer cries, "Come on!" he leads the way! That is what our Lord has done. In the sternest fight, He is always conspicuous, and there is no weary march that He bids us tramp in which He does not foot it at our side. You shall never climb so high that you will not find the footprint of the Crucified there, nor shall you be called to descend even into the depths of the sea but you shall find that He has been there, too, for He leads us always as the Captain of our salvation!

It is a captain's business, also, to *encourage his men*. How often the presence of a true leader has effected more for the army than all their own strength could do! When Basing could not be taken by the Parliamentary troops in Cromwell's day, "Old Noll" went down and he took Basing, directly, as he did every other place that he determined to capture! And infinitely more glorious is the Captain of our salvation, whose Presence secures victory to the most discouraged band if they do but see Him, and say, "It is He!" The next word is, "Be not afraid," for where He comes, devils fly. The earth shakes at the Presence of the Christ of God! It is the captain's business to encourage his men, and that our great Captain does continually!

Sometimes it is the captain's delight to *reward his followers*. A wise leader gives words of praise when they are deserved and, on special occasions, he distributes more substantial things. As for our blessed Lord, His gracious commendation, "Well done, good and faithful servant," would more than repay us for the toils of a lifetime—even if our lifetime were longer than Methuselah's! Let us, then, be faithful and true as we have such a Captain as our Lord Jesus Christ who can do for us all that captains should do for their soldiers, and a great deal more.

Now, seeing that it is the will of the Lord to lead us to Glory by the Captain of our salvation, I want you to be worthy of your Leader. Do you not think that, sometimes, we act as if we had no Captain? We fancy that we have to fight our way to Heaven by the might of our own right hand and by our own skill, but it is not so. If you start before your Captain gives you the order to march, you will have to come back. And if you try to fight without your Captain, you will rue the day. "Oh," says one, "but I

have been thinking today what I shall do if such-and-such happens." My dear Brother, it would be a great deal better for you to remember that "the Lord lives," and to leave the thinking and arranging in His hands. There are a great many *ifs* in the world that are like a swarm of wasps—if you let those *ifs* out, they will sting you from head to foot! But there is one glorious *if* that will kill them all! It is this—*if* the Lord Jesus Christ could fail—*if* He could desert us, then all would be lost! That kills all the other *ifs*, because it is an impossible *if*. He cannot fail us or leave us! He must live, He must conquer and while that is the case, the other *ifs* do not mean anything to us. Therefore, cast yourselves on your Captain's care. March onward though you cannot see your way! Fly at the enemy though they seem to outnumber you by ten to one, for greater is He that is for you than all that can be against you! Be not afraid of *anything*, for your Captain is equal to all emergencies.

When the Lord our God chose Him as our Leader and Commander, He laid help upon One that was mighty. He did not take some poor weak mortal to be the captain of such a company as we are! He did not even select an angel for this great task. He exalted One chosen out of the people who was most suitable for the position—and God's wisdom would be dishonored if Christ were found incapable of bringing the many sons to Glory! But He is blessedly capable of all that is required of Him—and the ancient prophecies concerning Him shall be completely fulfilled! "He shall not fail nor be discouraged." "and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands."

III. Thus far, then, we have seen that the Great Father will bring His many sons to Glory by a Captain. But the meat of the text lies in the part we have now to consider, and that is, THE BECOMING WORK OF THE FATHER UPON OUR CAPTAIN. "It became Him, in bringing many sons to Glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

God always acts becomingly and, therefore, *it was right that Christ should suffer*. I have sometimes heard discussions as to whether the Lord might not have saved sinners without a Mediator, or, if through a Mediator, whether we might not have been saved by some other method without the death of Christ. I do not think it is right for us to form any kind of judgment upon that matter, but to say, as our risen Lord said to His disciples, "It behooved Christ to suffer." It was becoming that Christ should die. "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him." It was a seemly and proper thing, in the sight of Him, "for whom are all things, and by whom are all things," that we should be saved by a Mediator, and that the chosen Mediator should not have us apart from His own terrible sufferings.

It was becoming that *our Captain should be made perfect, complete, fully equipped for saving us by suffering.* The agony could not be left out. The cup must not pass from Him without His drinking its awful contents. It was becoming that Christ should be poor—so He had not where to lay His head. It was becoming that He should be hungry—so He fasted for 40 days. It was becoming that He should sweat great drops of blood. It was a becoming thing in the sight of God that there should be suffering on the part of His chosen Captain. It was becoming that He should be spit upon—that He should be mocked—that He should be scourged—that He

should be nailed to a tree—that He should be parched with fever and, in awful depression of spirit, should cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" It was becoming that all this should happen and, therefore, it did happen. Let that be a sufficient answer to us whenever we are asked any questions about Christ's suffering—*it was becoming in God's sight*.

And let those who deny the Atonement, and those precious critics who sneer at every hymn that tells of the agonies of Christ, understand that it was becoming that He should endure all this and that we are not ashamed to sing of what God counts becoming. I, for one, mean still to sing—

"His dying crimson, like a robe,
Spreads o'er His body on the tree."

I mean, still, to sing—

"Well might the sun in darkness hide,
And shut its glories in,
When God, the mighty Maker, died
For man, the creature's sin."

Even though it seems to some as if we knew Christ after the flesh, I would rather know Him so than not at all. And some seem to wish *not* to know Him at all. They want, especially, to get rid of the blood—"the offense of the Cross" has not yet ceased—it is still a cause of stumbling to a great many! But, oh, I pray you who are offended at the Cross, not to think that you will ever get to Heaven, for God and you would not agree, there, for He counts the Cross becoming, and you count it foolishness—so there is a radical difference of opinion between you two and one Heaven would not hold you! You must get agreed with God about that matter, or else, depend upon it, you will never enter the pearly gates! You must honor the Son even as you honor the Father, and honor the Son in His blood and wounds and in all His agony and death, or else you shall not come where the Father takes pleasure in the Well-Beloved.

Further, the text seems to say that *it was becoming that Christ should be made perfect through suffering.* There are many points in which Christ could not save us without suffering. He could not be a perfect Substitute unless He bore our sin and shame. He could not be a perfect Sympathizer unless He bore our suffering. This, perhaps, is the main point in which Christ is perfected. He becomes capable of entering into all the griefs that disturb the many sons whom He is to lead to Glory. In our Elder Brother, the heir of all things, there is an epitome of all the sorrows of all the rest of the family. In Christ there is every pang that rends the heart, every grief that forces tears from the eyes—except such griefs as are sinful and could not enter into His holy bosom—but everything that is inevitable to flesh and blood, to hearts that break, spirits that are depressed and everything of that kind, Jesus knows.

Sometimes I have been where none of you have ever been, but I have never been where I could not find Christ. And some of you, my dear Brothers and Sisters, have been in heartbreaking trouble that I never knew. But the Master has been there, if the Pastor has not, and if the dearest Christian friend has not—and so He has become perfect through suffering. "I know their sorrows," He says, "I know their sorrows, not by

having read or heard about them, but by having suffered them." Of all the bitter medicine in the great apothecary's store, Christ has had a draught. He knows all about them and this makes Him "perfect through sufferings."

Finally, it was becoming on the part of God, "for whom are all things, and by whom are all things," that He should perfect His Son as our Captain through sufferings. But the original Greek gives us a fuller meaning than this—that God should glorify His Son. It is becoming on God's part that He should give to Christ everything that can make Him glorious and honorable. Seeing that He bowed His head to suffer and to die, it was right that God should raise Him from the dead, that He should set Him at His own right hand, that He should crown Him with many crowns, that He should grant Him to "have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." It is becoming that Christ should have all honor and Glory paid to Him, that men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father. In prayer, when I need an argument that I know will prevail with God, I say to Him, "Father, glorify Your Son! You love Him, look at Him, is He not lovely in Your eyes as the suffering, obedient Son of Your love? Do You not admire Him beyond all conception? Therefore, hear my supplication and grant my petition for His sake."

I like, sometimes, to leave off praying and singing, and to sit still, and just gaze upward till my inmost soul has seen my Lord. Then I say, "He is inexpressibly lovely. Yes, He is altogether lovely!" If He is that to my poor eyes, which are so dull and dim that they cannot half discern His beauties, what must He be in the eyes of God? In the eyes of God He is so precious that, as my text says, "It became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things"—it was becoming even in Him, "in bringing many sons to Glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings"—glorified beyond all imaginable glory and to have universal homage paid to Him throughout the universe forever and ever! God sees it to be becoming and, therefore, we delight in it. Amen and amen!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HEBREWS 2:1-15.

Verse 1. *Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.* We have heard them. Do not let us forget them! Let them not be like the driftwood which goes floating down the stream. Let us make a desperate effort to retain them in our memories and, above all, to ponder them in our hearts.

2, 3. *For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation?* They could not trifle with the angels' message without receiving just punishment from God. Much less, then, can we trifle with Christ's Gospel! We have not an angelic savior, but God Himself, in the Person of His Son, has deigned to be the Mediator of the New Covenant. Therefore, let us see to it that we do

not trifle with these things. You see, dear Friends, that we need not be great open sinners in order to perish—it is merely a matter of *neglect*. See how it is put here. "How shall we escape, if we *neglect* so great a salvation?" You need not go to the trouble of despising it, or resisting it, or opposing it. You can be lost readily enough simply by neglecting it. In fact, the great mass of those who perish are those who neglect the great salvation!

3. *Which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed unto me by them that heard Him.* The Apostles and the other followers of our Lord constantly bore witness to His miracles and His Resurrection.

4. *God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will.* Those who doubt the Truth of the Gospel, or who say they do, are often found believing historical statements that are not half as well proved. A man sits down and reads a book of the Gallic wars and he believes that Julius Caesar wrote it—yet there is not a half or a *tenth* as much evidence to prove that he did write it as there is to prove that our Lord Jesus lived, died and rose again from the dead! The witness to the truth of these great matters of fact has been borne by God, Himself, with signs, wonders and miracles. Honest and true men, Apostles and others, have witnessed them—and they have also been certified by Incarnate Deity, even by the Lord who deigns to speak to us by His Spirit. We cannot, therefore, trifle with this Gospel without incurring most serious guilt!

5. *For to the angels He has not put in subjection the world to come, of which we speak.* We are the preachers of it—not the angels! And the great Author and Finisher of our faith is the Man, Christ Jesus—not an angel. We have not, now, the ministry of angels, but the ministry of men, by whom the Lord of the angels sends His messages to their fellows.

6-8. *But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that You are mindful of him? Or the son of man, that You visit him? You made him a little lower than the angles; You crowned him with glory and honor, and did set Him over the works of Your hands: You have put all things in subjection under his feet.* This was the original status of man. God made him to be His vicegerent on earth and he would still hold that position were it not that since he has rebelled against his own Sovereign, even the beasts of the field take liberty to be rebellious against him. Man is not now in his original estate and, therefore, he no longer rules. And we see many men who are very far from being royal beings, for they are mean and groveling. Yet the glory of man is not all lost, as we shall see.

8, 9. *For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus.* Here is the representative Man who is supreme over all. "We see Jesus."

9. *Who was made a little lower than the angels for suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that He, by the Grace of God, should taste death for every man.* Oh, how glorious it is to realize our position in Christ and to see how He has lifted us up, not merely to the place from which the first Adam fell, but He has made us stand so securely there

that we shall not again descend around the ruins of the Fall! Glory be to His holy name!

10, 11. *For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to Glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren.* The Christ and the Christian are one—the Man, Christ Jesus, and the men whom He redefined are one! He has so become partaker of our nature that now we are one family and He is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters. Am I addressing any who are ashamed of Christ, or who are ashamed of God's poor people, and who would not like to be known to be members of a poor Church? Ah, how you ought to be ashamed of *yourselves* for having any such pride in your hearts, for Christ is not ashamed to call His people brethren! Oh, what wondrous condescension! He has done this many times in the Psalms where He speaks of His brethren.

12. *Saying, I will declare Your name to My brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise to You.* That is a quotation from the 22nd Psalm.

13. *And again, I will put My trust in Him.* Thus entering into the very faith of His people!

13, 14. *And again, Behold I and the children which God has given Me. Inasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood.* As you know to your cost, for perhaps you have aches and pains about you at this very moment. Verily, you are "partakers of flesh and blood." Perhaps you are suffering from despondency and depression of spirit. If so, that reminds you that however much you may, in spirit, sometimes soar to Heaven, yet you are still "partakers of flesh and blood."

14, 15. *He also, Himself, likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.* He so took upon Himself flesh and blood as to die in our nature, that thus He might slay death, and might set us free from all fear of death. Do you not see that if the representative Man, Christ Jesus, died, He also rose again, and also that so will all who are in Him rise, too? If you are in Him, You shall rise again! Therefore, fear not to lie down in your last sleep, for the trumpet shall awaken you and your bodies shall be molded afresh like to His glorious body and your soul and body together shall dwell in infinite bliss forever! "Therefore comfort one another with these words."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—289, 336, 294.

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CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR PETER
NO. 2620

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 30, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 22, 1882.

"But I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not."
Luke 22:32.

SATAN has a deadly hatred towards all good men and they may rest assured that somewhere or other, he will meet them on their way to the Celestial City. John Bunyan, in his immortal allegory, placed him in one particular spot and described him as Apollyon straddling the road and swearing by his infernal den that the pilgrim should go no further, but that then and there he would spill poor Christian's soul. But the encounter with Apollyon does not happen in the same place to all pilgrims. I have known some of them assailed by him most fiercely at the outset of their march to Zion. Their first days as Christians have been truly terrible to them by reason of the Satanic attacks they have had to endure, but, afterwards, when the devil has left them, angels have ministered to them and they have had years of peace and joy. You remember that in the case of our Savior, no sooner was He baptized than He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. In like manner, there are those whose fiercest trials from the adversary come at the beginning of their public ministry. Others meet with their greatest conflicts in middle life when, perhaps, they are too apt to think themselves secure against the assaults of Satan and to fancy that their experience and their knowledge will suffice to preserve them against his wiles. I know some, like Martin Luther, in whose voyage of life, the middle passage has been full of storm and tempest, and they have scarcely known what it was to have a moment's rest during all that period. Then there have been others, the first part of whose career has been singularly calm. Their life has been like a sea of glass—scarcely a ripple has been upon the waters—and yet, towards the end, the enemy has made up for it, and he has attacked them most ferociously right up to the last! I have known many instances of eminent saints who have had to die, sword in hand, and enter Heaven—I was about to say, with the marks of their stern conflict fresh upon them. At any rate, they have been crowned on the battlefield and have fallen asleep at the close of a tremendous fight.

With the most of us who are really going to Heaven—I will not say that it is a rule without any exception—but with the most of us, at some time or another, we shall know the extreme value of this prayer, "Lead us not into temptation of any kind, but deliver us from the Evil One, who, be-

yond all others, is especially to be dreaded." There is little to be got out of him, even if we conquer him. He usually leaves some mark of his prowess upon us which we may carry to our graves. It were better to leap over hedge and ditch and to go a thousand miles further on our pilgrim road than ever to have a conflict with him, except for those great purposes of which I shall presently speak for a moment. The fight with Apollyon is a terrible ordeal—an ordeal, however, which a brave Christian will never think of shirking! No, he rather will rejoice that he has an enemy worthy of his steel, that true Damascus blade with which he is armed. And, in the name of God, he will determine, though he wrestles not with flesh and blood, that he will contend against principalities and powers and with the very leader of them all—that there may be all the more Glory to the great King who makes the weakest of His followers to be so strong that they put the old dragon, himself, to flight!

So, dear Friends, rest assured that Satan hates every good man and woman, and that, some time or other, he is pretty sure to show that hatred in a very cruel and deadly attack upon them.

Further, because of his hatred, Satan earnestly desires to put Believers into his sieve that he may sift them as wheat—not that he wants to get the chaff away from them—but simply that he may agitate them. You see the corn in the sieve, how it goes up and down, to and fro. There is not a single grain of it that is allowed to have a moment's rest—it is all in commotion and confusion—and the man who is sifting it takes care to sift first one way and next, another way, and then all sorts of ways. Now, that is just what Satan does with those whom he hates, when he gets the opportunity. He sifts them in all manner of ways and puts their whole being into agitation and turmoil. When he gets a hold of us, it is a shaking and sifting, indeed! He takes care that anything like rest or breathing space shall be denied us.

Satan desires thus to sift the saints in his sieve and, at times, God grants his desire. If you look at the Revised Version, in the margin you learn the true idea of Satan having asked, or rather *obtained by asking*, the power to sift Peter as wheat. God sometimes gives Satan the permission to sift as wheat those who are undoubtedly His people—and then Satan tosses them to and fro, indeed. That record in the Book of Job, of Satan appearing before God, is repeated in this story of Peter, for the devil had obtained from God liberty to try and test poor boasting Peter. If Christ had not obtained of God, in answer to His intercession, the promise of the preservation of Peter, then had it gone ill, indeed, with the self-confident Apostle! God grants to Satan permission to try His people in this way because He knows how He will overrule it to His own Glory and their good. There are certain Graces which are never produced in Christians, to a high degree, except by severe temptation. "I noticed," said one, "in what a chastened spirit a certain minister preached when he had been the subject of most painful temptation." There is a peculiar tenderness without which one is not qualified to shepherd Christ's sheep, or to feed His lambs—a tenderness without which one cannot strengthen his brethren, as Peter was afterwards to do, a tenderness which does not

usually come—at any rate, to such a man as Peter, except by his being put into the sieve and tossed up and down by Satanic temptation!

Let that stand as the preface of my sermon, for I shall not have so much to say upon that as upon another point.

First, observe, in our text, the grand point of Satan's attack. We can see that from the place where Jesus puts the strongest line of defense—"I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." The point of Satan's chief attack on a Believer, then, is his *faith*. Observe, secondly, the peculiar danger of faith—"That your faith fail not." That is the danger—not merely lest it should be slackened and weakened, but lest it should *fail*. And then observe, thirdly, *the Believer's grand defense*—"I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not."

I. Notice carefully, in the first place, THE GRAND POINT OF SATAN'S ATTACK.

When he assails a child of God, his main assault is upon his faith, and I suppose that the reason is, first, *because faith is the vital point in the Christian.* We are engrafted into Christ by faith and faith is the point of contact between the believing soul and the living Christ. If, therefore, Satan could manage to cut through the graft there, then he would defeat the Savior's work most completely. Faith is the very heart of true godliness, for, "the just shall live by faith." Take faith away and you have torn the heart out of the gracious man. Hence, Satan, as far as he can, aims his fiery darts at a Believer's faith. If he can only destroy faith, then he has destroyed the very life of the Christian! "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Therefore, if the devil could but get our faith away from us, we should cease to be pleasing to God and should cease to be "accepted in the Beloved." Therefore, Brothers and Sisters, look well to your faith! It is the very head and heart of your being as before God. The Lord grant that it may never fail you!

I suppose that Satan also attacks faith *because it is the chief of all our Divine Graces*. Love, under some aspects, is the choicest, but to lead the van in conflict, faith must come first. And there are some things which are ascribed solely and entirely to faith that are never ascribed to love. If any man were to speak of our being justified by love, it would grate upon the ears of the godly! If any were to talk of our being justified by repentance, those of us who know our Bible would be up in arms against such a perversion of the Truth of God! But they may speak as long as they like of our "being justified by faith," for that is a quotation from the Scriptures. In the matter of justification, faith stands alone. It lays hold on Christ's Sacrifice and His righteousness and, thereby, the soul is justified. Faith, if I may say so, is the leader of the Graces in the day of battle and hence Satan says to his demoniacal archers, "Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the King of Israel—shoot at faith, kill it if possible." If faith is slain, where is love, where is hope, where is repentance, where is patience? If, faith is conquered, then it is as when a standard-bearer faints. The victory is virtually won by the arch-enemy if he is able to conquer faith, for faith is the noble chieftain among the Graces of a saint!

I suppose, again, that Satan makes a dead set upon the faith of the Christian *became it is the nourishing Grace*. All the other Graces within us derive strength from our faith. If faith is at a low ebb, love is sure to burn very feebly. If faith should begin to fail, then would hope grow dim. Where is courage? It is a poor puny thing when faith is weak. Take any Grace you please, and you shall see that its nourishing depends upon the healthy condition of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ! To take faith away, therefore, would be to take the fountain away from the stream—it would be to withdraw the sun from its rays if light. If you destroy the source, of course that which comes out of it ceases. Therefore, Beloved, take the utmost possible care of your faith, for I may truly say of it that out of it are the issues of life to all your Graces. Faith is that virtuous woman who clothes the whole household in scarlet and feeds them all with luscious and strengthening food. But if faith is gone, the household soon becomes naked, poor, blind and miserable. Everything in a Christian fails when faith ceases to nourish it!

Next to this, Satan attacks faith *because it is the great preserving Grace.* The Apostle says, "Above all"—that is, "over all," "covering all"—"taking the shield of faith with which you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." Sometimes, the Eastern soldiers had shields so large that they were like doors, and they covered the man from head to foot. Others of them, who used smaller shields, nevertheless handled them so deftly and moved them so rapidly that it was tantamount to the shield covering the entire person. An arrow is aimed at the forehead, up goes the shield and the sharp point rings on the metal! A javelin is hurled at the heart, but the shield turns it aside. The fierce foe aims a poisonous dart at the leg, but the shield intercepts it. Virtually, the shield is all-surrounding—and so it is with your faith. As one has well said, "It is armor upon armor, for the helmet protects the head, but the shield protects both helmet and head. The breastplate guards the breast, but the buckler or shield defends the breastplate as well as the breast." Faith is a Divine Grace to protect the other Graces—there is nothing like it and, therefore, I do not wonder that Satan attacks faith when he sees its prominent position and its important influence in the entire town of Mansoul.

I cannot help saying, also, that I wonder not that Satan attacks faith *because it is the effective or efficient Grace*. You know what a wonderful chapter that 11th Chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews is—it is a triumphal arch erected in honor of what? Of faith! According to that Chapter, faith did everything—it quenched the fire, stopped the mouths of lions, turned to flight the armies of the aliens, received the dead who were raised and so on. Faith is the soul's right hand. Faith works by love, but, still, it is faith that works, and you can do nothing acceptably before God unless you do it by that right hand of faith. Hence, Satan cannot stand faith—he hates that most of all. Pharaoh tried to have all the male children thrown into the river because they were the fighting force of Israel. He did not mind having the women to grow up to bear burdens—it was the men whom he feared. And, in like manner, the devil says, "I must

stamp out faith, for that is the secret of strength." He will not trouble himself so much about your other Graces—he will probably attack them when he can, but, first of all he says—"Down with faith! That is the man-child that must be destroyed!" And he aims his sharpest and deadliest darts at it.

I believe, also, that faith is attacked by Satan, most of all, *because it is most obnoxious to him.* He cannot endure faith. How do I know that? Why, because God loves it! And if God loves faith and if Christ crowns faith, I am sure that Satan hates it. What are we told concerning the work of Jesus being hindered by unbelief? "He could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief." Now, I will turn that text around and say of Satan, that he cannot do many mighty works against some men because of their faith! Oh, how he sneaks off when he discovers a right royal faith in a man! He knows when he has met his master and he says, "Why should I waste my arrows upon a shield carried by such a man as that? He believes in God, he believes in Christ, he believes in the Holy Spirit—he is more than a match for me." To those that are under his leadership, he cries, "To your tents!" He bids them flee away and escape, for he knows that there can be no victory for them when they come into collision with true God-given faith! He cannot bear to look at it. It blinds him—the lustrous splendor of that great shield of faith which shines as though a man did hang the sun upon his arm and bear it before him into the fray—blinds even the mighty Prince of Darkness! Satan does but glance at it and straightway he takes to flight, for he cannot stand it. He knows it is the thing which most of all helps to overthrow his kingdom and destroy his power! Therefore, Believer, cling to your faith! Be like the young Spartan warrior who would either bring his shield home with him or be brought home dead upon his shield. "Cast not away your confidence, which has great recompense of reward." Whatever else you have not, "have faith in God." Believe in the Christ of God. Rest your soul's entire confidence upon the faithful promise and the faithful Promiser and, if you do so, Satan's attacks upon you will all be in vain!

That is my first point—observe the grand point of Satanic attack.

II. Now, secondly, observe THE PECULIAR DANGER OF FAITH. "That your faith fail not."

Did Peter's faith fail? Yes, and no. It failed in a measure, but it did not altogether fail. It failed in a measure, for he was human, but it did not altogether fail, for, at the back of it, there was the superhuman power which comes through the pleading of Christ. Poor Peter! He denied his Master, yet his faith did not utterly fail and, I will show you why it did not. If you and I, Beloved, are ever permitted to dishonor God and to deny our Lord, as Peter did, yet may God in mercy keep us from the utter and entire failure of our faith as He kept Peter!

Notice, first, there was still some faith in Peter, even when he had denied his Master, for when the Lord turned and looked at him, *he went out and wept bitterly.* If there had still not been the true faith in Peter, the Master might have looked upon him long before a tear would have coursed down his cheeks. The Lord not only looked on Judas, but He

gave him a sop with Him out of the dish. And He even let the traitor put his lips on Him and kiss Him. But all that had no weight with Judas. The reason why Christ's look had such an effect on Peter was because there was still some faith in Peter. You may blow as long as you like at the cold coals, but you will get no fire. But I have, sometimes, seen a servant kneel down when there has been just a little flame left in the coal in a corner of the grate, and she has blown it tenderly and gently so as to revive it. "It is not quite out," she says and, at last, there has been a good fire once again! May God grant that we may never come to that sad condition, but, if we do, may He, of His Grace, grant that there may still be that blessed little faith left, that weak and feeble faith which, through the breathing upon it of the Spirit of God, shall yet be fanned into a flame!

We are sure that there was this faith still in Peter *or else what would he have done?* What did Judas do? Judas did two things. First, he went to a priest, or to priests, and confessed to them. And then he went out and hanged himself—the two things were strangely connected. Peter did neither, yet, if he had not had faith, he might have done both. To publicly deny his Master three times and to support his denial with oaths and curses, even when that Master was close by and in His greatest need, must have put Peter into most imminent peril. And if there had not been, within his heart, faith that his Master could yet pardon and restore him, he might, in his despair, have done precisely what the traitor Judas did. Or, if he had not gone to that extremity of guilt, he would have hidden himself away from the rest of the Apostles. But, instead of doing so, we soon find him, again, with John—I do not wonder that he was with John. They were old companions, but, in addition to that, the Beloved John had so often leaned his head on the Master's bosom that he had caught the sweet infection of his Savior's tenderness and, therefore, he was just the one with whom Peter would wish to associate.

I think that if I had ever denied my Lord as Peter did, in that public way, I would have run away and hidden myself from all my former companions. But Peter did not, you see. He seemed to say to himself, "The Master, with His dear tender heart, can still forgive me and receive me." So he clings to the disciples and especially to John. Yes, and notice that on the day of our Lord's Resurrection, Peter was the first disciple to enter the sepulcher, for, though "the other disciple did outrun Peter" and reach the grave first, "yet he went not in" until Peter led the way. "The Lord is risen, indeed, and has appeared to Simon," is a remarkable passage. Paul, writing concerning Christ's Resurrection, says that, "He was seen of Cephas," that is, Peter. There was some special manifestation of our blessed Master to Simon Peter who was waiting for it, and privileged to witness it—and this showed that his faith was kept from failing through the Savior's prayers.

Now, Beloved, I say no more about Peter, but I speak to you about your own faith. Are you greatly troubled? Then I pray that your faith may not fail. It is shaken. It is severely tried, but God grant that it may not fail! Something whispers within your heart, "Give up all religion, it is not true." To that lie, answer, "Get you behind me, Satan, for the religion of

Jesus Christ is eternally, assuredly, Infallibly true." Cling to it, for it is your life! Or, perhaps, the fiend whispers, "It is true enough to others, but it is not meant for you, you are not one of the Lord's people." Well, if you cannot come to Christ as a saint, come to Him as a sinner! If you dare not come as a child to sit at His Table, come as a dog to eat the crumbs that fall under it! Only come and never give up your faith!

If the arch-fiend whispers, again, "You have been a deceiver! Your profession is all a mistake, or a lie!" Say to him, "Well, if it is so, there is still forgiveness in Christ for all who come unto God by Him." Perhaps you are coming to the Savior for the first time—you mean to cast yourself upon the blood and merit of Jesus even if you have never done so before. I pray for you, dear coming one! O gracious Savior, do not let Satan crush out the faith of even the weakest of Your people! Blessed Intercessor, plead for that poor trembler in whom faith is almost dying out! Great High Priest, intercede for him, that his faith may not utterly fail him and that he may still cling to You!

What is to become of us if we have not faith in Jesus? I know that there are some who seem to get on well without it. So may the dogs. So may the wild beasts. They get on well enough without the children's garments or the children's bread—but you and I cannot. The moment I am unbelieving, I am unhappy. It is not a vain thing for me to believe in Christ—it is my life, it is my strength, it is my joy! I am a lost man and it were better for me that I had never been born unless I have the privilege of believing! Give up faith? Remember what Satan said concerning Job, "Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life"? And our life is wrapped up in our faith in Christ! We cannot give it up and we will not give it up! Come on, fiends of Hell, or mockers of earth—we will not give it up, we will hold it fast, for it is part of the very warp and woof of our being! We believe in God and in His Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And it is our great concern that our faith should be well guarded and protected, for we know the peculiar danger to which it is exposed when it is assailed by Satan.

III. Now I will close my discourse by speaking, for only a very few minutes, upon THE BELIEVER'S GREAT PRESERVATIVE AND DEFENSE.

What is the great protection of our faith? Our Savior's intercession! Prayer is always good, it is always a blessed thing, but notice that great letter-word in the text, "**I** have prayed for you." It is the intercession of *Christ* that preserves our faith—and there are three things about it which make it precious beyond all price—it is prevalent, prevenient and pertinent. First, it is *prevalent,* for, if Jesus pleads, He must prevail. It is *prevenient*, for, *before* the temptation comes to Peter, He says, "I have prayed for you. Satan has but obtained, by his asking, the permission to tempt you, but I have already prayed for you."

And, then, it was *pertinent*, that is, to the point. Christ had prayed the best prayer possible—"that your faith fail not." Peter would not have known that this was to be the chief point of attack by Satan. He might have thought that Satan would attack his love. The Lord seems to hint at

His thought about that by saying to him, afterwards, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?" But the Savior knew that the hottest part of the battle would rage around Fort Faith and, therefore, He prayed that the fortress might be well garrisoned and never be captured by the enemy. And it was not!

Whenever I begin to talk to you about the intercession of Christ, I feel inclined to sit down and let you think, and look up, and listen till you hear that Voice, matchless in its music, pleading, pleading, pleading, with the Father! It were much better for you to realize it than for me to describe it. It was a blessed thing to hear one's mother pray—by accident, as we say—to pass the door that was ajar and to hear Mother pleading for her boy or her girl. It is a very touching thing to hear your child praying for her father, or your wife breathing out her warm desires for her Beloved. I do not know anything more charming than to hear, now and then, a stray prayer that was never meant to be heard on earth, but only in Heaven. I like such eaves-droppings. Oh, but listen! It is Jesus who is praying! He shows His wounds and pleads the merit of His great Sacrifice and, wonder of wonders, He pleads for *me*, and for *you*! Happy man, happy woman, to have our faith preserved by such a mighty preservative as this—the intercession of Christ!

I want you to especially notice that *this intercession is the pleading of One who*, in the text, *seems to directly oppose Himself to the great adversary.* "Satan has asked for you by asking that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for you by asking," (so I will venture to paraphrase it) "that your faith fail not." There stands Satan. You cannot see him and you need not want to, but that grim monster who has made kings and princes tremble, and has plucked angels from their spheres of light, and hurled bright spirits down from Heaven to Hell, stands there to assail you! And you may well be afraid, for God, Himself, permits him to sift you! Ah, but there also stands the Ever-Blessed One, before whom an angel, fallen or unfallen, is but a tiny spark compared with the sun! There He stands, girt about the chest with the golden girdle of His faithfulness, robed in the fair white linen of His matchless righteousness. Upon His head is a crown of glory that far outshines all constellations of stars and suns! And He opposes His Divine pleading to the demoniacal asking of the fallen one. Are you still afraid? It seems to me unspeakably blessed to see it written here, "Satan has desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat," and then to see over the top of it these words, "but I have prayed for you." Oh, blessed, "but"! How it seems to cast the fallen angel back into the bottomless Pit and to bind him with chains, and set a seal upon his prison—"But I have prayed for you." Tempt on, then, O Satan! Tempt at your worst, for there is no fear when this glorious shield of gold, the intercession of the Savior, covers the entire person of the poor attacked one! "I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not."

And then my last word is this—*it is an intercession which is absolutely certain of success.* In fact, He who offers it anticipates its success and discounts it by giving this precept to His servant—"and when you are converted." Sure pledge, then, that he *will be* converted, that he will be

turned back, however far he wanders! When you are restored, "strengthen your brethren." Then, for certain, he will be restored, or else the Savior would not have given him a precept which could only be available if a certain, unlikely contingency should occur! O you who are a true child of God, you may be drenched, but you shall never be drowned! O warrior of the Cross, your shield may be covered with fiery darts, thick as the saplings of a young forest—but no dart shall ever reach your heart! You may be wounded in head and hand and foot. You may be a mass of scars, but your life is given you! To Christ are you given and you shall come out even from between the jaws of death—and you shall overcome Satan by Christ's power! Only trust Christ! Only trust Him! Cling to your faith, Beloved. Cling to your faith! I would like to get a hold of that young man who has lately been listening to skeptical teachers, and to whisper in his ear, "Cling to your faith, young man, for, in losing that, you will lose all."

And to you who, alas, have fallen into sin after having made a profession of religion, let me say that, however far you have gone astray, still believe that Jesus is able to forgive you! Come back to Him and seek His pardon now! And you, my hoary-headed Brothers and Sisters, whose hair is whitening for Heaven, are you sorely beset by all sorts of temptations? Well, give me your hand, for I, too, know what this warfare means. Let us believe in God, my Brothers and Sisters—let us believe in God! Though He should break us down worse than ever. Though He should set us up as a target and let the devil shoot all the arrows from his quiver at us, let us still believe in God and come to this point to which my soul has come full often, and to which Job came of old, "'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.' Whatever He does to me—if He shall never smile upon me again—I will still believe Him, I can do no other." I dare not doubt Him! I must confide in Him! Where is there any ground for confidence if it is not in the God that cannot lie, and in the Christ of the Everlasting Covenant whom He has set forth to be the propitiation for human sin, and in the Holy Spirit, whose work it is to take of the things of Christ and reveal them to us?

May the blessed Trinity save and keep us all, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 22:7-34; 54-62.

Verses 7-20. *Then came the Day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover must be killed. And He sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the Passover, that we may eat. And they said unto Him, Where will You that we prepare? And He said unto them, Behold, when you are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he enters. And you shall say unto the good man of the house, The Master says unto you, Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with My disciples? And he shall show you a large upper room furnished: there make ready. And they went and found as He had said unto them: and they made ready the Passover. And when*

the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve Apostles with Him. And He said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the Kingdom of God shall come. And He took bread, and gave thanks, and broke it, and gave unto them, saying, This is My body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament—(Or, Covenant).

20, 21. *In My blood, which is shed for you. But, behold, the hand of him that betrays Me is with Me on the table.* What a shadow this revelation must have cast over that solemn feast, over the Savior's heart and over the minds of all His attached disciples! We can scarcely imagine what pangs tore His loving spirit. He could have used the language of David with even deeper emphasis, and said, "It was not an enemy that reproached Me. Then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated Me that did magnify himself against Me. Then I would have hid Myself from him. But it was you, a man My equal, My guide and My acquaintance." "The hand of him that betrays Me is with Me on the table." O Beloved, I pray that you and I may never betray our Master! If ever we should so fail as to deny Him, may the Lord stop us where Peter fell and never suffer us to betray Him as Judas did!

22. *And truly the Son of Man goes, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed!* The decree of God does not lessen the responsibility of man for his action. Even though it is predetermined of God, the man does it of his own free will—and on him falls the full guilt of it.

23, 24. *And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing. And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.* Be astonished, dear Friends, as you read, in such a connection as this, "There was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest." What? While yet the anxious question as to which of them was the traitor was being passed round, "Lord, is it I?" Is it so closely followed by another question, "Which of us shall be highest in the Kingdom?" Oh, the awful intrusiveness of pride and ambition! How it will come in and defile the very Holy of Holies! May God prevent our falling victims to it! The last question for a Christian to ever ask is, "How may I win honor among men?" The one question for a Believer should be, "How can I glorify my Master ?" Very often, that can best be done by taking the very lowest place in his Church.

25, 26. *And He said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But you shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that serves.* Let every respect be given to the elder and let such as God honors be honored among us—but let no man honor himself, or seek honor for himself! After all, in

Christ's Kingdom, the way to ascend is to descend! Did not the Master act thus? He descended that He might ascend and fill all things! And so must His disciples! Less, and less, and less, and less must we become—and so we shall really be, in His sight—more, and more, and more, and more!

27. *For who is greater, he that sits at meat, or he that serves? Is it not he that sits at meat? But I am among you as He that serves.* For He had just then taken a towel and girded Himself, and washed their feet—so becoming *Servus servorum,* the Servant of Servants, though He was, in very truth, the King of Kings!

28. *You are they who have continued with Me in My temptations.* There is a reward to the righteous, though they serve not for reward, for the Lord says—

29, 30. *And I appoint unto you a Kingdom, as My Father has appointed unto Me; that you may eat and drink at My table in My Kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* Ah, but see what follows! No sooner, in this Chapter, does the thought seem to rise than it is dashed down again! The brightness always has a shadow cast across it,

31, 32. *And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren.* We are thinking about thrones and about which of us shall have the loftiest throne—but see how the Master is thinking about the necessary while we are doting upon the superfluous! He thinks of our needs while we are dreaming of something great. What a blessing it is that we have our Savior praying for us when we, ourselves, may be fancying that we need not pray! Our hands are ready for the scepter and we are anxious to sit down on the throne—when the Lord knows that our proper place is at the footstool, pleading for mercy!

33. *And he said unto Him, Lord, I am ready to go with You, both into prison, and to death.* That is bravely spoken, Peter—and yet it is very foolishly said, too! He spoke out of his very heart and he meant what he said, but Peter did not know what a poor weak body Peter really was! His Master understood him far better.

34. *And He said, I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day, before that you shall thrice deny that you know Me.* And so it came to pass. Let us read a part of the sad story, beginning at the 54th verse.

54. *Then took they Him, and led Him, and brought Him into the High Priest's house. And Peter followed afar off.* I do not think that Peter was to be blamed for that. I do not see how he could very well have followed any nearer, for he was already a marked man. That cutting off of the ear of Malchus had made him especially prominent among the Apostles, even if he had not been well known before! He got into the crowd and came after his Master at such a distance as seemed safe for him.

55. *And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them.* I do think that he was to be blamed for *that* action, for it brought him into dangerous company. Better be cold, than go and warm your hands in ungodly society!

56. *But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him.* As the flame came flashing up every now and then, she looked at him, and Peter was troubled by her gaze—she, "earnestly looked upon him."

56-59. *And said, This man was also with Him. And he denied Him, saying, Woman, I know Him not. And after a little while another saw him, and said, You are also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one hour, later, another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth, this fellow also was with Him; for he is a Galilean.* For he got to talking to this evil company and his speech had betrayed him!

60. *And Peter said, Man, I know not what you say.* Another Evangelist tells us that he began to curse and to swear, as if that was the surest proof that he could possibly give that he did not know Jesus—for, when you hear a man swear, you know at once that he is no Christian—you may conclude that safely enough! So Peter thought that to prove that he was no follower of Christ, he would use such evil language as the ungodly speak.

60, 61. *And immediately, while he yet spoke, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter.* God has all things in His hands. He has servants everywhere and the rooster shall crow, by the secret movement of His Providence, just when God wills! And there is, perhaps, as much of Divine ordination about the crowing of a rooster as about the ascending of an emperor to his throne! Things are only little and great according to their bearings and God reckoned not the crowing bird to be a small thing since it was to bring a wanderer back to his Savior, for, just as the rooster crowed, "the Lord turned and looked upon Peter." That was a different look from the one which the girl had given him, but that look broke his heart.

62. *And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said unto him, Before the roster crows, you shall deny me thrice. And Peter went out and wept bitterly.* How many there are who sin with Peter, but who never weep with Peter! Oh, if we have ever transgressed in such a way as he did, let us never cease to weep! Above all, let us begin at once to lament it and rest not till the Master looks again, and says by that look, "I have blotted out all your transgressions; return unto Me."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—327, 330, 328, 846.

—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 SINNER'S REFUGE
NO. 2621

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 7, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, EARLY IN THE YEAR 1857.

"Then you shall appoint you cities to be cities of refuge for you; that the slayer may flee there, who kills any person at unawares." Numbers 35:11.

YOU are aware that the principle of blood-revenge is a deep-seated one in the Eastern mind. From the earliest ages it was always the custom with the Orientals, when a man was murdered, or slain without malice aforethought, for the nearest relative, his heir, or any person related to him, to take revenge for him upon the person who, either intentionally or unintentionally, was the means of his death. This revenge was a very special thing to the Oriental mind. The avenger of blood would hunt his victim for 40 years—yes, until he died, if he was not able to reach him before—and would be on his trail all his life, that he might slay him. It was not necessary that the manslayer should have any trial before a judge—his victim was dead and if the one who killed him was not put to death, it was reckoned among some tribes to be legitimate to kill his father, or indeed any member of his tribe—and until someone in that tribe was put to death, as a revenge for the man who had been slain, by accident or otherwise, a deadly feud existed between the two clans which never could be quenched except by blood.

Now, when the Lord gave to the Jews this Law concerning the cities of refuge, he took advantage of their deep-rooted love towards the system of the revenge of blood by the nearest relative. God acted wisely in this, as He has done in all things. There are two matters mentioned in Scripture which I do not believe God ever approved, but which, finding they were deep-seated, He did not forbid to the Jews. One was polygamy, the practice of marrying many wives had become so established that, though God abhorred it, yet He permitted it to the Jews because He foresaw that they would inevitably have broken the commandment if He had made an ordinance that they should have but one wife. It was the same with this matter of blood-revenge—it was so firmly fixed in the mind of the people that God, instead of refusing to the Jews what they regarded as the privilege of taking vengeance upon their fellows, enacted a Law which rendered it almost impossible that a man should be killed unless he were really a murderer, for He appointed six cities, at convenient distances, so that when one man killed another by accident, and so committed homicide, he might at once flee to one of those cities. And though he might

have to remain there all his life, yet the avenger of blood could never touch him, if he were innocent. He would have a fair trial, but even if he were found innocent, he must stay within the city into which the avenger of blood could not, by any possibility, come. If he went out of the city, the avenger might kill him. He was, therefore, to suffer perpetual banishment, even for causing death accidentally, in order that it might be seen how much God regarded the rights of blood and how fearful a thing it is to put a man to death in any way. You see, dear Friends, that this prevented. the likelihood of anyone being killed who was not guilty of murder, for, as soon as one man struck another to the ground by accident, by a stone, or any other means, he fled to a city of refuge. He had a head start from the pursuer and if he arrived there first, he was secure and safe.

I wish to use this custom of the Jews as a metaphor and type to set forth the salvation of men through Jesus Christ our Lord. I shall give you, first, an explanation and, then, an exhortation.

I. I SHALL ATTEMPT AN EXPLANATION OF THIS TYPE. Note, first, *the person for whom the city of refuge was provided.* It was not a place of shelter for the willful murderer—if he fled there, after a fair trial he must be dragged out of it and given up to the avenger. And the avenger of death was to kill him and so have blood for blood, and life for life. But, in case of an accident, when one man had slain another without malice aforethought and had, therefore, only committed homicide, the man fleeing there was perfectly safe.

Here, however, the type does not adequately represent the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is not a refuge provided for men who are innocent, but for men who are guilty—not for those who have accidentally transgressed, but for those who have willfully gone astray! Our Savior has come into the world to save not those who have, by mistake and error, committed sin, but those who have fearfully transgressed against well-known Divine Commandments and who have followed the sinful dictates of their own free will, their own perversity leading them to rebel against God.

Note, next, *the avenger of blood.* In explaining this portion of the type, I must, of course, take every part of the figure. The avenger of blood, I have said, was usually the next of kin to the one who had been slain. But I believe any other member of the family was held to be competent to act as the avenger. If, for instance, my brother had been killed, it would have been my duty, as the first of the family, to avenge his blood, if possible, then and there —to go after the murderer, or the man who had accidentally caused his death—and to put him to death at once. If I could not do that, it would be my business and that of my father and, indeed, of every male member of the family, to hunt and pursue that man until God should deliver him into our hands so that we might put him to death. I mean not that it is *now* our duty, but it would have been so regarded under the old Jewish dispensation. It was allowed, by the Mosaic Law, that those who were the relatives of the man killed would be the avengers of his blood.

We find the counterpart of this type, for the sinner, in the Law of God. Sinner, the Law of God is the blood-avenger that is on your trail! You have willfully transgressed—you have, as it were, killed God's Commandments, you have trampled them under your feet—and so the Law of God is the avenger of blood. It is after you and it will have you in its grasp before long! Condemnation is hanging over your head and it shall surely overtake you! Though it may not reach you in this life, yet, in the world to come, the avenger of blood, the Moses, the Law of the Lord, shall execute vengeance upon you and you shall be utterly destroyed!

But, further, *there was a city of refuge provided under the Law of God*—no, more, *there were six cites of refuge*, in order that one of them might be at a convenient distance from any part of the country. Now, there are not six Christs—there is but one, but there is a Christ everywhere. "The Word of God 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. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

The city of refuge was a priestly city—a city of the Levites, and it afforded protection for life to the manslayer. He might never go out of it till the death of the then reigning High Priest, after which he might go free without being touched by the avenger of blood. But, during the time of his sojourn there, he was housed and fed gratuitously—everything was provided for him and he was kept entirely safe! And I would have you mark that he was safe in this city, not because of its walls, or bolts, or bars, but simply because it was the place Divinely appointed for shelter. Do you see the man running towards it? The avenger is after him, fast and furious! The manslayer has just reached the borders of the city—in a moment the avenger stops—he knows it is no use going any further after him, not because the city walls are strong, nor because the gates are barred, nor because an army stands outside to resist, but because God has said the man shall be safe as soon as he has crossed the border and has come into the suburbs of the city! Divine appointment was the only thing which made the city of refuge secure! Now, Beloved, our Lord Jesus Christ is the Divinely-appointed way of salvation! Whoever among us shall make haste from our sins and flee to Christ, being convinced of our guilt, and helped by God's Spirit to enter that road, shall, without doubt, find absolute and eternal security! The curse of the Law of God shall not touch us, Satan shall not harm us, vengeance shall not reach us, for the Divine appointment, stronger than gates of iron or brass, shields everyone of us "who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" in the Gospel!

The city of refuge, I must have you note, too, had around it, suburbs of a very great extent. Two thousand cubits were allowed for grazing land for the cattle of the priests and a thousand cubits within these for fields and vineyards. Now, no sooner did the man reach the suburbs of the city, than he was safe—it was not necessary for him to get within the

walls, but the outskirts, themselves, were sufficient protection. Learn, then, that if you do but touch the hem of Christ's garment, you shall be made whole! If you do but lay hold of Him with "faith as a grain of mustard seed," with faith which is very feeble, but is truly a living principle, you are safe—

"A little genuine Grace ensures
The death of all our sins!"

Get anywhere within the borders of the city of refuge and you are, at once and forever, secure from the avenger!

We have some interesting particulars, also, with regard to the distance of these cities from the habitations of men in ancient Judea. It is said that wherever the crime of homicide might be committed by any man, he might get to a city of refuge within half a day and, verily, Beloved, it is no great distance from a guilty sinner to the sheltering breast of Christ! It is but a simple renunciation of our own powers and a laying hold of Christ, to be our All-in-All, that is required in order to our being found within the city of refuge! Then, with regard to the roads to the city, we are told that they were strictly preserved in good order. Every river was bridged. As far as possible, the road was made level and every obstruction removed so that the man who fled might find an easy passage to the city. Once a year the elders of the city went along the route to see that it was in proper repair and to assure, as far as they could, that nothing might occur through the breaking down of bridges, or the blocking of the highway, to impede the flight of any manslayer and cause him to be overtaken and killed. Wherever there were by-roads and turns, there were legible sign-posts with this word plainly visible upon them, "Refuge"—"*Refuge*"—pointing out the way in which the man should flee if he wished to reach the city. There were two people always kept on the road, so that in case the avenger of blood should overtake a man, they might intercept him and entreat him to stay his hand until the man had reached the city, lest innocent blood should be shed without a fair trial—and so the avenger himself would be proved guilty of murder. The risk, of course, was upon the head of the avenger if he put one to death who did not deserve to die.

Now, Beloved, I think this is a picture of the road to Christ Jesus. It is no roundabout road of the Law—it is no obeying this, that, and the other command—it is a straight road. "Believe, and live." It is a road so hard that no self-righteous man will ever tread it, but it is a road so easy that every man who knows himself to be a sinner may, by it, find his way to Christ and his way to Heaven! And lest any should be mistaken, God has set me and my Brothers in the ministry to be like hand-posts in the way, to point poor sinners to Jesus! And we desire to always have on our lips the cry, "Refuge! *Refuge!* REFUGE!" Sinner, this is the way! Walk you therein and you shall be saved!

I think I have thus given the explanation of the type. Christ is the true City of Refuge and He preserves all those who flee to Him for mercy. He does that because He is the Divinely-appointed Savior, able to save unto the uttermost all them that come to God by Him.

II. Now, in the second place, I HAVE TO GIVE AN EXHORTATION.

You must allow me to picture a scene. You see that man in the field? He has been at work. He has taken an ox-goad in his hand, to use it in some part of his farm work. Unfortunately, instead of doing what he desires to do, he strikes a companion of his in the heart and he falls down dead! You see the poor fellow with horror in his face. He is a guiltless man, but, oh, what misery he feels when he gazes upon the corpse lying at his feet! A pang shoots through his heart, such as you and I have never felt—horror, dread, desolation! Yes, some of us have felt something akin to it *spiritually*—we will not allude to the when and the why—but who can describe the agony of a man who beholds his companion fall lifeless by his side? Words are incapable of expressing the anguish of his spirit! He looks upon him, he tries to lift him up—he makes sure that he is really dead—what does he do next? Do you not see him? In a moment, he flies out of the field where he was at labor and runs along the road with all his might! He has many weary miles before him—six long hours of hard running—and as he passes the gate, he turns his head and there is the man's brother! He has just come into the field and seen his brother lying dead!

Oh, can you conceive how the manslayer's heart palpitates with fear? He has a little head start on the road—he sees the avenger of blood, with red face, hot and fiery, rushing out of the field with the ox-goad in his hand, and running after him! The way lies through the village where the dead man's father lives—how fast the poor fugitive flees through the streets! He does not even stop to bid good-bye to his wife, nor to kiss his children—but on, on, he speeds for his very life! The relative calls to his father and his other friends—and now they all rush after him. Now there is quite a troop on the road—the man is still ahead, there is no rest for him. Though one of his pursuers may pause for a while, or turn back, the others still trail him. There is a horse in the village. They mount it and pursue him. If they can find any animal that can assist their swiftness, they will take it. Can you not conceive of the manslayer crying, "Oh, that I had wings, that I might fly to the city of refuge"? See how he spurns the earth beneath his feet! What, to him, are the green fields on either hand? What are the babbling brooks? He stops not even so much as to wet his lips! The sun is scorching him, but still on, on, on, he runs! He casts aside one garment after another! He still rushes on and the pursuers are close behind him. He feels like the poor stag hunted by the hounds—he knows they are eager for his blood and that if they do but once overtake him, it will be a word, a blow—and he will be a dead man. Watch how he speeds on his way! Do you see him now? A town is rising into sight! He perceives the towers of the city of refuge—but his weary feet almost refuse to carry him further! The veins are standing out on his brow like whipcords! The blood spurts from his nostrils—he is straining all his powers to the utmost as he rushes on—he would go faster if he had any more strength. The pursuers are after him—they have almost caught him, but see, and rejoice! He has just reached the outskirts of the city—there is the line of demarcation—he leaps over it and falls senseless to the ground—but there is joy in his heart.

The pursuers come and look at him, but they dare not slay him. The knife is in their hands and the stones, too, but they dare not touch him. He is safe, he is secure! His running has been just fast enough—he has managed to leap into the kingdom of life and to avoid a cruel and terrible death.

Sinner, that picture I have given you is a picture of yourself, in all but the man's guiltlessness, for you *are* a guilty man! Oh, if you did but know that the avenger of blood is after you! Oh, that God would give you Grace that you might have a sense of your danger tonight! You would then not stop a solitary instant without fleeing to Christ. You would say, even while sitting in your pew, "Let me get away, away, away, where mercy is to be found," and you would give neither sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids till you had found in Christ a refuge for your guilty spirit! I am come, then, to exhort you to flee to Jesus now!

Let me pick out one of you, to be a specimen of all the rest. There is a young man here who is guilty. The proofs of his guilt lie close at hand. He knows himself to be a great transgressor—he has foully offended against God's Law. Young man, young man, as you are guilty, the avenger of blood is after you! Oh, that avenger—God's fiery Law—did you ever see it? It speaks words of flame! It has eyes like lamps of fire! If you could once see the Law of God and mark the dread sharpness of its terrible sword, you might, as you sat in your pew, quiver almost to death in horror at your impending doom! Sinner, I think if this avenger shall seize you, it will not be merely temporal death that will be your portion—it will be death eternally! Sinner, remember, if the Law of God lays its hands on you, and Christ does not deliver you, you are damned! Do you know what damnation means? Say, can you tell what are the billows of eternal wrath and what the worm that never dies are? What the Lake of Fire, what the Pit that is bottomless are? No, you cannot know how dreadful these things are! Surely, if you could, Man, you would be up on your feet and fleeing for life—eternal life! You would be like that man in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* who put his fingers in his ears and ran sway! And when his neighbors ran after him, he cried, "Eternal life! Eternal life!"

O stolid stupidity! O sottish ignorance! O worse than brutal folly that makes men sit down in their sins and rest content! The drunk still drinks his bowl—he knows not that in its dregs there lies wrath. The swearer still indulges in his blasphemy—he knows not that, one day, his oath shall return upon his own head! You will go your way and eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and live merrily and happily, but, ah, poor Souls, if you knew that the avenger of blood was after you, you would not act so foolishly! Would you suppose that the man, after he had killed his neighbor, and when he saw the avenger coming, would coolly take his seat and wait to be slain, when there was a city of refuge provided? No, that consummate folly is reserved for such as you are! God has left that to be the top stone of the folly of the human race, the most glittering jewel in the crown of free will—the dress of death wherein free will does robe itself. Oh, you will not flee to Christ, you will stay where you are, you will rest contented and, one day, the Law of God will seize you—and

then wrath, *eternal wrath*, will lay hold upon you! How foolish is the man who wastes his time and carelessly loiters when the city of refuge is before him, and the avenger of blood is after him!

Suppose, now, I take another case. There is a young man here, who says, "Why, Sir, it is no use my trying to be saved. I shall not think of prayer or faith, or anything of that sort, because there is no city of refuge for me." Suppose that poor man, who had killed his neighbor, had talked like that? Suppose he had sat still, folded his arms and said, "There is no city of refuge for me." I cannot imagine such folly! And, surely, you do not mean what you said just now! If you thought there was no city of refuge for you, I know what you would do—you would shriek, and cry, and groan! There is a kind of despair that some people have which is a sham despair. I have met with many who say, "We do not believe we could ever be saved," and they seem not to care whether they are saved or not. How foolish would the man be who would sit still and so let the avenger slay him because he fancied there was no entrance for him into the city! But your folly is just as great and even worse, if you sit still and say, "The Lord will never have mercy on me." He is as much a suicide who refuses the medicine because he thinks it will not cure him, as the man who takes the knife and stabs himself in the heart! You have no right, Sir, to let your despair triumph over the promise of God! He has said it and He means it—"Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." If He has shown you your guilt, depend upon it, there is a city of refuge for you! Run to it! Run to it! May God help you to take yourselves to it now! Oh, if men only knew how dreadful is the wrath to come and how terrible will be the Day of Judgment, how swiftly would they flee away to Jesus! There is not a hearer of mine here who would delay an hour to flee to Christ if he did but know how fearful is his condition out of Christ! When God the Holy Spirit once convinces us of our sin, there is no stopping, then! The Spirit says, "Today, if you will hear His voice," and we cry, "Today, Lord, today, we hear Your voice!" There is no pausing, then! It is on, on, on, for our very life! I beseech you, my Hearers, you who have sinned against God, and know it—you who want to be delivered from the wrath to come—I beseech you, by Him that lives and was dead, flee to Christ!

Take heed that it is to Christ you flee, for, if the man who had slain his neighbor had fled to another city, it would have been of no avail. Had he fled to a place that was not an ordained city of refuge, he might have sped on with all the impetuosity of desire and yet have been slain within the city gates. So, you self-righteous ones, you may flee to your good works, you may flee to your baptism and your confirmation—and your church or your chapel attendance—you may be all that is good and excellent, but you are fleeing to the wrong city and the avenger of blood will find you, after all! Poor Soul! Remember that Christ Jesus the Lord is the only Refuge for a guilty sinner—His blood, His wounds, His agonies, His sufferings, His death—these are the gates and walls of the city of salvation! But if we trust not in these, without a doubt, trust where we may, our hope shall be as a broken reed and we shall perish after all!

I may have one here who is newly awakened, just led to see his sin, as if it were the corpse of a murdered man lying at his feet. It seems to me that God has sent me to that one individual in particular. Man, God has shown you your guilt and He has seat me to tell you that there is a Refuge for you! Though you are guilty, He is gracious! Though you have revolted and rebelled against Him, He will have mercy on all who repent and trust in the merits of His Son! He has bid me to say to you, "Flee! Flee! Flee!" And, in God's name, I say to you, "Flee to Christ." He has bid me warn you against delays. He has bid me remind you that death surprises men when they least expect it. He has bid me assure you that the avenger will not spare, neither will his eyes pity—his sword was forged for vengeance, and vengeance it will have! God has also bid me exhort you, by the terror of the Lord, by the Day of Judgment, by the wrath to come, by the uncertainty of life and by the nearness of death, to flee to Christ this very moment—

"Hasten, traveler, hasten! The night comes on!
And you far off from rest and home,
Hasten, traveler, hasten!"

But, oh, how much more earnest is our cry, when we say, "Hasten, Sinner, hasten!" Not only does the night come on, but, look, the avenger of blood is close behind! Already he has slain his thousands—let the shrieks of souls, already damned, come up in your ears! Already the avenger has worked wonders of wrath—let the howling of Gehenna startle you, let the torments of Hell amaze you! What? Will you pause with such an avenger in swift pursuit? What? Young man, will you stop this night? God has convinced you of your sin—will you go to your rest once more without a prayer for pardon? Will you live another day without seeing to Christ? No, I think I see signs that the Spirit of God is working in you and I think I hear what He makes you say, "God helping me, I give myself to Christ even now! And if He will not, at once, shed abroad his love in my heart, this is my firm resolve—no rest will I find anywhere till Christ shall look on me and seal, with His Holy Spirit, my pardon bought with blood."

But if you sit still, young man—and you will do so, if left to your own free will—I can do no more for you than weep for you in secret. Alas for you, my Hearer! Alas for you! The ox led to the slaughter is more wise than you are! The sheep that goes to its death is not so foolish as you are! Alas for you, my Hearer, that your pulse should beat a march to Hell! Alas that yonder clock, like the muffled drum, should be the music of the funeral march of your soul! Alas! Alas that you should fold your arms in pleasure when the knife is at your heart! Alas! Alas for you, that you should sing and make merriment when the rope is around your neck and the fatal drop is about to be given to you! Alas for you, that you should go your way and live joyfully and happily, and yet be lost! You remind me of the silly moth that dances round the flame, singeing itself for a while and then, at last, plunging to its death—such are you! Young woman, with your butterfly clothing, you are leaping round the flame that shall destroy you! Young man, light and frothy in your conversation, joyful in your life, you are dancing to Hell! You are singing your way to

damnation and promenading the road to destruction! Alas! Alas! Alas that you should be spinning your own winding-sheets—that you should, every day, by your sins, be building your own gallows—that by your transgressions you should be digging your own graves and working hard to pile the firewood for your own eternal burning! Oh, that you were wise, that you understood this, that you would consider your latter end! Oh, that you would flee from the wrath to come!

O my Hearers, think of the wrath to come, the wrath to come! How terrible that wrath is! These lips dare not venture to describe it! At the very thought of it, this heart fills with agony! O my Hearers, are there not some of you who will soon be proving what the wrath to come really is? There are some of you who, if you were now to drop dead in your pews, must be damned. Ah, you know it! You know it! You dare not deny it! I know you know it! As you hang down your heads, you seem to say, "It is true. I have no Christ to trust to, no robe of righteousness to wear, no Heaven to hope for!" My Hearer, give me your hand! Never did father plead with son with more impassioned earnestness than I would plead with you. Why do you sit still when Hell is burning almost in your very face? "Why will you die, O house of Israel?" O God! Must I yearn over these people in vain? Must I continue to preach to them and be "a savor of death unto death" to them and not "a savor of life unto life"? And must I help to make their Hell more intolerable? Must it be so? Must the people who now listen to us, like the people of Chorazin and Bethsaida in the days of our Lord, have a more terrible doom than the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah? O you who are left to your own free will to choose the way to Hell—as all men do when left to themselves—let these eyes run down with tears for you because you will not weep for yourselves!

It is strange that I should feel more concern for your souls than you do for yourselves. My God knows there is not a stone that I would leave unturned to save each one of you. There is nothing that human strength could do, or human study could learn which I would not seek after if I might but be the instrument of saving you from Hell! And yet you act as though it concerned you not, whom it should concern the most. It is my business, but it is far more yours. Sirs, if you are lost, remember that it is yourselves who will be lost! And if you perish, bear me witness that I am clear of your blood. If you flee not from the wrath to come, forget not that I have warned you. I could not bear to have the blood upon my head which some, even of those who like sound doctrine, I fear, will have at the last day of account! I tremble for some I know who preach God's Gospel, in some sense idly, but who never warn sinners. A member of my Church said to me lately, "I heard So-and-So preach— he is called a sound-doctrine-man. I listened to him for nine years and I was attending the theater all the time. I could curse, I could swear, I could sin and I never had a warning from that man's lips during the whole nine years."

Ah, me! I would not like one of my Hearers to say that concerning my preaching. Let this world hiss me! Let me wear the coat that sparkles, and the cap that garnishes a fool! Let earth condemn me and let the fools of the universe spurn me, but I will be free from the blood of my Hearers!

The only thing I seek in this world is to be faithful to my Hearers' souls. If you are damned, it will not be for lack of faithful preaching, nor of earnest warning. Young men and maidens, old men with gray heads, merchants and tradesmen, servants, fathers, mothers, children—I have warned you this night—you are in danger of Hell! And, as God lives, before whom I stand, you will soon be there unless you flee from the wrath to come! Remember, none but Jesus can save you! But if God shall enable you to see your danger and give you Grace to flee to Christ, He will have mercy upon you and the avenger of blood shall never find you! No, not even when the red lightning shall be flashing from the hands of God in the Day of Judgment! His City of Refuge shall shelter you forever! And in Heaven with Jesus, triumphant, blessed, secure, you shall sing of the blood and righteousness of Christ who delivers penitent sinners from the wrath to come. God bless and save you all! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-14.

Verses 1-4. *Moreover, brethren, I would not that you be ignorant how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ.* The history of Israel in coming out of Egypt was a very instructive type of the history of the visible Church of Christ. They were in slavery in Egypt as all men are in bondage to sin and Satan. They were brought out of Egypt as all the redeemed are delivered by the almighty Grace of God. With a high hand and an outstretched arm, the Lord brought Israel out of the house of bondage and, by a very wonderful Baptism, "in the cloud and in the sea," they commenced their career as God's separated people. Then they all shared in the same spiritual ordinances—"They did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink." Yet, for all that, they were not all God's people. They were so nominally and visibly—but they were not all really so. And, as there was a mixed multitude that came up out of Egypt, together with the true Seed of promise, so is there an alien element in every Church at this present day. Among those who have been baptized into Christ, there are still some who, while they eat the spiritual meat and drink the spiritual drink, yet for all that have not been brought into true communion with Christ and do not, in reality, know the Lord.

5. *But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.* There was no evidence of faith in many of them and, "without faith it is impossible to please God." Is it not a sad thing that in a people so highly favored as they were, there should have been so large a proportion of those who had not the faith which renders men pleasing to God? So they did literally come out into the wilderness to die there—and they never entered into the rest of God.

6. *Now these things were our examples, to the intent we.* We professed Christians—we, Church members.

6. *Should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.* They gave way to their carnal appetites. They craved for meat when God had already given them angels' food. Now, if we act like this, we cannot be pleasing to God.

7. *Neither be you idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.* That is, to go through those unclean rites and ceremonies before their idols which are here called, "play." Ah, dear Friends, may God keep us from the worship of anything which we can see with our eyes, or hear with our ears! May we never become idolaters! You know we can very easily make idols of our children. We can make idols of our own persons! We can make idols of our talents, of our respectability and so forth. But, oh, it matters not what the idol is—it is no more pleasing to God if it is of silver and gold than if it were of the mud of the river. No—"Neither be you idolaters, as were some of them."

8. *Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.* Fornication in God's people is peculiarly black and filthy. In the ordinary man of the world, it is evil enough, but when a man professes to be a Christian, he must flee from even the very *thought* of it, and keep himself chaste, for his body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Oh, may none of us ever come anywhere near to this great evil, but in purity of heart may we walk before our God!

9. *Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted Him, and were destroyed by serpents.* I cannot stay to mention the many ways in which we can tempt Christ, but we can still readily do so. What a dreadful doom it was to be destroyed by serpents! Yet is it not amazing that in connection with this great sin, and its awful punishment, the bronze serpent was lifted high, that whoever looked at it might live? And now, if any have tempted Christ by presumptuous sin, by their delay, or by their infidelity, let them bless God that they are not yet destroyed by serpents because Christ has been lifted up even as the serpent of brass was exalted above the camp of Israel! Remember our Lord's words to Nicodemus—"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."

10. *Neither murmur you, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed by the destroyer.* It is a dreadful habit to get into—that of complaining against God. Occasional murmuring is doubtless sinful, but habitual murmuring becomes a very great evil! I am afraid that there are some who quibble at God's Providence and at His Word till they come to be quibblers and nothing else! And what good is a man who can do nothing else but carp, quibble and criticize? O Beloved, "neither murmur you, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed by the destroyer."

11. *Now all these things happened to them for examples.* They were like a book in which we might read our own history in large characters. We

see ourselves foreshadowed in them and we read our happiness or our misery in their behavior.

11, 12. *And they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Therefore let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.* For if he begins to think that he stands, it may be that it is nothing but his own imagination—there may be no real standing about it. And there is no surer sign of the falsity of a man's estimate of himself than the fact that it is a high one. He that thinks himself good has not begun to be good, for the door of the palace of wisdom is *humility*, and the gate of the temple of virtue is lowliness of mind.

13, 14. *There has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it. Therefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.* I would like to see this verse put over the top of every "sacramental" table in every "church" in England—"Therefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry." If this text were properly understood, every crucifix would be broken to pieces and the altars, themselves, would be cleared away to make room for what should be there—the Table of the Lord—and we would have no more worship of visible things, which is idolatry! O you who are the dearly-beloved of God, flee from it! Keep as far from it as you can.

I remember reading of a man of God who was the rector of a certain parish and who had in the church a very ancient and famous painted window of which he was somewhat proud. In the design there was a representation of the Godhead—the Father was there, and oh, how blasphemous! He was represented as an aged man! And, one day, this clergyman, who had seen no evil in the window, heard a rustic explaining to a companion that that was the God whom they worshipped. The rector did not hesitate for a moment, but he threw a stone right through that part of the painted window. I suppose that was an offense against the law of man, but certainly it was not against the Law of God! He would never have that figure replaced on any account, whatever, and I think that he did well! "Dearly Beloved, flee from idolatry." Put it out of your sight! Do not tamper with it, but hate it with a perfect hatred! In God's eyes, it is one of the most fearful of sins. He has said, "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God," and He will have nothing to come between us and the pure and simple worship of His own invisible Self.

—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.

WATCHING TO SEE
NO. 2622

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 14, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 26, 1882.

"I will stand my watch, and set myself on the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved. And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain on tablets, that he may run that reads it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith."
Habakkuk 2:1-4.

I KNOW that, on Thursday nights, there is a large number of friends here who are engaged in the work of the Lord, and sometimes it is meet to address them, mainly, because, if the bread be put into the hands of the disciples, they will pass it on to the multitude. In the day of battle, if the command is given to the officers, they will repeat it to the various sections of the army, and so the whole mass shall be moved forward with one aim and objective. Habakkuk was, like ourselves, called of God to labor for the good of the people among whom he dwelt. He was one of the later Prophets who came to warn God's ancient people before the Lord meted out their last terrible measure of chastisement. He saw, in vision, his country given up to the Chaldeans, and he pleaded with God about the matter. He had a burden on his heart which pressed very heavily upon him. He saw the nation crushed beneath the oppressors and he asked, "Why is this?" The Lord replied, "Because of the iniquity of the people." Habakkuk understood that, but then it occurred to him that the Chaldeans, who were treading down the people, were themselves far greater sinners—that, certainly, in the matter of oppression and blood-thirstiness, they were a far more guilty people than those whom they came to punish! So he used this fact partly as an argument with God that He would withdraw the Chaldeans and overthrow them. And partly he set it before the Lord as a difficulty which troubled his mind. He said, "You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity: why look You upon them that deal treacherously and hold Your tongue when the wicked devours the man that is more righteous than he?" Habakkuk was puzzled, as David had been before him, and as many a child of God has been since. He felt as if he could not do his work rightly, so, in his perplexity, he came to consult God concerning it. And having laid

the case before the Lord, he made use of the memorable and instructive words which we are now to consider under the gracious guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I. So, first, dear Friends, we shall notice, in our text, THE ATTITUDE OF THE LORD'S SERVANT.

That is expressed in the one word, "watch." When you are puzzled—when you are troubled, when you do not know what to do, then may God help you to say, "'I will stand my watch, and set myself on the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved." Before we can do any real service for God, we must first of all receive our commission from Him. We cannot teach others aright unless we are, ourselves, taught of God—and His truest servants are those who continue waiting upon Him that they may receive from Him the words which afterwards they are to speak to the people in His name. Habakkuk is a model to us in this respect. Troubled in heart, he resolves to set himself to watch his God and to listen for the message he is afterwards to deliver.

We learn from him that the attitude of the Lord's servant towards God is, first, *an attentive attitude.* "I will stand my watch, and set myself on the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me." If we have a deaf ear towards our Lord, we must not marvel if He gives us, also, a dumb tongue. If we will not hear what God speaks, we may not expect to be able, ourselves, to speak in His name. Or, if we pour forth a flood of words, yet we may not expect that they will be such as He will approve and bless. O dear Friends, if we would work for God in the right spirit, we must begin as Jesus did, of whom it was written in prophecy long before He came to the earth, "The Lord God has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakens morning by morning, He wakens My ears to hear as the learned. The Lord God has opened My ears and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back." In the fullness of time, Jesus came forth and taught to others what he had thus learned in secret, and, if we would teach others, we must first be taught by the Spirit of God.

How much more we might know if we were only willing to listen to the Lord's messages! There is, in the Word of God, a voice which is often inaudible because we are so engrossed with other things. There is, also, the voice of the Christian ministry which oftentimes speaks to us, but it is like the cry of one in a wilderness—it is not heard by us. There is, too, a voice in God's Providence. How much the Lord says to his flock by every stroke of his rod and by every blessing of His daily Providence! There is a voice from every grave—a message in every bereavement when friends are taken away. There are voices everywhere speaking to those whose ears are open. Above all, there is the blessed Spirit always waiting to communicate to us the things of God by that soft mysterious whisper which none know but those who are, themselves, spiritual—and which they know at once to be the very voice of God within their spirits. Brothers, we must be attentive! We must not allow a single sound from the Lord to escape us. Some men seem God must speak thunder and lightning before they will ever hear Him, but His true children sit at His feet

that they may catch the slightest movement of His lips and not let a single syllable from the Lord fall to the ground. The attitude of the Christian worker must be one of attention.

But, next, it must be a patient attitude. Observe what Habakkuk says, "I will stand my watch." Not merely, "I will be upon my watch for a moment," but, "I will take my place like a sentinel who remains on guard until his time of watching is over." Then the Prophet puts it again, "I will set myself on the tower"—as if he took his position firmly and resolutely upon the tower, there to stand and not to stir till he had seen and heard what God the Lord would have him see and hear. Do you think, dear Friends, that we are sufficiently resolved to know our Master's will? Do we frequently enough get upstairs alone and, with our open Bibles, search out what God would have us learn? And do we pray over the Word till we have wormed ourselves into the very heart of the Truth of God—till we have eaten our way into it, as the weevil eats its way through the shell, and then lives upon and in the kernel? Do we do this? Do we set ourselves upon the tower, determined that we will not go forth to speak for the Lord till the Lord has spoken to us, lest we go upon a fool's errand, to deliver our own inventions, instead of proclaiming the message that comes from God Himself?

Your attitude, my Brother, if you are a servant of the Lord, is that of attention and patience.

To which I may add that it is often *a solitary attitude.* "I will stand my watch." The Church has gone to sleep, but, "I will stand my watch." Like flocks of sheep, they lie all around us, the multitudes of souls for whom we have to care, but there are still shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night, to whom the Glory of the Lord is often revealed when the sheep perceive it not. The city lies wrapped in slumber and no sound is heard among her ten thousand sleepers, but there is one who knows no sleep, nor gives slumber to his eyelids, for he is the appointed watchman of the night and he keeps to his tower and sets himself in his place, firmly resolved that till the morning breaks there shall be somebody to keep guard over the city. Well, sometimes, I say, watchmen have to be quite alone. O Brothers, it would be better for us if we had more solitude! It often becomes necessary to us because we cannot find kindred spirits that can watch with us a single hour. The higher you get up in the Church of God, the more solitary you will be. For the sheep, there are many companions, but even for an under-shepherd, there are but few. As for that Great Shepherd of the sheep, the Chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls, the Good Shepherd, you know that His most favored Apostles could not watch with Him even one hour, but He had to endure His terrible agony in Gethsemane alone. And such of His servants as He honors most will know best what is the meaning of Gethsemane, the olive press and the solitude which often accompanies the stern watch that the faithful servant of God must keep.

Never mind if all others around you say that you are hot-headed, zealous, enthusiastic, foolish and I know not what! Say to yourself, "I will stand my watch." What if they should think that you carry things much too far and have too much religion, or are too consecrated? Reply, "I will

set myself upon the tower, and will still watch, for that is my business even if I must attend to it alone." The man who has God for his Companion has the best of company! And he that is a solitary watcher for the Most High God shall, one day, stand amidst yon shining legions of angels, and he will, himself shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of his Father. Expect, therefore, if you are a servant of the Lord, to sometimes have to watch alone—and be thankful for that position if God honors you by calling you to occupy it!

Observe, further, that the attitude of the child of God who is called to be a prophet to his people—as I know that many of you are—is one in which *the mind must be entirely engrossed.* The true servant of the Lord thinks of nothing else than this—"I will stand my watch, and set myself on the tower, and will watch to see what the Lord will say unto me." He is wholly taken up with that one matter! Many of you have your secular callings to follow, but, without neglecting them, you can still, in spirit, be watching and waiting to hear the voice of God, for God speaks to us not only when we are in the study, or kneeling in prayer by our bedside, but He has ways of talking with us while we are going along the road and so He makes our hearts to burn within us. He can speak with us in the thick of the greatest throng and, perhaps, some of us were never more conscious of the voice of God than amid the rushing of ten thousand spindles, or in the midst of the crowded street! At such times, the noise and turmoil of this busy world have not been able to drown the gentle voice of God within our spirit. May you, Beloved, be thus engrossed! If you intend to serve the Lord, give your whole soul to the learning of His Truth and the hearing of what He has to say to you, that you may afterwards be able to tell to others what you have, yourselves, been taught of God.

Observe, also, that the Prophet was *entirely submissive to the will of God.* He put himself into this attitude, that he might hear whatever God would say to him, and that his only thought, all the while, should be, "What shall I answer when I am reproved?" We need to be, as much as possible, like clean white paper for God to write upon. Our mind is often far too much occupied and too prejudiced to receive a clear impression of the will of the Lord. How many make up their mind as to what *they will see in a text* and so they never learn what the passage would teach them if it were allowed to speak freely to them. If you would serve God, say to your soul, "I will stand my watch, and set myself on the tower, and I will give both my ears and all my heart to understand what God would have me know, and to learn what He would teach me." May this be the happy privilege of us all!

The last remark I will make upon this first head is that the attitude of the Lord's servant was *eminently practical.* The Prophet did not watch and wait merely that he might know the secrets of the future, or be able to prophesy, or show his wonderful knowledge. No, but he wanted to know what he should answer when he was reproved. He knew that when he went out into the world, men would begin to reprove him for being a Prophet—they would rebuke him for his zeal and his earnestness! And so he waited that he might have the right answer to give, with meekness

and fear, to all who opposed him. That should be your wish and mine, Beloved, for, if we serve God faithfully, we are sure to meet with objectors. Well, if this opposition is only against *us*, it does not matter much, but, alas, sometimes their critical and cruel remarks are against the Truth of God itself, and, worst of all, against our blessed Lord! In such a case it is well to have something with which we can stop the mouths of the snarling dogs. It is a blessing to have heard God's voice, for, if you repeat the message He speaks to you, even the echo of God's voice will break the rocks in pieces and cause the cedars of Lebanon to split in two! There is nothing that can stand against the Word of the Lord! In the 29th Psalm, David says, "The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty" and, if we have heard that voice, and know how, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to echo its mighty tones, they will strike the objector dumb! And even when he hates the Truth of God, he will still be compelled to feel what force there is in it. So the servant of the Lord says, "I will watch and wait to hear what God will say to me, for then I shall know what to answer when I am rebuked and reproached for the Truth's sake."

This, then, is to be the attitude of the children of God. Get away to your watchtowers, Brethren! Get away to your tower by the brook Jabbok and wrestle with the Angel! Get away to the top of Carmel and put your head between your knees and cry unto the Lord until the heavens are covered with clouds, and the thirsty earth is refreshed with rain! "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much," but they who do not hear God's voice cannot effectually pray, for God will not hear their voice if they will not hear His. If we have been deaf to Him, He will be deaf to us. The communion necessary to prevailing prayer renders it absolutely essential that we should first set ourselves to hear the voice of God and then, again, it shall be said that the Lord listened to the voice of a man, for the man first listened to the voice of the Lord!

II. The second part of our subject is, THE WORK OF THE LORD'S SERVANT.

We have seen what Habakkuk's attitude was. The next verse tells us about his work—"The Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tablets, that he may run that reads it." It was not long before the waiting Prophet heard God speak and if you and I wait upon Him, it will not be long before we hear something that will be worth our waiting for and, especially, we shall receive plain directions as to our duty!

Habakkuk was, first, *to see the vision*. The first name for a Prophet was, "a Seer." You, my Brother, cannot be a *teller* of the good tidings of salvation unless you are first a *seer*. Mind that you see well all that is to be seen. Use your eyes to the best advantage and also to be able to see what God sets before you. It is curious how the different senses are mingled in these verses. Did you notice the expression in that first verse, "I will watch to see what He will say unto me"? When God speaks to us, we can hear with our eyes as well as with our ears. There is an inner sense which sees the meaning of the Lord's language, and the inner ear hears

the very tones in which that meaning is expressed. So, the Prophet was first to be a *seer*—he was to wait to see what God would say unto him.

Then, next, he was to "write the vision," that is, *to make it known* and, Beloved, when you and I have seen or heard anything which God has revealed to us, let us go and write it down or make it known by some other means. God has not put the treasure into the earthen vessel merely for the vessel's own sake, but that the treasure may afterwards be poured out from it, that others may thereby be enriched! You have not been privileged to see, merely to make glad your eyes, and to charm your soul—you have been permitted to see in order that you may make *others* see—that you may go forth and report what the Lord has allowed you to perceive. God does not usually favor His servants with visions that they may keep them to themselves. Paul hid for 14 years one that he saw, but he was obliged to let it out at last and, I suppose, that if he had had more visions, he would not have been able to keep that one concealed so long. John no sooner became the seer of Patmos than he heard a voice that said to him, "Write." He could not speak to others, for he was on an island where he was exiled, but he could write—and he did. And, often, he who writes, addresses a larger audience than the man who merely uses his tongue. It is a happy thing when the tongue is aided by the pen of a ready writer and so gets a wider audience and a more permanent influence than if it merely uttered certain sounds and the words died away when the ears had heard them. The first thing which you have to do, if God has called you to serve Him, is, after hearing what He has said to you, to make it known to somebody else—"Write the vision."

And take care, dear Friends, that, in the spreading of the Truth of God, you *use as permanent a means of doing so as you can*. "Write the vision," that is to say, if you cannot write with a pen, if you have not that special gift, yet write it on men's hearts! Do not merely speak it, but seek to reach the inmost soul of your fellow beings and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, write the Truth there! God help you not merely to sound it in their ears, but to write it on the fleshy tablets of their heart—and to leave the Truth of God deeply engraved upon their memory! I have sometimes been greatly favored in this way. Indeed, it has often been the case, for I almost daily meet with persons who say, "We remember hearing you preach more than 20 years ago, and we remember what you said." And they will quote something which they then heard. I remember visiting, in one of our hospitals, a man who had heard me years before. He said to me, "While I was lying here, one night, I thought I heard the very tones of your voice"—and he told me some similes that I had used when he listened to me. I am glad to be successful in producing permanent impressions upon my Hearers, but I wish I could be more so. Mr. Jay used to say that in preaching, we must say things that will "strike and stick." It is well when we can do so and I urge you, who are the servants of the Lord, to be sure that when you teach the Truth, you so teach it that it shall be permanently learned under your instruction. "Write the vision...upon tablets."

Then the next duty of the servant of God is to "*make it plain*." I have sometimes thought that certain ministers fancied that it was their duty

to make the message elaborate—to go to the very bottom of the subject and stir up all the mud they could find, there, till you could not possibly see them, nor could they see their own way at all. I could not help, the other morning, comparing some preaching to a boy who was in front of me, one summer's day, wanting a penny, and sweeping the crossing for me in such a fashion that he enveloped me in clouds of dust in order to clear my way! Have I not seen preachers do just the very same thing? They tell people all the difficulties they have discovered in the Bible—which difficulties most of their Hearers would never have heard of unless their ministers had told them—and they raise a cloud of dust in order to make a pathway for a poor troubled soul! We would rather that they let the dust lie still, for we, ourselves, raise enough dust without their help!

"Write the vision, and make it plain." I suggest that as a motto to you who preach in the open air and to you who speak in the lodging houses or anywhere else. "Make it plain." It is wonderful how plain we must make the Gospel before some people will be able to understand it. They have no idea what we mean by many of the expressions that we use. The most common language among Christians is often an unknown dialect to worldlings—they cannot make heads or tails of it. You and I, speaking together of our Christian experience, perfectly understand one another, but if we were to say the same things outside to the majority of the people, we might just as well preach to them in Dutch! If you have a loaf of bread and you want to feed a hungry child with it, it is hopeless to try to put that loaf of bread inside the child just as it is. Crumble it up, Brother, crumble it up as small as you can! And pour over it some of the nice warm milk of your own hearty love—and in that way the child and the loaf will come into contact before long! There is no way of getting many great Truths of God in the lump into most people's minds—we must break them up into small pieces, or, to use the words of the text, when we "write the vision," we must "make it plain."

Another important point is to *make it practical.* I have heard this text misquoted a great many times, "that he that runs may read it." Kindly look at the passage and see whether that is correct. It does not say, "that he that runs may read it," but it does say, "that he *may* run that reads it." That is a different thing and that is what we want to see. But I have known some people who have had the Gospel delivered to them and they have slept that heard it! There has been something about the prophet's very tone, and voice, and manner that has tended to fill the ears with somniferous influences. "Ah," said one to me, "I cannot help believing in mesmerism and so would you if you could see how our minister mesmerizes the people all round the gallery every Sunday! They can sleep soundly enough after he has been preaching a little while." Now, dear Brothers, if we want to do any good to our fellow creatures, we must hear God's voice ourselves—and that will not send us to sleep, but it will wake us up! and then we must go and tell the people very plainly what we have heard, and also tell it to them so earnestly "that he may run that reads it." I believe that I could easily make some of you run if I were to take up a telegram from the table and read, "Mr. So-and-So's house is on fire. He is requested to hurry home as fast as possible." Away he would go down

the aisle as soon as the words were out of my mouth! You see, that message is something that concerns him *personally*, something that may mean great peril to his property, so he runs that reads it, or hears it read! I wish I could always preach about the wrath to come in such a way that every unsaved man who heard me would take to his heels and run for his life from the City of Destruction! Or that I could so speak about the glories of Heaven and the preciousness of Christ, that men would straightway run to Him, even to the Holy One of Israel, whom God has glorified! Let us always try to write on men's hearts in a good running hand, that he that reads the message may at once begin to run to escape from judgment and to find the Savior and to enter into eternal life!

There, child of God, is your attitude, and there is your work.

III. Now, in the third place, the next verse brings out our difficulty, that is, THE TARRYING OF TRUTH, "for the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

We preach a Gospel whose chief glory lies in the future. The blessings which we proclaim have a most important bearing upon the present, but the stress and emphasis of them relate to the future and, therefore, it is that, oftentimes, men reject our testimony because, to them, the time is not yet, or they doubt its truth because they do not at once see the results produced which we foretell.

Brethren, *every promise of God's Word has its own appointed time of fulfillment* and every doctrine or privilege has its own allotted hour. There is an election of Grace, but we shall not know all who are included in it till we shall meet the whole company of the faithful at the right hand of God! There is a redemption by blood, but the fullness of that redemption will not affect these mortal bodies until the trumpet of the Resurrection has sounded out its mighty blast over land and sea! Then shall we see how Christ has redeemed the bodies as well as the souls of His chosen ones. Take any blessing that you please and the same rule applies. Although there is much in the Covenant of Grace to be enjoyed, today, there is much more that is yet to come.

The servant of God is still a prophet. He says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved"—that is a prophecy! He says, "Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you"—that is a prophecy! He says, "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever"—that is a prophecy! He says, "The hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation"—that is a prophecy! And the testimony of Jesus is still the spirit of prophecy and each prophecy has an appointed time in which it will be fulfilled.

And, further, *it is absolutely certain to be fulfilled*. There is no word which God's servant rightly speaks for his Lord which will not come true. Ye have not followed cunningly-devised fables and, therefore, you need not speak your Master's message as though you were old wives rehears-

ing the gossip of a country village! You are telling what God the Holy Spirit has revealed in the Word and applied to your own soul—therefore, tell it boldly! Now, then, you are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech sinners by you, and you are to go and pray them, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God! Do you not see, dear Brothers, the position you are to take up? May you be helped to take it up! You are a prophet and your prophecy has a time for fulfillment—and it is absolutely certain to come to pass!

But, *sometimes, it apparently tarries*. You tell men of the blessedness that comes of true religion and they say, "There is such-and-such a Believer who is very sorrowful." "Oh, yes," you reply, "in his case the vision is tarrying." "There is such-and-such a child of God who does not enjoy the Light of the Lord's Countenance." Just so. We did not say that he always would, but we do say that he will, one day, walk in the Light of God. "Ah," says one, "I have been seeking the Lord for years, but I have not obtained peace and comfort." Just so—He did not promise that you would obtain the blessing immediately. It may be that, for a while, you shall "walk in darkness, and see no light," to test your faith. But, though the vision may seem to tarry, it will not really tarry—it will come in God's good. time. Oh, how often have you and I, struggling to live by faith and to glorify God, geo into a maze and we have said, "We shall get out of it." But we did not get out of it for a long time. "Oh," we have said, "surely God will deliver us!" Yet, for a while, He did not deliver us. We even got into still worse trouble than before and then the arch-enemy began to whisper—

"The Lord has forsaken you!
Your God will be gracious no more"—

and what little faith we had began to waver, for we said, "We did not think that we should be tried like this! We thought we would come out of the darkness much sooner than this." But now, Brothers and Sisters, in looking back upon those past exercises and experiences, what do you say of them? Did the Lord tarry, after all? "Well," you reply, "He tarried as I would like Him to always tarry—

'He hid the purpose of His Grace,
To make it better known.'

He allowed the clouds to collect more thickly to give all the heavier shower of blessing, by-and-by. He did permit me to begin to sink. He did let me nearly go down, but it was only to make me know how weak I was, that I might the more firmly cling to His hand when He plucked me out of the waves and bade me stand still by His side."

I can personally say, at the present moment, that I would not like to have had one ache less, or one depression of spirit less, or one affliction less of any sort. I would rather not have any more—as everybody says—but yet I am glad that my "rathers" count for nothing with God and that I have not any permission or need to manage for myself! How much better everything is arranged by Him! As for the past, it is all right and, blessed be His holy name, it has been so right that it could not be better! It has not only been good, but it has been better. Yes, it has been best of all! So shall every child of God find it. You may say, "This life of faith is difficult.

This hanging on so long, almost by one's eyelashes—will it not soon come to an end?" The end will come at the right time—

"God is never before His time:
He is never too late."

Remember how Israel went out of Egypt at the appointed time? It is written, "And it came to pass the same day, that the Lord did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies," and on that same day when Infinite Wisdom and Infinite Grace shall know that it is better for you to be delivered, you shall be delivered to the praise of the glory of God's Grace!

IV. The fourth verse gives us our last point, but I will only just hint at what I would have said if there had been more time. THIS TARRYING OF TRUTH BECOMES A TESTING OF THE PEOPLE because that Gospel which we are to tell does not bring forth all its fruit at once to those who hear us. What then? Why, this is the winnowing-fan, this is the sieve, this is the way by which God discerns between the righteous and the wicked!

As for the wicked man, he says, "I do not see any present good coming out of religion. Look at that poor, miserable, sighing, groaning, poverty-stricken Christian over there! What good has his religion ever done him? I do not believe in it." Just so. Now we know who and what you are, for our text says, "His soul which is lifted up is not upright in him." He is so proud that he judges God's Word and condemns it! He will not have Christ to reign over him. He will not believe God. He will not wait for God and the reason is that his soul is not upright in him. Follow him home and you shall see, in his life, that his soul is not upright in him. The man who judges God is one whom God will judge and who shall not be able to stand in the Day of Judgment. I will not say that every man who rejects Christ is necessarily immoral, but I will say that, in nine cases out of ten, it is so and that when you trace an infidel's life, there is something there that accounts for his infidelity. He wants a cover on his unbelief for that is something he has good need to cover! There is something about his daily walk that does not agree with holiness—some darling sin that spoils his hope of being saved as a Christian. So he tries, as much as he can, to get a hope out of lies, out of contradicting God. "His heart is not upright in him."

But how does this test discern the righteous? Why thus—"The just shall live by his faith." You know that a Christian, a holy man, a just man, a justified man talks thus—"Yes, if God has spoken anything, it is true. If God has said that, it will be fulfilled. I will wait. Troubles may multiply, cares may come like a deluge, but I will wait. I am sure that God is true and I will wait and watch for the unfolding of His purposes. Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. I will never give up reliance upon Him." Now, that man is a just man, and that is the man who will live! It is always well when these three things go together—righteousness, faith, life. They ought not to be found apart. They should always be together.

"The just man"—that is, the righteous man—"shall live." Ah, there is no true life without that righteousness! "Shall live by his faith"—and there is no true life without faith and no true righteousness without

faith. These three go together—may we all have them and may it be your joy and mine to keep on telling others what God has revealed to us, that we may thus gather out His own believing people, His elect and redeemed ones, while the graceless will, perhaps, despise and hate what they may see and so will ripen for the flames of Hell! God grant, of His Grace, that they may yet be delivered, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HABAKKUK 2:1-11.

Verse 1. *I will stand my watch, and set myself on the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.* "I shall look to God and I shall also look to myself. There shall be an expectation as I gaze upward to my Lord and there shall also be an examination as I look within at my empty, guilty, good-for-nothing self."

2. *And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tablets, that he may run that reads it.* The Prophets were accustomed to write their messages upon wax tablets and the Lord bade Habakkuk thus write what he had seen. God would have both His Law and His Gospel plainly revealed to men so that they might know and understand His will. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "We use great plainness of speech." And the Lord would have all His servants do likewise. It is not for us to bury the Gospel under a mass of fine words, but to set it forth in the simplest and clearest possible language—for it is not the power of human words that God blesses, but the Truth, itself, as it is applied to the heart by His Spirit.

3. *For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.* Is that a contradiction—"Though it tarry…it will not tarry"? No. To us it appears to tarry, but, in God's way of reckoning, it does not really tarry. To our impatient spirits it seems long in coming, but God knows that it will not be a moment beyond the appointed time.

4. *Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.* This grand text was quoted by Paul when he wrote his Epistles to the Romans, the Galatians and the Hebrews. It proves that Old Testament saints understood New Testament life! David and Abraham lived by faith, even as Paul and Peter and the other Apostles did.

5. *Yes also, because he transgresses by wine, he is a proud man, neither keeps at home, who enlarges his desire as Hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathers unto him all nations, and heaps unto him all people.* This was spoken of the Chaldeans, an ambitious nation so exceedingly greedy that it seemed as if the whole world would not be large enough to satisfy their voracious appetite. Their great kings enlarged their mouths like Gehenna and they seemed as insatiable as the very jaws of Death itself. They heaped up nation upon nation to make a huge empire for themselves.

6. *Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increases that which is not his? How long? And to him that loads himself with thick clay!* That which is said of ambition may also be said of covetousness. What an idle task it is for a man to go on perpetually hoarding—heaping together more than he can possibly enjoy, as if it were made for nobody but for one man, and he must grasp all the wealth of the world. There is scope enough for the loftiest ambition when you seek the nobler joys of Grace. There is room for a sacred covetousness when you "covet earnestly the best gifts," but, in every other respect may these two things—ambition and covetousness—be always thrust far from us!

7. *Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite you, and awake that shall vex you, and you shall be for booty unto them?* So it happened to Chaldea that the nations which they had spoiled, by-and-by, grew strong enough to take vengeance upon them and to spoil them in their turn. Usually, when men do wrong, it comes home to them sooner or later. The chickens they hatch come home to roost at night, at any rate, if not before. Towards the end of life, a man begins to gather the fruit of his doings, or, if he does not reap it in this world, certainly he will in the world to come.

8, 9. *Because you have spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil you; because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein. Woe to him that covets an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil!* He fancies, when he gets rich by oppressing others, that he will, himself, rise out of harm's way. He says that he will make the main chance sure. He who has plenty of gold fancies that he will be able to preserve himself from sorrow, but this is what God has to say about that matter—

10, 11. *You have consulted shame to your house by cutting off many people and have sinned against your soul. For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.* These Chaldeans were great builders, as we know by the vast ruins that still remain. And most of their buildings were erected by labor exacted from the people whom they oppressed. They received no wages for their work, so even today, from the ruins, the stone cries out of the walls and the beams out of the timber answers it. Let all men know that, sooner or later, God will execute justice even upon the greatest nations! If they will be destroyers, they shall be destroyed. Their evil policy shall, by-and-by, sweep them away. "There is a something in the world," says one, "that makes for righteousness." Indeed there is, only it is more than a something—it is God himself who is always working in all things towards the vindication of His own righteous and holy Law.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—196, 700, 685.

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HOW FAITH COMES
NO. 2623

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 21, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 2, 1882.

"And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on Him for the saying of the woman who testified, He told me all that I ever did. So when the Samaritans were come unto Him, they sought Him that He would tarry with them: and He abode there two days. And many more believed because of His own word; and said unto the woman, Now we believe not because of your saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is, indeed, the Christ, the Savior of the world."
John 4:39-42.

WHEREVER faith exists, it is the gift of God. It is a plant that never sprang up spontaneously from the soil of corrupt human nature. Whether it is little faith or great faith, it is equally of Divine origin, and wherever it is found—whether in the child of pious parents who was brought up with the utmost care, or in one who has lived all the former part of his life in the vilest sin—it is equally and alike the fruit of the Spirit and the effect of God's Grace. From this fact I gather great encouragement because, if it needs Divine power to implant faith in the heart that looks more favorable, it needs no more to implant and preserve it in the soul that appears most unprepared to receive it. Casting our eyes over the whole map of Palestine, we might have said that Samaria was probably as unlikely a place as any in the entire country in which we might expect to find followers of the Lord Jesus, for, at the very threshold of Christ's announcing Himself, there would be found this prejudice, that the Samaritans would not believe in a Jew.

They would not even *listen* to a Jew, for, while the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans, the Samaritans reciprocated the feeling and had no dealings with the Jews. Yet it was among the Samaritans, the members of the mongrel faith into which Judaism had deteriorated, that Christ was to find a large number of His followers! My Brothers, you will be wise to go, first, to those places where there seems to be least likelihood of conversions. You will often find that God judges not as man judges—"Man looks on the outward appearance"—but God, who reads the hearts of men, can see a certain readiness where we reckon that there is the most unreadiness! The Lord knows that the soil where the Seed of the Kingdom is sown may be in the best condition for fruitfulness even when we fancy that it cannot possibly yield us any return for our labor. If faith is the work of God—a supernatural thing—as it certainly is,

what have you and I to do with judging according to natural appearances?

You may go and speak, my Brother, feeble as you feel yourself to be, for the Seed owes very little, indeed, to the hand that sows it. And you may go, my Brother or my Sister, and scatter this precious Seed upon what you may regard as waste soil, but the Seed owes very little, after all, to the soil! God can make it spring up like a root out of a dry ground and, as of old He brought water out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock, so can He bring a harvest to His Glory where everything seems utterly barren. If it is God's work, let us have no doubts, much lese any despondencies, concerning it, but let us continue to put ourselves into His hands that He may use us anywhere that He pleases, for we know not where He will most glorify His name through our feeble instrumentality.

I am going to talk about faith—faith as it came to these Samaritans. And we shall notice, first, *faith's annunciation*—"Now we believe." Secondly, *faith's nativity*—where it is born. Thirdly, *faith's upbringing*—faith's Nazareth—for, according to the text, it grows and takes higher ground as it develops. "Now we believe, not because of your saying: for we have heard Him ourselves." I give these names to my three divisions in order to assist your memories.

I. First, then, I call your attention to FAITH'S ANNUNCIATION. Here we have it, in the 42nd verse—"we believe."

Genuine faith may, through timidity, be hidden for a little while, or, possibly, the love of carnal ease may lead some to conceal their faith in Christ. But it is of the very nature of faith that it should make its appearance known and felt. As Christ had what our Church of England friends call His Epiphany, when He was manifested to men, so faith, though it may, for a while, be swaddled and laid in a manger, and kept in a stable, must have its coming out—it must have its manifestation and men must see it! Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea managed, for three years or so, to conceal their faith to a great degree. Every now and then the light would burn a hole through the bushel, for they could not quite hide the fire that was within them, but when Jesus died, then the thoughts of many hearts were revealed and both these men stood out in the clear light of day as His avowed disciples. They could not help it! The occasion had come when their faith must be manifested and they must, by their actions, say, "Now we believe." Our Lord has always put, side by side with the faith that saves, *the duty of confession of that faith*. His own words are, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." And Paul, guided by the Holy Spirit, wrote, "If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Christ loves not a tongue-tied faith—He would not have Faith dumb, but would have her speak to the glorifying of her Lord on whom she depends! So these Samaritans, when they had come to believe in Jesus, must confess their faith and they did so by saying, "Now we believe."

Possibly, dear Friends, they felt some little difficulty—I suppose that it was but little in their case—in saying, "Now we believe," *because they had previously undergone a period of doubt*. Evidently these people did

not receive the woman's testimony, although others had done so. They listened to it and were sufficiently moved by it to go out and see the Teacher of whom she spoke, but they were not brought to faith by it. Perhaps they even battled with her and raised questions—I will not say quibbles—but, at last, to her great joy, they said to her, "'Now we believe.' We have got out of all the muddle and confusion in which we were. We have left the darkness, the doubt and the difficulty. And 'now we believe.'"

Are there any of you, dear Friends, who have been amusing yourselves for years with the notion that you were infidels? Have you tried to make up, in your own minds, a sort of belief that you were "agnostics"? I think that is the favorite word for those who are proud of being know as *nothings* or *ignoramuses*. Have you tried to bolster up in your mind the idea that you were something very amazing in the form of a skeptical person—all the while, I doubt not, believing a great deal more than you liked to admit—believing and trembling at the same time? But have you played that foolish game out and have you now truly trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ as your own Savior? If so, then do not be ashamed to say, "Now I believe." You may have to eat your own words—well, then, eat them! You may have to be very humble when you meet your old friends—well, then, be humble—there will be no harm to you in that! And, perhaps, they will bring against you some of your own arguments. Well, it will serve you right if they do and, besides, it will give you the pleasure of breaking those arguments in pieces and, perhaps, of winning your friends for Christ, for you have seen those fallacies broken in your own case and you may be the means, in the hand of God, of breaking the bow and cutting the spear in sunder in the case of those who have been your fellow doubters!

Do not be ashamed of confessing your past folly. I think a man who says, "I was wrong," really says, in effect, "I am a little wiser, today, than I was yesterday." But he who never admits that he has made a mistake and who claims that he has always been in the right, has evidently never made much growth in knowledge of himself. So, do not be ashamed to say, "Now I believe," though that confession may have been preceded by many a doubt.

And do not hesitate to *say it to the person who has, up to now, been baffled by you*. I expect the tears were in that poor woman's eyes when she said to the men, "You remember what sort of person I used to be, and you see the change that has been worked in me. You know that I always spoke straight out what I believed, and this blessed Man, who read my very soul, is the Christ! I know He is. Then, why do you not believe what I say about Him?" I should not wonder if she pleaded very hard with them, and prayed, and entreated them to believe her testimony. And now, at last, when they did believe, it was due to her that they should cheer her heart by saying, "Now we believe." And, even though they had to add, "not because of your saying," that qualification would not grieve her. "Oh," she would say, "so long as you believe, I do not mind how you came into that happy condition! I would have been glad if God had used my saying to bring you to faith, but, inasmuch as He blessed the saying of the great Preacher, the Lord and Master, Himself, I am the more glad

on that account, for He will have all the glory of it and, so long as you do but believe, you give gladness to my heart."

There are some of you, dear Friends, to whom I have preached in vain for a long while and God knows that when I have been laid aside, I have often felt a holy joy in my heart at the thought that the man who has been preaching for me will be blessed by God to some who have never been converted under my ministry. Sometimes, when I have longed to be fishing for souls, but could not even stand and, therefore, had to lie at home in pain, it has been my hope that some other fisherman would throw the fly better than I might have done, and that you would take the bait from him, though you have often refused it from me. And when you come forward to join the Church, and say to me, as many have done, "Sir, we believe, but it was through Fullerton and Smith's mission," or, "it was through the teaching in the Sunday school," or, "it was through the agency of someone who spoke to us in the aisle," I am sure that I have been just as glad and happy as if you had told me that it was by my own personal testimony that you had found the Lord. Glad, indeed, am I to be the instrument of saving souls, but still, if you are saved, the instrumentality by which that blessed result is reached is, after all, a very small matter! But, when you do really believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, take care that you tell us, for we have wept over you and prayed for you. And when you are converted, it seems but a fair and honest recompense that you should say to the individual whom God has honored to be your spiritual parent, "Now we believe." By doing so, you will strengthen and encourage him to go on with his work more earnestly than before! Perhaps you will even stave off a heartbreak and make the Christian sower fill his hands the fuller and scatter the seed more deftly because he knows that he has not labored in vain, nor spent his strength for nothing!

In this annunciation of faith, I want you to observe, also, that *it was very speedy.* The Lord Jesus Christ was only in that place for two days, so that those who said, "Now we believe," must have testified very speedily after they believed. I do not think that it is the duty of people to wait several months before they come forward and confess Christ—it may sometimes be the wisdom of the officers and members of the Church to say to some persons, "We would like to see a little of your life, that we may judge by your fruit, before we receive you into fellowship." It may even be their *duty* to say that, and to keep them waiting outside the Church for a while to test their genuineness, but it is not the duty of the candidate, himself. His business is, as speedily as may be convenient after he has believed in Jesus, to confess his faith and to seek to be baptized and added to the Church. You do not find Paul waiting several months, after he was converted, before he was baptized. You see, in Scripture, no trace of what our old people in the country used to practice, namely, "summering and wintering" converts, to see what they were like before they permitted them to make a confession of their faith in Jesus. No, no—if you have believed in Him, come along with you!

The next step is to say so, and to say it as quickly as you can, "Now we believe." If tonight you are brought to faith in Jesus Christ, I would say to you, find some Christian Brother and tell him at once that you have believed in Jesus. When this precious child of the Spirit of God, namely,

Faith, is born, let it be known to the King's house that it has come! In Heaven they make such blessed tidings known for, "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents." Though it is but the initial stage of faith, hold not the glad news back from the Church of God, but let it be speedily proclaimed, "Now we believe." What a joyous moment it is when any can say, "Now we believe!" It is the end of suspense—it is the end of the kingdom of darkness, it is the end of fear, it is the end of despair—it is the dawn of hope, it is the dawn of Heaven! Oh, what a world of meaning there is in those three words! What glory is opened up to the poor tearful eye by faith! What sights are visible when we can say, "Now we believe!"

O my dear Hearers, can you all say, "Now we believe"? If you can do so, truthfully, you can say a greater thing than Cicero or Demosthenes, with all their eloquence, ever uttered! Have you been seekers for months and years? Have you been tempest-tossed and driven up and down upon the sea of doubt? May you now cast your anchor overboard into the depths of Jehovah's love and when you find that it holds, may you cry out, with ecstasy, "Now we believe!" There, then, is the annunciation of faith.

II. Now, very briefly, I want you to look, in the second place, on FAITH'S NATIVITY. How does faith come into men's hearts?

According to the plain teaching of Scripture, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." But faith is not always created in the human heart by the same form of instrumentality. It is *always* the fruit of the Spirit of God but it comes in different ways. Some of these Samaritans believed because of the saying of the woman and, I suppose that in the Christian Church, a very large number derive their faith through the power of God's Spirit, from *the personal witness of others who have been converted*. Now look, dear Friends, all of you, at this woman, and be encouraged to use your personal testimony for Christ! She was the spiritual mother of many a Samaritan believer, yet she was a woman of bad character. An ill savor was about her name—everybody in Sychar must have looked upon her as a dangerous person of fickle love and of foul ways—and yet, after she had found Christ, she did not hesitate to tell her neighbors about Him—and God did not refuse to bless her testimony! I believe that there are thousands of persons whom no man would ordain, but who are ordained of God, for all that—and there are many whom we would say that the Church could not employ, whom the great Head of the Church employs, and employs grandly, too! What if you have been converted from great sin? Be careful and watchful that you sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto you, but let not shame with regard to the past make you ashamed to confess the Christ of the present, and to acknowledge that He has worked a great work upon you! Here was a poor fallen woman and yet, after her conversion, she became a missionary of Christ to the city of Sychar! She was, altogether, quite an unofficial person. She does not appear to have been called a sister of mercy, or to have put on any peculiar garb, but she ran straightway to the people with whom she had lived and, perhaps, to the very men with whom she had sinned! She went to tell the story that Christ had come to her and had given to her that Living Water, of which, if a man shall drink, he shall never thirst

again! Well, Believer, if no man sends you, go all the same, for *God* sends you! Perhaps no man has laid his hands upon you, but of what use is the laying on of hands? Full often I fear it is only empty *hands* laid on empty *heads*—so, if no man has laid his hands on you, go without the laying on of hands, in the name of Him who has laid His pierced hands upon you and said to you, "Fear not, for I am with you: be not dismayed, for I am your God: I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness."

If you ask, "What shall my message be?" let your message be your own personal testimony—what you have, yourself, seen, heard, tasted, handled and felt of the good Word of God. I do not suppose that this woman arranged her discourse under three heads, or that she had an introduction and a conclusion and all that, but she just went to the men of the city and said, "Come see a Man who told me all things that I ever did—is not this the Christ?" That was her little sermon and as often as she repeated it over and over again, she spoke out and bore her personal testimony—and so she brought the men of Sychar to Christ. "Go home," said Christ to one whom He had healed, "go home to your friends and tell them how great things the Lord has done for you, and has had compassion on you." It is amazing how attractive a personal narrative is! If you begin to explain to some people the doctrines of the Gospel, your audience will diminish one by one. But tell them your own experience of the power of Christ and they will listen as listened the wedding guest when "the ancient mariner" laid his hand upon him, detained him and told him that strange legend of the sea! You will have attentive hearers when you speak about your own dealings with Christ, the wonders that Christ has worked in you and for you, and of which you can testify because they are your own experience! That is, in many a case, the nativity of faith. The mother tells her child, the husband tells his wife, the brother tells his sister and, more often, still, the sister tells her brother. One man communicates it to his co-workers—a gentleman speaks of it in the drawing room to those of his own class—and so faith is born in other hearts as the result of the personal testimony of Believers!

But, dear Friends, there are some persons who do not seem as if they would ever be converted by that means. Personal testimony evidently fails with them as it did with some of these Samaritans. What, then, remains? Why, it will suffice if personal testimony leads the way and excites attention to the subject! Then, if the man is wise, he asks for time and thought—and our Lord Jesus is always ready to attend to those who are anxious about spiritual matters, but are not quick to believe. Two days did He remain in Sychar and those unbelievers who were candid sat at His feet and heard Him through the two days. Now, what did Jesus preach during those two days? Turn to your New Testaments and find the sermon. Even though you look very carefully, you will not discover it, for it is not there! And it is a very curious thing that when the woman preached, we have notes of *her* sermon, but when Christ preached, we are not told what He said. Very remarkable is it that, frequently, we have those discourses of Christ which did not convert anybody and we have *not* those discourses which *did* convert people! Why is that? I suppose that the Holy Spirit gives us the discourses which were rejected in order

to let us see that there was no fault in the sermon, but that the fault was in the people. But as for those that were received, He simply tells us the result and does not state the particular form of the discourse. I would infinitely rather preach sermons that win souls and are then forgotten, than go on preaching and having my discourses printed from week to week, and hear of no results! Happily, I have not to choose either alternative, but these people who were not persuaded to believe by the witness of the woman, were converted through hearing Christ, Himself.

"Well," says one, "but we cannot personally come to Christ right now." No, I know that you cannot, but you can do what is very much like it. I recommend every man who finds faith to be a difficult thing, to carefully read through the four Gospels, asking the Holy Spirit to enable him to believe what is recorded and revealed there. I usually find that the greatest doubters are the people who do not read the Bible. Holy Scripture has within itself a mighty convincing power—and when men lie soaking in it, it soon penetrates into their very souls! A man says, "I cannot believe," and yet he does not read or hear about the very thing that is to be believed! He keeps out of the way of it and yet says, "I cannot believe it." If there is something in the newspaper today, about which you felt compelled to say, "Other people seem to believe it, but, somehow, I am unable to do so—I would be very glad to believe it, but I cannot"—what would you do? You would read the statement again! You would refer to any other account that would be likely to confirm it. You would candidly examine the whole affair to see whether it was true or not. Yet how few—how very, very few have thus come to Holy Scripture, itself, and virtually listened to Jesus, Himself, and then have gone away and still said, "We do not believe." Unless they are really given up to hardness of heart, the result, in every case, seems to be that when they search the Scriptures, and seek to know what Christ did and said, they are soon subdued by His sweet power and are found sitting at His feet, believing in His name! If anybody has not done this and yet remains an unbeliever, I charge his unbelief upon himself as his own fault and sin. If I will not examine the evidence, I am to blame if I do not believe the Truth of God!

Do you ask, "What evidence shall I examine?" I say again, examine the documents themselves! Let Christ speak for Himself. "Had I not better read a, 'Life of Christ'?" Listen, there is no, "Life of Christ," extant but the one written by the four Evangelists. All the attempts that have been made at lives of Christ, whatever value they may have, are not biographies of Christ! They are somebody's idea of what He *may* have been. We need no other, "Life of Christ," than the fourfold one given to us in the Gospels! Those Inspired Evangelists have told us all we ought to wish to know. And if you read those Books—not men's books which have been written upon those Books—I believe that through the blessing of God the Holy Spirit, you will yet be able to say, with these Samaritans, "Now we believe." God grant that it may be so! It is in this way that faith is often born. Holy Scripture is the Bethlehem of faith! There is this blessed Child brought forth and happy are they who take it, and nurse it, that it may grow.

III. This is our last point, FAITH'S UPBRINGING, or, as I called it, "faith's Nazareth."

It is possible that there were some of the Samaritans who believed and who, when they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of your saying, for we have heard Him ourselves," meant that they did, at first, believe because of the woman's saying, but, after a while, they outgrew that first stage of faith and they came to believe in Jesus still more strongly because they had heard Him themselves.

This was a higher form of faith. The beginnings of faith are as a spider's web. It would be difficult to say how little a thing faith may be at first. I doubt not that many believe the Bible because they were always taught by their parents that it is the Word of God—although they have never thoroughly examined that question for themselves. Some have believed the Truth of God, at first, because their minister preached it. Well, I would not discourage even that form of faith, for it may be like a very tiny thread which may be fastened to a string—and the string may be tied to a rope and the rope be attached to a cable—and, at last, the shipwrecked mariner may thus be saved from drowning! Anything that links men to Christ may, nevertheless, be overruled of God to their salvation. When that woman said, concerning our Lord, "If I may but touch His clothes, I shall be made whole," I fear that there was some superstition in the notion, but, nevertheless, Christ overlooked that and, seeing the real faith that lay hidden underneath, took care that it should live. Do not discourage *anything* that tends towards faith in Christ, but it is a grand thing when men grow, by God's Grace, till they can say, "Now I do not believe simply because of what my dear mother taught me. I do not believe merely because of what my minister preached. I do not believe because of any human being at all, but I believe because I have heard Christ for myself, I have had personal dealings with Him and, now, '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.'"

The faith that sprang from Christ's own testimony would also be *much more vivid faith.* The other day there was a meeting held to protest against the barbarities indicted on our Jewish brethren. All the speakers spoke very strongly, but if any one of you had seen what has been done and had come fresh from the deeds of blood, I guarantee that you would have spoken very intensely, indeed. Your indignation would have flamed fiercely if you had seen the homes of the people burned down and men murdered and women ravished, for the sight of the cruelties and abominations would have affected you far more than merely hearing about them! So, when Faith gets to deal with Christ for herself—when she sees sin forgiven—when she feels the weight taken from her troubles—when she realizes the great possessions of joy which Christ has given to her—to her, herself—then she becomes much more vivid and truly living than the faith that rests simply upon the testimony of others!

And, Beloved, as our faith becomes more vivid, so, also, it becomes more independent. We need more independent Christian people in the present day! I hope that we are growing a race of them, here, and I pray that we may grow far more of them. I have seen young people and, for all that matter, old people, too, behave excellently and seem to be admirable Christians while they have lived here in the midst of other warm-hearted Believers. But they have gone down into the country to live and it has

been very grievous to see how cold-hearted they have become—how some of them have even, at last, forsaken the assemblies of God's House and, if they have not utterly turned aside, yet they have been very different from their former selves! Beloved, if you have seen Christ and are truly one with Him, you will live with Him when all Christian association is withdrawn! Look at many of the houses in our London streets. If a giant were to pull one of them out of the middle of the row, they would all come tumbling down! They only stand because they lean on one another. But Christians should be detached houses—no, semi-detached—for they must be attached to Christ—but they ought to stand alone, apart from men, because of their living faith in Him!

This kind of faith has grown beyond that which was at first exercised and it has become broader. If you will kindly look at the chapter, you will notice that all the woman could tell the men was this, "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did—is not this the Christ?" But these men had learned more than that, for they had listened to Jesus Himself! They wondered, at first, that He, being a Jew, should care for them. But, by-and-by, it darted into their mind that He had not come to be the Savior of Jews, alone, so they said, "We have heard Him, ourselves, and know that this is, indeed, the Christ, the Savior of the world." Oh, that was grand, broad faith, when they saw that this Christ was not the Jews' Christ alone, but the Christ of the Samaritans—the Christ of the Gentiles, too—the Savior of sinners all over the world! May your faith and mine, dear Friends, grow broad! May we believe for others! May we hope for others! May we expect to see God's salvation extending even unto the ends of the earth and, moved by this faith, may we be stirred up to go out and find the lost sheep, that we may bring them to the Great Shepherd, that He may fold them in safety by His tender care! Let us be so much with Christ that we may catch His spirit, and that our faith may grow exceedingly, and our love to all the saints be increased!

The Lord give His blessing, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 4:1-42.

Verses 1-6. *When, therefore, the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus Himself baptized not, but His disciples), He left Judea and departed again into Galilee. And He must needs go through Samaria. Then came He 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.* Do not be surprised, dear Brothers and Sisters, if you sometimes grow weary in the Lord's work. I trust that, even then, you will not be weary of it, but that you will believe that your blessed Master can still use even His tired servants and bless their labors. The Lord Jesus Christ worked great marvels even when He sat wearily on the brink of Jacob's well—and you, perhaps, are at this moment as fatigued and worn as you well can be—yet, will you not awaken all the energies of your soul if you should see an opportunity of doing good, even if it

should be to some poor fallen woman, as in the case here mentioned? It is a blessed thing never to be too tired to pray and to never be too tired to speak to an anxious enquirer!

7. *There came a woman of Samaria to draw water.* Providence was at work so that when Christ reached the well, this woman was on her way there. It was very late in the day for anyone to go to draw water, but, probably, the other women, who went to the well early in the morning, were not willing to associate with her, so she had to go by herself. Late as she was, however, she was all in good time, for she reached the spot just when Christ was waiting to bless her!

7, 8. *Jesus said unto her, Give Me to drink. (For His disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat).* Or else they might have drawn water from the well to refresh Him.

9, 10. *Then said the woman of Samaria to Him, How is it that You, being a Jew, asks drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If you knew the gift of God, and Who it is that says to you, Give Me to drink; you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water.* See the deadly mischief of ignorance concerning spiritual things? If she had known, she would have asked, and Christ would have given! But the first link was missing and, therefore, the rest of the chain was not drawn on. Sometimes all that people need is a little wise instruction and they will then trust the Savior. God grant that we may always be ready to give it! Alas, there are some who need much more than that, but Christ could truly say to this Samaritan woman, "If you had known, you would have asked, and I would have given." O dear Hearers, do not perish through ignorance! You have your Bibles—then, search them! You have a Gospel ministry among you—take care that you give diligent heed to what you hear from the servants of the Lord!

11. *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?* Christ told the woman that He could give her living water, but it puzzled her to know how He could get at it. The well where they had met was deep and He had nothing to draw the water out of it—how, then, could He go still deeper to get the living water of which He had spoken? She could not understand His simile and, to this day, it is the same with many of our Hearers. The simplest language of God's ministers goes right over the heads of the people. They take our words literally when they ought to see that they are spiritual and, on the other hand, I have known them spirit them away when they ought to be accepted literally. Such is the perversity of man's mind that, often, he will not understand the Truth of God.

12-14. *Are You greater than our father, Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? 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.* These words set forth the wonderful nature of Divine Grace! They greatly err who suppose that we can receive it and yet, after all, be left to perish without it! No, but when it is once imparted to us, it continues to spring up within us like a well that never runs dry! It is the

living and incorruptible seed, "which lives and abides forever." It is of the very nature and essence of the Grace of God that it is indestructible—it cannot be taken away from the heart in which it has been implanted by the Holy Spirit!

15. *The woman said unto Him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come here to draw.* This was an ignorant prayer on the part of the woman, but it is one which I would commend to every enlightened soul—"Sir, give me this water." Do you want a form of prayer? Here is one for you! "Sir," *Lord*—"give me this water." The Lord is ready to hear that petition and to give this precious living water even now.

16, 17. *Jesus said unto her, Go, call your husband and come here. The woman answered and said, I have no husband.* The Lord Jesus knew all about her character and here He touched the weakest point in it. His plainest teaching had so far missed the mark, for He had not reached her conscience—but He was about to do so.

17, 18. *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.* You can imagine her astonishment—her blank amazement as the secret story of her life was thus repeated to her!

19. *The woman said unto Him, Sir, I perceive that You are a Prophet.* It would have been a sign of better things if she had said, "Lord, I perceive that I am a sinner," but that confession had to be made a little farther on. How apt people are rather to think about the preacher than about themselves! If half the criticisms which are passed upon ministers of Christ were bestowed upon the hearers, themselves, how much sooner they might receive the blessing they need! The woman then asked our Lord a question about religion which was strangely out of place from such a woman as she. Yet, often, those who have least morality will have the most ceremonialism and concern about the *externals* of worship!

20. *Our fathers worshipped in this mountain.* This Mount Gerizim—

20. *And You say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.* This she thought was a very important matter.

21. *Jesus said unto her, Woman, believe Me, the hour comes when you shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.* "There shall be an abolition of all specially-holy shrines, for all places shall be, alike, holy. There shall be a putting an end to all your traditions and your forms of worship, for God shall be worshipped after another fashion than that which is merely formal and superficial."

22-26. *You worship what you do not know: we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour comes and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship Him. 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, who is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things. Jesus said unto her, I that speak unto you am He.* That majestic word of Christ carried conviction with it—the woman believed it then and there!

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.* She was too glad, too happy

to recollect so poor a thing as a water pot! It was much to her before, but very little now. As one who finds a precious pearl forgets some trifle that he carried in his hands, so she "left her water pot."

28, 29. *And went her way into the city, and said to the men, Come, see a Man, who told me all things that I ever did—is not this the Christ?* Her notion was that when Christ came, He would tell all things. Here was a Man who revealed her innermost secrets—was not He the Christ?

30-32. *Then they went out of the city and came unto Him. In the meantime, His disciples urged Him, saying, Master, eat. But He said unto them, I have meat to eat that you know not of.* O Beloved, there is a wonderful fascination about the blessed work of soul-seeking! When one is really anxious to bring a sinner to the Savior, eating and drinking are often forgotten! As the hunter of the chamois, in the heat of the chase leaps from crag to crag, and is oblivious of danger, and forgets all about the time for his meals, so he that hunts after a precious soul, to win it for Christ, forgets everything else! He is altogether absorbed in this holy pursuit—the Master was more absorbed in it than any of us are ever likely to be.

33-35. *Therefore said the disciples, one to another, Has any man brought Him anything to eat? Jesus said unto them, My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work. Say not you, There are yet four months, and then comes harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes and look on the fields for they are white, already, to harvest.* That was probably an old Oriental proverb, used by lazy men who never thought it time to get to work, but Jesus said, "Do not use the idler's language any longer. Now, at once, there is work for you to do."

36-42. *And he that reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit unto life eternal: that both he that sows and he that reaps may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One sows, and another reaps. I sent you to reap that whereon you bestowed no labor: other men labored and you are entered into their labors. And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on Him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that I ever did. So when the Samaritans were come unto Him, they besought Him that He would tarry with them: and He abode there two days. And many more believed because of His own word and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of your saying: for we have heard Him, ourselves, and know that this is, indeed, the Christ, the Savior of the world.* The Lord bring us all to trust in Him for His dear name's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—766, 547, 549.

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

SECONDHAND
NO. 2624

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 28, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 12, 1882.

"Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?"
John 18:34.

I EXPLAINED this morning, [Sermon #1644, Volume 28—"*Our Lord's First Appearance before Pilate*"—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org] why our Savior put that question to Pilate. The Roman governor had asked Him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And Jesus as good as said to him, "Have you, of your own knowledge, seen anything in Me that looks like setting up to be a king in opposition to Caesar? You intend, by asking Me that question, to enquire whether I have led a rebellion against your government, or the imperial authority which you represent. Now, has there been anything which you have observed which would have led you to make this enquiry, or do you only ask it because of what the Jews have been saying in their enmity against Me?" You will see, dear Friends, that our Lord asked this question in order that He might get from Pilate's own lips the acknowledgment that he had not seen any sign of sedition or rebellion in Him and that it might be proved that the charge had been brought to Pilate by those outside, and had not come from the Roman governor himself.

We will, now, forget Pilate for a while, for I want to use this question in two ways with reference to ourselves. First, I shall utilize it as *a warning against secondhand quibbles at Christ and His Gospel*. Some people have a large stock of them and we might say to each one of these quibblers, "Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this?" Then, in the second place, I shall use the text as a *warning against all secondhand religion*, pressing this question home upon each one who speaks up for Christ, "Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this?"

I. We will begin with the opponents of the Lord Jesus and consider our text, first, as A WARNING AGAINST SECONDHAND QUIBBLES AT CHRIST AND HIS GOSPEL.

There are a great many people in the world who really do not know why they oppose religion—and if you ask them the reason, they repeat some old bit of scandal, some stale slander upon Jesus and His Cross—and they give that as their answer. I firmly believe that there are thou-

sands, who are ranked among the opposers of the Gospel who have not anything to say against Christ of their own knowledge, but others have told them something or other, and they go on repeating and reiterating the old exploded obsolete objections that have been demolished thousands of times! And I suppose they and others of their kind will keep on doing the same thing right to the end of time.

As soon as Jesus Christ's Gospel was launched upon the world's sea, it had to encounter opposing winds, storms and tempests. Like a scarred veteran, the Gospel has had battle after battle to fight. In our Lord's own day it was opposed most vigorously. His Apostles found that wherever they went, their feet were dogged by those who railed at Jesus and His Word. And when the Apostles had all fallen asleep, the early Churches found that they had need of an order of men who became the apologists for the Gospel and who bravely stood up to defend it against the attacks of divers heathen philosophers, skeptics and heretics who arose wherever the Truth of God was preached. There was opposition everywhere to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ—and His servants girded up their loins to do battle for Him and for His Truth.

That great campaign has continued even down to this day and there is this very remarkable fact about it, that, at the present moment, most of the objections that are brought against the Gospel are those that were answered and silenced some hundreds of years ago! And even when they appeared, all those centuries ago, they were then only reproductions of some older objections which had been answered and, as the defenders of the faith thought, had been trampled out, like sparks of fire trodden under foot! But, somehow an ill wind has begun to blow, again, and the fire, which some hoped was finally extinguished, has burned up once more. Originality in skepticism has almost ceased to be—we scarcely ever hear anything fresh in the way of heresy nowadays. We are troubled with the very errors which our forefathers answered a hundred years ago, yet the adversaries of the Truth of God go on cleaning and sharpening their blunted shafts, that they may once more shoot them at the great shield of faith which is impervious to their puny assaults, for it can quench even the most fiery darts of the devil himself! The modern arrows of skepticism will be broken against that glorious shield, yet they will probably be gathered up by another generation that will follow the present one and the heretics and objectors in the future will do just as their fathers did before them. I want, at this time, to put to any quibbler whom I may be addressing, the question of our Lord to Pilate, "Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this?"

And, first, I ask you to observe that there are many unreasonable prejudices. Some persons have great prejudices against the Bible. I will not repeat what they say, but I would like to ask every person who thinks ill of this blessed Book, "Have you read the Bible through, and read it thoroughly? Have you studied it? Are your objections your own? Come, now, did you make them yourself?" It is almost always found that objections are like the axe the young Prophet was using—they are borrowed—

and often they are objections against a Book which has not been read at all, and which has not been allowed to exercise its own influence upon the heart and the judgment of the person who is prejudiced against it to his own hurt! Other people have told men, such-and-such things, so they shut the Book and refuse to look into it for themselves.

There are other people who are *prejudiced against public worship*. You see, I am starting at the very beginning—those matters with regard to religion which are elementary. Of course, we are told that we shut ourselves up on Sunday in these dreary buildings of ours, and here we sit, in a horrible state of misery, listening to the most awful twaddle that ever was taught, our singing being nothing better than droning and the whole of our worship being something very terrible! If I were to read to you the descriptions of an English Sabbath which I have sometimes seen in newspapers, they might make you almost weep tears of blood to think that we poor souls should suffer so much as we do! Only you know that we are altogether unconscious of any such suffering! We really have been under the notion that we very much enjoyed ourselves while worshipping the Lord in His House. Many of us have the idea that the Sabbath is the happiest day in all the week and that, when we hear the Gospel preached, it is sweeter than music to us and makes our hearts leap within us for very joy!

Of course we are very much obliged to our friends for telling us how dull and how unhappy we are and for wishing us to be in a better condition. We can only say that, not being enabled to perceive any of these sorrows, we would advise them to retain their pity and exercise it upon themselves—for they certainly need it far more than we do! To any of you who make remarks of the kind I have indicated, I ask—"Do your difficulties concerning public worship really arise out of your attending the House of God, out of your hearing the Gospel preached—out of your joining in the songs and praises of God's people?" Oh, no! It is those people who never come to our services who believe the Sabbath to be dull, the House of God to be dreary and the preaching of the Gospel to be a monotonous sound from which every sensible man would escape! I put the question of my text to every person who is prejudiced against the Bible, and prejudiced against our public worship in God's House, "Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this?"

Sometimes, *the prejudice concerns the preacher*. I will not say that it is so about myself, though I have had, in my time, more than my fair share of it. "Hear *him*?" says one, "I would not go across the road to listen to such a fellow." Many have said that and the preacher, whoever he may be, is condemned without a hearing. If the objector were asked to give a reason for his prejudice, he might answer by quoting the old lines—

"I do not like you, Dr. Fell.
The reason why, I cannot tell,
But this I know, and know full well—
I do not like you, Dr. Fell."

I should like to say to everybody who is prejudiced against any servant of Christ, "Do you say this of yourself?" Those absurd stories about the

preacher—did you really hear them, yourself, or did somebody tell you them? Would you like to be judged by the mere idle tittle-tattle of the street or of the newspapers? And if you would not, then be an honest, reasonable man and at least give the servant of God a hearing before you condemn him or his message! And, take my word for it, the most-abused preacher is very likely to be the very man whom God will bless the most! Not the one who is most praised, but the one who is most censured by the world, is probably the man who has been most faithful to his Master and to the Gospel committed to his charge. At any rate, be honest enough to reply to the question which our Lord put to Pilate, "Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this?"

There is a remark sometimes made, and I fear it is a very common one, "Oh, I would not be a Christian, I would not be religious, for *it makes men so dreadfully miserable*!" Now, Friend, do you say this, yourself, or did somebody else tell you? Come, now, you say that religion is such a miserable thing—have you tried it for yourself? Have you experienced the misery that comes out of prayer—out of faith—out of repentance—out of love to God—out of being pardoned—out of having a good hope of Heaven? Have you ever proved what that dreadful misery is? I think if you had ever really tested these things for yourself, your verdict would be the very reverse and you would join with us in singing the lines that express what many of us most firmly believe about this matter—

"'Tis religion that can give
Sweetest pleasures while we live!
'Tis religion must supply
Solid comfort when we die."

Yet you go on repeating that slander upon religion though you cannot prove it to be true and might easily learn its falseness! Let me appeal to you. Had you a godly mother? "Yes," you say, "and it was her life that prevents my being altogether an unbeliever." I thought so, but, if I remember her aright, she was a quiet good soul who, in her home, tried to make everybody happy. And though she had not much pleasure in her son, for he was wayward and willful, yet there was no unkindness on her lips—the law of love always ruled the house. She was a weak and feeble creature who derived but slender gratification from any of the outward enjoyments of life, but she had a deep, secret spring of peace and joy which kept her calm, quiet and happy. And now that she has gone to be with God, she has left a gleam of sunlight still behind in her sweet memory. You did not get from your mother, nor from other godly friends, your belief that religion makes men miserable! And I venture to say that, so far as you have had any actual personal observation of it, you have been inclined to come to quite the opposite verdict and to confess that, though you do not know how it is, yet, somehow or other, godliness does give to the people who possess it, peace of mind, happiness of heart and usefulness of life.

There is another slander that is spread abroad very widely, and that is *that the Doctrine of the Grace of God*—the Doctrine which we try to preach from this pulpit—has no sanctifying effect. That, on the contrary, *it is*

likely to lead people into sin. They say that if we preach, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life," and do not preach up good works as the way of salvation, it is clear that such teaching will lead people into sin! Clear, is it? It is not so to me! But, my Friend, will you answer this question, "Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this?" Is it not a matter of history that there never have been stricter living men than the Puritans? What is the great quarrel against John Calvin, himself, but that when he ruled in Geneva he was too stern and too exacting in his requirements? It is an odd thing—is it not—that these Doctrines of Grace should, on the one hand, make men too strict as a matter of fact, and yet that the wiseacres who object to them should say that these doctrines are likely to lead into sin those who accept them? It is not found to be so by those who believe them!

Let me again appeal to any candid objector. My dear Sir, did you ever prove what it is to believe in the great love of God to you—that, for the sake of His dear Son, out of pure, unmerited Grace, He has chosen you, saved you and appointed you to eternal life? Did you ever believe that and then feel, as a natural consequence, that you would go and live in sin? I know that you never did, but that it was quite the reverse! "Here," said some boys to a companion, "we are going to rob an orchard. Come along with us, Jack." "No," he said, "my father would not approve of such a thing." "But your father is very fond of you and never beats you as our fathers do." "Yes," said the boy, "my father loves me very much and I love him very much—and that is the reason why I am not going to rob the orchard and so grieve him." Now, you believe in the beating of the boys by the rod of the Law, do you not? And we, on the other hand, feel that because God loves us and will, in His infinite mercy continue to love us, therefore we must keep out of sin as much as we possibly can. We cannot do that horrible thing which would grieve His blessed Spirit. So I ask you, as truthful men, not to repeat that old slander concerning the Doctrines of Grace leading to sin until you have really had some reason to assert it because of what you, yourselves, have witnessed in the lives of Christian people! Do not say it again until you can truly say it from your own experience or observation! Do not repeat it simply because others tell you it is so.

Yes, and there are some who say that *there is no power in prayer,* that we may pray, if we like, but that we cannot change the purposes of God—that the laws of nature are fixed and immutable and, therefore, to pray is a piece of absurdity. "Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this?" I will speak personally to you. Did you ever try to pray? Did you ever put this matter to the test—whether God will hear prayer or not? I do not think you can have put it to a fair test and I would like you to see whether God will or will not hear even *your* prayer if you cry to Him. If any say to me, "God does not hear prayer," I have scarcely the patience to give them an answer! I live from day to day crying to God for this or that favor which I receive as certainly and as constantly as ever my sons had their meals when they sat at my table! I

knew how to give good gifts to my children and I know that my Heavenly Father gives good gifts to me. My evidence, of course, is only that of one man—and it may not suffice to convince others, though many of you, here, could add your testimony to mine—but I should like all objectors just to give prayer a fair trial before they are quite so sure about the inefficacy of it. Let them see whether real prayer, offered in the name of Jesus Christ, will not be heard even in their case!

I am certain that there is not a praying man anywhere on the face of the globe who does not bear this testimony—that God hears him. And if any say, "We do not pray and do not believe that God hears prayer," what evidence have you to bring? You are altogether out of court, for you know nothing about the matter! But the man who does pray and then says, "God hears me," is the man to be a witness, and the one who has a right to be heard. I have told you, more than once, what the Irishman said when there were five witnesses to prove that he had committed murder. He said to the judge, "You must not condemn me on their evidence—there are only five people here who saw me do it—I can bring 50 people who did not see me do it!" But that was no evidence at all and, in like manner, there are many who say, "You bring a certain number of people who pray, to prove that God hears them. But we can bring ten times as many, who do not pray, and who do not get heard." What has that to do with the matter? Where is the evidence? You say it not of yourself but merely repeat, secondhand, what has been said by others, so often and so foolishly, that it sickens one to hear it!

It is beginning to be questioned in many quarters, nowadays, whether there is any real effect produced by prayer, except that of exciting certain pious emotions in the breasts of those who pray. This is a very pretty statement! We ought to be extremely obliged to those superior persons who allow that even so much may be done! I am amazed they do not assert that prayer is ridiculous, or hypocritical, or immoral! Their moderation puts us under obligations. And yet I do not know—when I look again at their admission, I thank them for nothing—for they as good as call us fools! Do they think that we perform a useless exercise merely for the sake of exciting pious emotions? We must be grievous idiots if we can receive benefit from a senseless function! We are not willing to whistle to the wind for the sake of the exercise. We should not be content to go on praying to a god who could be proven to be both deaf and dumb. We have still some little common sense left, despite what our judicious friends consider to be our fanaticism. We are sure that we obtain answers to prayer! Of this fact I am certain and I solemnly declare that I have received of the Lord that which I have asked at His hands. I am not alone in such testimony, for I am associated with multitudes of men and women who bear witness to the same fact and declare that they sought the Lord and He heard them. Take care, Brothers and Sisters, to record all instances of answered prayer so as to leave this unbelieving generation without excuse. Accumulate the facts and demonstrate the grand Truth of God! Multiply the testimonies till even the philosophers are

obliged to admit both the phenomena and the deduction rightly drawn from them.

There is one other gross slander to which I would reply, and that is a saying that goes round among troubled consciences—*that Christ will not receive sinners*—that the very guilty cannot be saved. They say that Christ can forgive and deliver up to a certain point, but if you get beyond that, He is no longer willing to pardon. Dear Hearer, has that foolish and wicked notion entered your head? Then I ask you, "Are you speaking for yourself about this?" Did you ever prove it to be true? Have you ever sought His face? Have you cried to Him for mercy? "Yes," you say, "I have." And then, further, have you thrown yourself at His feet, trusting Him to save you, and have you been refused? I know you have not! There was never a sinner, yet, who fell down before Him and determined to lie there and perish if He did not speak a word of mercy, to whom the Lord has not, sooner or later, spoken the Grace-word which has sent that poor sinner on his way rejoicing! I would at least like you to go and see whether Christ will receive you or not before you say that He will not do so.

Say not that the door of His mercy is shut, but go in while it is still open! If He casts you out, then He will have broken His word, for He has said, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." Do not call Him a liar and say that He will cast you out till you have, yourself, proved that it is so! And that, I know, will never be the case. I am afraid that there is another being who has been whispering that vile insinuation into your ear—and he is your archenemy who is seeking your destruction and, therefore, he has come and told you this lie against the infinitely-loving and gracious Savior! Believe him not, but come even now and put your trust in Jesus and you shall find that He will give you eternal life!

I have thus examined the question of my text with reference to the opponents of the Gospel. I shall now leave that part of the subject, praying the Holy Spirit to bless it to all whom it may concern.

II. Now, in the second place, I am going to speak briefly, but with much earnestness, to the many here present who are friends of the Gospel, but who have only a SECONDHAND RELIGION, if they have any at all. I want to have a word with you, dear Friends, about this matter. You and I have been talking a great deal about Christ. Now, have we been simply quoting what others have said? Have we been making extracts from other people's experience, or is what we have said something that we can say of ourselves, and not what others have told us?

For, Brothers and Sisters, first, a *secondhand testimony for Christ is a powerless thing*. Take a man—as I am afraid is often done—with no Grace in his heart and send him to Oxford or Cambridge, with the view of making him a parson. Teach him the sciences, languages, mathematics and give him a degree. His friends want to get a living for him and the bishop's chaplain proceeds to examine him. The first question ought to be, Is this young man a Christian? Is he truly converted? Does he know the Lord? Does he understand, in his own soul, the things he is going to

preach to others? For, if he does not, what good can he do in the Christian ministry? Perhaps he is sent to a school of theology to learn the various systems of doctrine. He must read the judicious Hooker. He must study Jeremy Taylor. He must take lessons in elocution and rhetoric. Then, possibly, his friends buy him some lithographed sermons that he may read and they get him some books, that he may make extracts from them to put into the sermons he preaches. Suppose that man is, all the while, unconverted? Suppose that he does not know anything about the working of the Grace of God in his own soul? What is the good of him as a teacher of others? No good at all! At any rate, at the best, he may be only as good as one of those newly invented phonographs which can repeat what is spoken into them. This man can read out what he has selected from other books, but that is all. We will suppose that he is a very decent sort of fellow—an amiable gentleman, well-instructed, well-behaved and so on—but all that he has to say is what other people have told him!

But now put into that man's pulpit, only for one Lord's-Day, a preacher who has known what it is to feel the burden of sin and to have it removed by faith in Jesus. Let him begin to speak to the people in downright earnest about the pangs and sorrows of true repentance. Let him tell them about their need of the new birth and about his experience of obtaining that great blessing and how, by Sovereign Grace, he was brought out of the darkness into the light, and even from death to life. Let that man be moved to speak of the peace of pardon through the precious blood and of the joys of Heaven laid up for all Believers—and then the people will wake up, I will guarantee you! This is something very different from the preaching to which they have been accustomed—and they will soon feel the power of it.

Yet the Lord sometimes uses even a preacher who does not, himself, understand the Truth he proclaims. I know a man who went and heard a certain minister preach, or rather, read a sermon, and it was such a good one that the hearer's conscience was smitten by it. The discourse was about the new birth and, the next morning, the man went off to the clergyman, and said, "Sir, I want you to explain this matter further to me, for I am dreadfully distressed by what you preached last night." What, do you think, this preacher said? He said, "Well, Jonathan, I am sure I never meant to cause anybody any uneasiness. What was it that gave you such trouble?" "Why," he replied, "it was that part of the sermon where you said that we must be born again." So the preacher said, "Well, here is the discourse. You see, by the dates upon it, that I have used it 13 times before, so I could not have made it with any special view to your case. I am very sorry, indeed, that it caused you any discomfort, and I will never preach it again if it brings people into trouble in this style." That was all the help the poor man could get from the parson, so he went out and found a true servant of God who knew the Truth of God, himself, and was not a secondhand retailer of it, and, through conversation with him and prayer, and the reading of the Scriptures, he was brought into

peace and liberty! I need hardly tell you that he does not go to hear that secondhand preacher now! He listens to a far humbler minister, who, nevertheless, preaches what he has tasted and handled of the good Word of Life.

Now, if any of you are going to be Sunday school teachers, or street-preachers, do not begin to talk about what somebody else has told you. Go and say what you, yourself, know, of a heart first broken by the power of the Holy Spirit, and then bound up by the application of the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ! Proclaim your message in a living way from the heart to the heart, or else your hearers will feel that there is no power about it, however nicely you put the Truth and however sweetly you describe it. There is all the difference between personal testimony to the Truth of God and a parrot-like repetition of it, that there is between the living and the dead! Let us only bear witness to what we really know—and then no one will need to ask us what our Lord asked Pilate, "Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this?"

Now, further, the same thing is true *with regard to professors*. We have many friends who come, at different times, to join the Church, and their stories vary greatly. Some who come to see me cannot say much and they think that I shall be very dissatisfied with them because they make a great muddle of their narrative, and there is not much, after all, that comes out. But the people with whom I am least satisfied are those who reel off their yarn by the yard—they have it all ready to repeat and everything is arranged as prettily as possible! Yes, and as I listen to it, I know that someone has told them what to say and they have memorized it all for me to hear! But I like far better the testimony that I have to pick out in little bits, but which I know comes fresh from the heart of the trembling convert! Sometimes it costs the poor soul a tear or a real good cry—and I have to go round about in all manner of ways to get hold of the story at all—but that shows that it is true and that the man never borrowed it. I like to hear the experience of a Believer, when he comes straight out of the world and out of the ways of sin, to confess his faith in Christ. He does not know anything about the terms that Christian people use. He has not learned our phrases and it is a great delight to hear it all fresh and new. Yet it is always the same story in all the essential parts of it. However strangely he may narrate it, it tallies with that of others in the main points. Take the experience of a Christian man who has been brought up in the sanctuary from his childhood and extract the pith and marrow of it. Now take the experience of a man who has been a gambler, a drunk, a swearer, but who has been truly converted—and extract the pith of that. Talk to a peer of the realm who has become an heir of the Kingdom of Heaven and take the pith of his experience. Now get a chimney-sweep who has been brought to the Lord and get the pith of his experience. Put them all side by side and you will not know one from the other! There are always the same essential marks—death, birth, life, food—Christ in the death, the life, the birth, the food—repentance, faith, joy, the work of the Spirit of God! But it is very sweet to hear the story

told in the many different ways in which the converts tell it. The true child of Grace is always the same in heart, although the outward appearance may continually vary.

But, dear Friends, whenever you begin to make a profession of religion, take care that you never profess more than you really possess! Go just as far as you can go, yourself, by the Grace of God, and do not repeat what others tell you. To borrow another man's experience is dishonest. If it is not mine, how dare I say that it is? It is also very apt to be self-deceptive, for a man may repeat another person's experience until he really thinks he *did* pass through it, himself, just as a man may repeat a lie until it almost ceases to be a lie because he, himself, gets to believe what at first he knows was not true! That borrowing of the experience of others is usually worthless with those who have had much to do with men, for we who do know the Lord and are familiar with His people, very readily trip up those who only repeat what they have learned! Freemasons recognize one another by various grips and signs. A man may, perhaps, find out one of the grips, but he does not learn them all and, at last, he gets caught—and people say to him, "You are pretending to be what you really are not."

Take, again, a man's handwriting. Someone may imitate my writing for a long while, but, at last, he does not copy some peculiar dash, or stroke, or mark which is characteristic of my style. And those who know, say, "That is not Mr. Spurgeon's writing—it is a forgery." So there is a something—a sort of freemasonry—about Christianity. People may learn some of our grips, signs and passwords, but, by-and-by, they make a blunder and we say, "Ah, you are an impostor!" They may try to write after the fashion of a child of God and they may make the pot-hooks, hangers and straight strokes, but, as they get on further, there is a something or other that comes out in the long run which proves that they are only copyists after all. Therefore, I say to you, dear Friends—Do not attempt to repeat what others have told you about experimental godliness, but let your testimony only consist of what you can truly say out of your own heart and soul!

Let this be the case, also, *with regard to every man, whether he makes a profession of religion or not*. May God grant that all that we think we know, we may really know in our own souls and not have because we have borrowed it from others! In religion, proxies and sponsors are altogether out of place. I pray you never to be guilty of that horrible blasphemy—for I think that it is nothing less than that—of standing up before God and promising that a child shall keep His Commandments and walk in the same all the days of its life! Remember that in religion, there are certain things that must be *personal*. For instance, every man must be, himself, born—another person cannot be born for you. In like manner, "You must be born again"—personally, for yourself! There is no possibility of another person experiencing that new birth for you. If a man lives, he must eat for himself. You cannot take my meals for me—it is I, myself, who must eat them. And we must eat the flesh and drink the

blood of Christ by faith, each one for himself or herself—nobody can do it for another. In daily life each man must be clothed for himself. You may wear silk and satin, you may be dressed in the best broadcloth, but you cannot be clothed on my behalf—I must be dressed myself, or else go naked. So must each man put on the robe of Christ's righteousness, or be naked, to his shame, before God. Every man must repent of his own sin—make confession of his own sin, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for himself—love God for himself, obey the Lord for himself. There is no possibility of any other person, by any means, doing this for you! There must be personal godliness, or else there is no godliness at all. So, whenever you feel inclined to say for yourself, "I believe that I am a Christian. I believe this and I believe that," let this question come home to you, "Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this?"

And, lastly, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, let me utter a word specially for your ears. *Never get, in your prayers, or in your talk, an inch beyond your actual experience*. Our calling is a very high one and one of the most serious difficulties in the way of ever attaining its greatest height is the impression that we have reached it when we have not. My own impression is that some Brothers and Sisters might have been almost perfect if they had not thought that they were so already! But they missed the blessing through that very thought! Many a man might have become wise, but he imagined that he had learned wisdom, so he was never really wise. You know that if you see a man who thinks that he is wise, you say to yourself, "How very foolish he is!" And you speak truly, too. The doorstep of wisdom is a consciousness of ignorance and the gateway of perfection is a deep sense of imperfection. Paul was never so nearly perfect as when he cried, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But if he had sat down and said, "I have attained and am already perfect," then would he have been in a fair way of missing the blessing of God. No, dear Brothers or Sisters, say no more than you can justify. There are many who do that in business—mind that you do not so act in spiritual matters! Look at that shop window—what a wonderful display! Now go inside the shop. Why, there is nothing there! No, for the man has all his goods in the window! You would at once say to yourself, if he wanted to deal with you, "I shall not trust him very deeply." Ah, and do we not know some who, spiritually, have all their goods in the window? It is a grand thing to have a great stock in reserve. Never mind if it is in the cellar, where you cannot see it—it is none the worse for being out of sight!

The great thing for all Christians is to have a good background, something behind that is real so that, if you pray, or if you speak to another, you will be prepared to back it up! I remember trying to be a blessing to a very shrewd boy in a Sunday school class when first I knew the Lord. I told him the Gospel—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Then he asked me a straight question, "Teacher, have you believed?" I replied, "Yes, I hope so." He said, "Don't you know, Teacher? You ought to." "Yes," I answered, "yes, I do know. I have believed in Jesus." "Well,

Teacher," he enquired next, "have you been baptized?" I replied, "Yes, I have." "Then," he said, "Teacher, you are saved." I said, "I hope so." "But," he insisted, "*you are*." Just so, and I found that I must say so, too—that I must not use even Christ's words unless I meant to back them up by my own consistent character—otherwise I am throwing suspicion on my Master's truthfulness! May the Lord bring us up to this point of Christian honesty—that when we cannot truthfully say a thing from our own experience, we will be honest enough to resolve, "I shall not say it till I can truly say it."

When you think of a verse of a hymn, and it is a little in advance of your own position, wait till you come up to that point. There are numbers of hymns that I laid by, in that fashion, years ago. I wished that I could sing them, yet they seemed to stick in my throat and I could not. But my throat has been cleared a good deal lately, and I have been obliged, at last, to feel that I must have those very hymns, for they have become true to my soul and have made my experience a very happy one. Do not be in too much of a hurry in spiritual things any more than in temporal things. If you cannot eat meat, stick to your milk. Milk is for babes, so keep to milk till you outgrow it, You will choke with that tough bit of meat—you had better leave it for somebody else. Do not find fault with it, it is good for strong men, they do not need to be always drinking milk. Do not deny the strong man his meat, but let him have as much as he likes of it! As for yourself, if you are a babe in Grace, keep to your milk diet. But, in all your testimony, do not go beyond what is actually true to yourself. Often let my text lay its hand upon your shoulder and repeat this searching enquiry, "Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this?"

May God grant a rich blessing to you all, dear Friends, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—103 (VERSION II), 553, 645.

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

THE DUMB SINGING
NO. 2625

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING OR LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 4, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT SHOULDHAM STREET CHAPEL,
ON WEDNESDAY MORNING, APRIL 29, 1857.

"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert." Isaiah 35:5.

WHAT a difference Divine Grace makes, wherever it enters the heart! In our text we find the blind mentioned, but they are no longer blind when once Grace has touched their eyes! "Then the eyes of the blind" are "opened." We read also of the deaf, but they are not deaf after Grace has operated upon them! "The ears of the deaf" are "unstopped." Here are men who have been "lame," but when once the Omnipotent influence of Divine Grace has come upon them, they leap like a hart! And those who used to be speechless, so far from being dumb any longer, have experienced a change that must be radical, for its effects are surprising. "The tongue of the dumb" not only speaks, but it sings! Divine Grace makes a great difference in a man when it enters into him.

How vain, then, are the boasts and professions of some persons who declare themselves to be the children of God and yet continue to live in sin! There is no perceivable difference in their conduct from what it formerly was—they are still what they used to be before their pretended conversion—they are not changed in their acts, even in the least degree. And yet they most positively affirm that they are the called and living children of God, although they are entirely unchanged! Let such people know that their pretensions are lies and that falsehood is the only groundwork they have for their hopes, for wherever the Grace of God comes, it makes men to differ from what they were before. A graceless man is not like a gracious man, and gracious men are not like graceless ones—we are "new creatures in Christ Jesus." When God looks upon us with the eyes of love and works in us conversion and regeneration, He makes us as opposite from what we were before as light is from darkness, and as Heaven, itself, is from Hell! He works in man a change so great that no mere reformation can even imitate it—it is an *entire* change—a change of the will, of the affections, of the desires, of the dislikes and of the likes. The man becomes, in every respect, new, when Divine Grace enters his heart. Yet you say of yourself, "I am converted," and remain just as you were I tell you once again to your face, that you

say what is not true—you have no ground for saying it! If grace permits you to sin as you were known to do, then that grace is not Divine Grace! That grace is not worth having which permits a man to be, after he receives it, what he was before. No, Beloved, we must always hold and teach the great Doctrine of Sanctification. Where God truly justifies, He also really sanctifies. And where there is the remission of sin, there is also the forsaking of it! Where God has blotted out transgression, He also removes our love of it, makes us seek after holiness and walk in the ways of the Lord. I think we may fairly infer this from the text as a prelude to the observations I have to make concerning it.

I want you, first of all, to notice *the sort of people whom God has chosen to sing His praises and to sing them eternally*. Then, in the second place, I shall enter into *a fuller description of the dumb people here mentioned*. Then, thirdly, I shall try to mention *certain special times and seasons when those dumb people sing more sweetly than at others*.

I. First, then, THE PERSONS WHOM GOD HAS CHOSEN TO SING HIS PRAISES FOREVER. "The tongue of the *dumb* shall sing."

I ask you, first, to note that *there is no difference, by nature, between the elect and others.* Those who are now glorified in Heaven and who walk the golden streets clad in robes of purity, were, by nature as unholy, defiled and as far from original righteousness as those who, by their own rejection of Christ and by their love of sin, have brought themselves into the pit of eternal torment as punishment for their iniquities! The only reason why there is a difference between those who are in Heaven and those who are in Hell is because of Divine Grace, and Divine Grace alone. Those in Heaven would have been cast away had not everlasting mercy stretched out its hand and rescued them. They were, by nature, not one whit superior to others! They would as certainly have rejected Christ and have trod under foot the blood of Jesus as did those who were cast away if Grace, Free Grace, had not prevented them from committing that sin! The reason why they are Christians is not because they did naturally will to be so, nor because they did, by nature, desire to know Christ, or to be found of Him—they are now saints simply because God made them so! He gave them the desire to be saved. He put into them the will to seek after Him. He helped them in their seeking and afterwards brought them to feel that peace which is the fruit of justification! But, by nature, they were just the same as others, and if there is any difference, we are obliged to say that the difference does not lie in their favor. In very many cases, those who now "rejoice in hope of the glory of God" were the very worst of men! There are multitudes who now bless God for their redemption who once blasphemed Him—who, as frequently as they dared to do so, implored that the curse of God might rest upon their fellows and upon themselves! Many of the Lord's anointed were once the very castaways of Satan, the sweepings of society, the refuse of the earth! They were those whom no man cared for, who were called outcasts, but whom God has now called desired ones, seeing that He has loved them!

I am led to these thoughts from the fact that we are told here that *those who sing were dumb by nature*. Their singing does not come natu-

rally from themselves—they were not born songsters. No, they were dumb ones whom God would have to sing His praises. It does not say the tongue of the stammerer, or the tongue of him who blasphemed, or of him who misused his tongue, but, "the tongue of the dumb"—those who have gone furthest from any thought of singing, those who have no power or will to sing—the tongue of such as these shall yet be made to sing God's praises! It is a strange choice that God has made. Strange for its graciousness, strangely manifesting the Sovereignty of His will. When God resolved to build for Himself a palace in Heaven of living stones, where did He get them? Did He go to look for the richest and purest marble in the quarries of earthly perfection? No, you saints, "Look unto the rock from which you are hewn, and to the hole of the pit from where you were dug." So far from being stones that were white with purity, you were black with defilement, seemingly utterly unfit to be built into the spiritual temple which would be the dwelling place of the Most High!

Yet He chose you to be trophies of His Grace and of His power to save! Goldsmiths make exquisite forms from precious material. They fashion the bracelet and the ring from gold, but God makes His precious things out of base material. From among the black pebbles of the muddy pond He has taken up stones which He has set in the golden ring of His Immutable Love, to make them into gems to sparkle on His finger forever! He has not selected the best, but apparently the worst of men, to be the monuments of His Grace! And when He would have a choir in Heaven that would, with harmonious tongues, sing His praises—a chorus that would forever chant hallelujahs louder than the noise of many waters and, like great thunders—He did not send Mercy down to seek earth's songsters and call from us those who have the sweetest voices! No, but He said, "Go, Mercy, and find out the dumb, and touch their lips, and make them sing. The virgin tongues that never sang My praises, before, that have been silent until now, shall break forth in sublime rhapsodies and they shall lead the song—even angels shall but attend behind and catch the notes from the lips of those who once were dumb."

Oh, *what a fountain of consolation this opens for you and for me!* Yes, Beloved, if God did not choose the base things of this world, He would never have chosen us! If He had regard unto the countenances of men. If He were a respecter of persons, where would you and I be this day? We would had never been the subjects of His love and mercy! No, as we look upon ourselves, now, and remember what we once were, we are often obliged to ask our Lord—

"Why was I made to hear Your voice,
And enter while there's room
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?"

And we have no difficulty in finding the right answer in the next verse of the hymn—

"'Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That sweetly forced us in,
Else we had still refused to taste,
And perished in our sin."

Grace is always Grace, but it never seems so gracious as when we see it brought to our unworthy selves. Yes, my Friends, you may be Arminians in your doctrine, but you can never be Arminians in your feelings—you are obliged to confess that salvation is all of Grace and to cast away the thought that the Lord chose you because of your foreseen faith or good works! We are obliged to come to this point—to feel and know that it must have been of mercy, free mercy, and of that, alone—that we were not capable of doing good works without His Grace enabling us to do them and, therefore, they never could have been the motive for the Lord's love, nor the reason why it flowed towards us! O you unworthy ones, you saints that feel your deep natural depravity and mourn over your ruin by the fall of Adam, lift up your hearts to God! He has delivered you from all the impediments which Adam cast upon you! Your tongue is now loosed—Adam made it dumb, but God has loosed it! Your eyes, which were blinded by Adam's fall, are now opened by Him who has lifted you up from the horrible pit and the miry clay! What Adam lost for us, Christ has regained for us. He has set our feet upon a rock and established our goings—and He has put a new song into our mouth, even praise unto our God!

Before I leave this point, I must remind you *how this ought to give you encouragement in seeking to do good to others*. Why, my Brothers and Sisters, I can never think any man too far gone for God's mercy since I know that He saved me! Whenever I have felt despondent about any of my hearers who have, for a long time, persevered in guilt, I have only had to reach down my own biography from the shelves of my memory and think what I was till Divine Grace rescued me and brought me to my Savior's feet. And then I have said, "It will be no wonder if that man is saved—after what the Lord has done for me, I can believe anything of my Master! If He has blotted out *my* transgressions. If He has put away *my* sins, then I can never despair of any of my fellow creatures. They may be dumb, now, but He can make them sing."

Your son John is a sad reprobate—keep on praying for him, mother—God can change his very nature. Your daughter's heart seems hard as adamant, but He who makes the dumb sing can cause even that rock to melt! Believe in God for your children, as well as for yourselves! Take their cases before His Throne of Grace! Rely upon Him to save them and believe that in answer to earnest prayer, He will do so. And if you have neighbors who are full of the pestilence of sin, whose vices come up before you as a stench in your nostrils, yet fear not to carry the Gospel to them! Though they are harlots, drunks, swearers, be not afraid to tell them of the Savior's dying love. He makes the dumb sing—He does not ask for even a voice to begin with—they are dumb and He does not ask of them even the power of speech, but He *gives* them the power! If you have neighbors who keep not the Sabbath, love not God and are not willing to come to His House—and even despise Christ—if you find them as far gone as they can be, remember, He makes the dumb to sing and, therefore, He can make them live!

He needs no goodness in them to begin with—all He needs is the rough, raw material, uncut, unpolished—and He does not even need good material! Bad as the material may be, He can make it into something inestimably precious, something that is worthy of His precious blood! Go on with your work for Christ, dear Friends, and fear not concerning the worst of men and women—if the dumb can be made to sing, then surely you can never say that any man need be cast away because Christ cannot save them!

II. I am now to enter into A FULLER DESCRIPTION OF THESE DUMB PEOPLE. Who are they?

Sometimes I get a good thought out of *Cruden's Concordance*. I believe that is the best commentary to the Bible and I like to study it. I opened it lately at the word, "dumb," and I found Master Cruden describing five different kinds of dumb people, but I shall name only four of them. The first dumb people he mentions are those who *cannot* speak. Then, secondly, those who *will not* speak. Thirdly, those who *dare not* speak and, fourthly, those who have *nothing* to say and, therefore, are dumb.

Among the dumb people who shall sing are, first, *those who cannot speak*. That is the usual meaning of the word, *dumb*. The others are, of course, only figurative applications of the term. We call a man dumb when he cannot speak. Now, *spiritually*, the man who is still in trespasses and sins is dumb, for he is dead and there is none so dumb as a dead man! We used to hear, in our childhood, that they buried none but deaf and dumb persons in certain churchyards! That saying was intended to tickle our childish fancies and it misled us a little, but the meaning was that none but dead people were buried there. The Word of God assures us that unregenerate men are spiritually dead. It follows, then, that they must be spiritually dumb. They cannot sing God's praises. They know Him not and, therefore, they cannot exalt His glorious name. They cannot, in their natural state, confess their sins. They may utter the words of confession, but they cannot really confess, for they do not know the evil of sin, nor have they been taught to feel what a bitter thing it is. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit," and these people cannot truly do so. It may be they can talk well of the Doctrines of Grace, but they cannot speak of them out of the fullness of their hearts, as living and vital principles which they possess in themselves. They cannot join in the songs, nor can they take part in the conversation of Christians. If they sit for a while with the saints, perhaps they let it be known that they have culled a few phrases which they use and apply to certain things about which they know nothing. They talk a language the meaning of which they do not comprehend—like Milton's daughters reading to their father strange tongues which they did not understand. So far as the essence of the matter is concerned, these spiritually dead people are dumb. But, hail to Sovereign Grace! "The tongue of the dumb shall sing!" God will have His darlings made what they should be. They are dumb by nature, but He will not leave them so. They cannot now sing His praises, but they shall do it! They do not now confess their sins, but He will yet bring them to their knees and make them pour out

their hearts before Him! They cannot now talk the tongue of Canaan, or speak the language of Zion, but they shall do it soon! Grace, Omnipotent Grace, will have its way with them! They shall be taught to pray! Their eyes shall be made to flow with tears of penitence and then, after that, their lips shall sing to the praise of Sovereign Grace!

I need not dwell upon this point because there are many here who once were dumb, who can bless God that they now can sing. Does it not sometimes seem to you, Beloved, a very strange thing that you are what you are? I should think it must be one of the strangest things in the world for a dumb man to speak—because he has no idea how a man feels when he is speaking, he has no notion of the thing at all! A man, blind from his birth, has no idea what kind of a thing sight can be. I have heard of a blind man who supposed that the color scarlet must be very much like the sound of a trumpet. He knew no other way of describing it. So, the dumb man has no notion of the way to talk. Do you not think it is a strange thing that you are what you are? You said once, "I will never be one of those canting Methodists. Do you think I shall ever make a profession of religion? What? I attend a Prayer Meeting? It is not likely!" And you went along the streets in all your gaiety of mirth and said, "What? I become a little child and give up my mind to simple faith, and not reason at all? What? Am I to abandon all argument about things and simply take them for granted because God has said them? No, that never can be!" Yet that is what *has* happened and I will be bound to say it will be a wonder to you, as long as you are here, that you are a child of God! And even in Heaven, itself, your greatest wonder will be that you were ever brought to know the Savior!

But there are, next, *some dumb people who will not speak*. They are mentioned by Isaiah. He said some of the watchmen in his day were "dumb dogs." I bless God that we have not so many of these dumb people as we used to have. God has raised up, of late, especially in the Church of England, a large number of thoroughly Evangelical men who are not afraid to declare the whole counsel of God. There are many such faithful preachers of the Gospel to be found. [Stated in 1882.] There is no reason why the Church of England should not be thoroughly Evangelical. If it keeps to its Articles, it ought to be! It is the most inconsistent church in all the world if it is not Calvinistic—and it will be inconsistent unless it keeps to those grand fundamental Truths of God which are written in its Articles and which are a code of faith to be received by all Believers!

But, oh, there are a great many preachers among Dissenters and in the Church of England, too, that are "dumb dogs." There are still plenty who hardly know anything about the Gospel! They preach about a great many things, but little or nothing about Jesus Christ! They buy their sermons cheaply and preach them at their ease. They ask God to teach them what to say and then pull their manuscripts out of their pockets! We have had to mourn, especially in years gone by, that we could look from parish to parish and find only "dumb dogs" in the pulpits. And some men who might have spoken with a little earnestness, if they had liked, let the people slumber under them instead of preaching the Word

with true fidelity, remembering that they will have to give account to God at the last! My aged grandfather tells a story which I believe he could verify, of a person who once resided near him and called himself a preacher of the Gospel. He was visited by a poor woman who asked him what was the meaning of the new birth, and he replied, "My good woman, why do you come to me about that matter? Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, was a wise man, yet he did not understand about the new birth—how do you think I should?" And she had to go away with only that answer.

The time was when such an answer as that might have been given by a great many who were reckoned to be the authorized teachers of religion, but who really knew nothing about the matter. They understood a great deal more about fox-hunting than about preaching—and more about farming their land than about the spiritual husbandry of God's Church! But we bless God that there are not so many of that sort, now, and we pray that the race may become quite extinct—and that every pulpit may be filled with a man who has a tongue of fire and a heart of flame and who shuns not to declare the whole counsel of God, neither seeking the smiles of men nor dreading their frowns!

We have, in our text, a promise that it shall be so. "The tongue of the dumb shall sing." And ah, when God makes them sing, they sing well! You remember Rowland Hill's story, in "*The Village Dialogues*" about Mr. Merriman? He was a sad scapegrace of a parson and was to be seen at every fair and revel, and was seldom to be found in his pulpit when he should have been. But when, by God's Grace, he was converted, he began to preach with tears running down his face! The Church soon became crowded, but the squire would not go—he even locked up his pew. So Mr. Merriman had a little ladder made outside the door, as he did not wish to break it open, and the people used to sit on the steps, up one side and down the other, so that there was twice as much room as there was before!

No people make such good preachers as those who were once dumb! If the Lord opens their mouths, they will think they cannot preach often enough, or earnestly enough to make up for the mischief they did before! Chalmers himself might never have been so eloquent a preacher had he not been, for a long time, a dumb dog! He preached morality, he said, till he made all the people in his parish immoral! He kept on urging them to keep God's Law till he made them break it! But when he turned round and began to preach Christ's Gospel, then the dumb began to sing! Oh, may God work this change in every one of us! If we are dumb as professed ministers, may He open our mouths and force us to speak forth His Word, lest, at the Last Day, the blood of our hearers' souls should be found upon our garments and we should be cast away as unfaithful stewards!

I now introduce you to a third sort of dumb people. They are dumb because *they dare not speak*. They are good people, blessed souls. Listen to one of them—"I was dumb, I opened not my mouth because You did it." Ah, it is blessed to be dumb in that fashion! The Lord's servant will often have to be dumb under trials and troubles. When Satan tempts him to

repine, he will put his finger to his lips and say, "Hush, murmuring heart! Be still!" "Why does a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" Even the child of God will sometimes do as Job did when he sat down upon the ground for seven days and seven nights and said not a word, for he felt that his trouble was so heavy that he could say nothing. It would have been as well if he had kept his mouth shut for the next few days—silence would not have been so bad as some things that he uttered! There are times when you and I, Beloved, are obliged to keep the bridle on our tongues lest we should murmur against God. We are in evil company. Perhaps our spirit is hot within us and we want to take vengeance for the Lord. We are like the friends of David who would have slain Shimei. "Let us cut off this dead dog's head," we say, and then Jesus tells us to put our sword into its scabbard, for, "the servant of the Lord must not strive." How often have we thus been dumb!

Sometimes, when there have been slanders against our character and men have maligned us, oh, how our fingers have itched to be at them! But we have said, "No. Our Master did not answer His accusers and He has left us an example that we should follow His steps." The chief priests accused Him of many things, but, "He answered them not a word." We have found it difficult to be dumb, like the sheep when it is brought to the shearer, or the lamb when it is in the slaughterhouse. We could scarcely keep quiet. When we have been upon our beds in sickness we have tried to quench every murmuring word. We have not let a sentence escape our lips when we could possibly avoid it, but, notwithstanding all that, we have found it hard work to keep dumb—though it is blessed work when we are enabled to do it.

Now, you who have been dumb under great sorrow. You whose songs have been suspended because you dare not open your lips lest sighs should usurp the place of praise, come, listen to this promise—"The tongue of the dumb shall sing." Yes, though you are now in the deepest trouble and are obliged to be silent, you shall yet sing! Though, like Jonah, you are in the belly of Hell, as he called it—though the earth with her bars seems to be about you forever, and the weeds are wrapped about your head—yet you shall look again towards His holy Temple! Though you have hung your harp upon the willows, bless God that you have not broken it. You will have farther use for it, by-and-by, and you shall take it down from its resting place and—

"Loud to the praise of Love Divine,
Bid every string awake!"

If you have no songs in the night, yet the Lord shall compass you about with songs of deliverance! If you cannot sing His praises now, you shall do so, by-and-by, when greater Grace shall have been poured into your heart, or when delivering mercy shall be the subject of your song in better days that are yet to come! But, blessed be God, we are not always to be silent in affliction. We are bound to sing. Though we are dumb as to murmuring, we ought to sing God's praises! An old Puritan said, "God's people are like certain birds—they sing best in cages." He meant, "God's people often sing the best when they are in the deepest trouble." Said old Master Brooks, "The deeper the flood was, the higher the ark went up

toward Heaven." So is it with the child of God—the deeper his troubles, the nearer to Heaven he rises if he lives close to his Master. Troubles are called weights and weights, you know, generally clog us and keep us down to the earth. But there are ways, by the use of the laws of mechanics, by which you can make a weight *lift* you—and so it is possible to make your troubles lift you nearer Heaven instead of letting them sink you! God has sometimes opened our mouth when we were dumb—when we were ungrateful and did not praise Him. He has opened our mouth by a trial and though, when we had a thousand mercies, we did not praise Him, yet when He sent a sharp affliction, then we began to do so! He has thus made the tongue of the dumb to sing.

I will mention one more kind of dumb people and then I shall have done with this part of my subject. There are *those who have nothing to say* and, therefore, they are dumb. I will give you an instance. Solomon says, in the Proverbs, "Open your mouth for the dumb" and he shows, by the context, that he means those who, in the court of judgment, have nothing to plead for themselves and must stand dumb before the bar. Like that man of old who, when the king came in to see the guests, had not on a wedding garment—and when the king said, "Friend, how came you in here not having a wedding garment?" He stood speechless, not because he could not speak, but because he had nothing to say! Have not you and I been dumb? Are we not now dumb when we stand on *law* terms with God, when we forget that Jesus Christ and His blood and righteousness were our full acquittal?

Are we not obliged to be dumb when the Commandments are laid bare before us and when the Law of God is brought home to our conscience? There was a time with each of us, and not long ago with some here present, when we stood before Moses' seat and heard the Commandments read. And when we were asked, "Sinner, can you claim to have kept those Commandments?" we were dumb. Then we were asked, "Sinner, can you give any atonement for the breach of those Commandments?" And we were dumb. We were asked, "Sinner, can you, by a future obedience, wipe out your past sins?" We knew it was impossible and we were dumb. Then we were asked, "Can you endure the penalty? Can you bear to suffer forever in the flames of Hell? Can you endure torments that shall never cease? Can you dwell with everlasting burnings and abide with eternal fires?" And we were dumb.

Then we were asked the question, "Prisoner at the bar, have you any reason to plead why you should not be condemned?" And we were dumb. And we were asked, "Prisoner, have you any helper? Have you anyone who can deliver you?" And we stood dumb, for we had nothing to say. Yes, but blessed be God, the tongue of the dumb can now sing! And shall I tell you what we can sing? Why, we can sing this, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Not God, for He has justified us! "Who is he that condemns?" Not Christ, for "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." We who had not a word to say for ourselves, can now say everything! We can say to our Lord—

"Bold shall I stand in that great day,

For who anything to my charge shall lay?
While through Your blood absolved I am
From sin's tremendous curse and shame?"

Yes, the dumb ones can sing! So shall you, poor dumb one, if God has made you dumb by taking away all the names of Baal out of your mouth—if He has taken away all your self-righteousness and all your trust in yourself—as truly as ever He has shut your mouth, He will open it! If God has killed your self-righteousness, He will give you a better one! If He has knocked down all your refuges of lies, He will build you up a good refuge! He has not come to destroy you. He has shut your mouth that He may fill it with His praise. Be of good cheer! Cast your eyes to the Cross! Look to Jesus! Put your confidence in Him and even you, who think yourself a castaway—even you, poor weeping Mary—even you shall yet sing of redeeming Grace and dying love!

III. Now I have to conclude by noticing THE OCCASIONS WHEN THE TONGUE OF THESE DUMB PEOPLE SINGS THE BEST.

When does the tongue of the dumb sing? Why, I think it sings always, little or much! If it is once set at liberty, it will never leave off singing. There are some of you people who say that this world is a howling wilderness. Well, if so, you are the howlers, you make all the howling! If you choose to howl, I cannot help it, but I prefer the promise of my text, "Then shall the tongue of the dumb," *not howl*, but, "sing!" Yes, they sing always, little or much! Sometimes it is in a low note. Sometimes they have to go rather deep in the bass, but there are other times when they can mount to the highest notes of all. They have special times of singing. *When they lost their burden at the foot of the Cross*—that is the time when they begin to sing! Never did a harp of Heaven sound so sweetly as when touched by the finger of some returning prodigal! Not even the songs of the angels seem to me to be so sweet as that first song of rapture which rushes forth from the inmost soul of the forgiven child of God! You know how John Bunyan describes it. He says when poor Christian lost his burden at the Cross, he gave three great leaps and went on his way singing! We have not forgotten those three great leaps—they were great leaps of praise! We have leaped many times since then with joy and gratitude, but we think we never leaped so high as we did at the time when we saw our many sins all gone and our transgressions covered up in the tomb of the Savior! So you see, dear Friends, that is one time when we can sing—when we lose our burden at the Cross.

And after that, do God's people sing? Yes, they have sweet singing times *in their hours of communion*. Oh, the music of that word, "communion," when it is heard in the soul—communion with Jesus, fellowship with Jesus—whether in His sufferings or in His glories! These are singing times, when the heart is lifted up to feel its oneness with Christ, and its vital union with Him, and is enabled to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God," through communion with the Savior!

Have you not had some precious singing times at the Lord's Table? Ah, when the bread has been broken, and the wine poured out, how often has it been to me a time of song when the people have all joined in singing—

"Gethsemane, can I forget?
Or there Your conflict see
Your agony and bloody sweat,
And not remember Thee?
When to the Cross I turn my eyes,
And rest on Calvary,
O Lamb of God! My Sacrifice!
I must remember Thee."

I am in the House of God, I think—every day. I believe that David could not have asked for more than I have received when he prayed that he might dwell in the House of the Lord forever, for I spend more of my time in the House of God than I do anywhere else. But my best moments are at the Lord's Table. I rejoice then, when I have no thought of what I have to say to others, but simply sit down among the Lord's family and taste my morsel of bread, and have my sip of the wine. Oh, it is then that the soul finds its Savior precious! I look forward for every month to come when I may once more sit at the table of my Master and spiritually eat His flesh and drink His blood, and feel that I have, indeed, life in Him because I am in true union with Him. Ah, these are singing times to the family of God! And so, sometimes, are *preaching times and hearing times. Prayer Meetings are often special singing times—in fact, all the means of Grace* will very frequently be blessed of God to be to us the occasions of song!

But, lastly, my dear Friends, for I cannot stop to mention all these singing times, the best we shall have will be when we come to die! Ah, there are some of you who will be like what is fabled of the swan. The ancients said that the swan never sang in his lifetime, but always sang as he was about to die. Now, there are many of God's desponding children who seem to go live their life under a cloud, but they get a swan's song before they die. The river of their life comes running down, perhaps, black and miry with troubles—and when it begins to touch the white foam of the sea, there comes a little glistening in its waters. So, Beloved, though we may have been very much dispirited by reason of the burden of the way, when we get to the end we shall have sweet songs! Are you afraid of dying? Oh, never be afraid of that! Be afraid of living! Living is the only thing which can do us mischief—dying never can hurt a Christian! Afraid of the grave? It is like the bath of Esther in which she lay for a time, to purify herself with spices. The grave fits the body for Heaven. There it lies and corruption, earth, and worms do but refine and purify our flesh!

Be not afraid of dying—it does not take any time at all. Death is emancipation, deliverance, Heaven's bliss to a child of God! Never fear it—it will be a singing time. You are afraid of dying, you say, because of the pains of death. No, they are the pains of *life*—of life struggling to continue. Death has no pain—death, itself, is but one gentle sigh—the fetter is broken and the spirit released. The best moment of a Christian's life is his last one because it is the one that is nearest Heaven—and then it is that he begins to strike the keynote of the song which he shall sing to all eternity! Oh, what a song will that be! It is a poor noise we make, now,

when we join the song here. Perhaps we are almost ashamed to sing! But up there our voices shall be clear and good! And there—

"Loudest of the crowd we'll sing,
While Heaven's resounding mansions ring
With shouts of Sovereign Grace!"

The thought struck me, the other day, that the Lord will have in Heaven some of those very big sinners—ones who have gone further astray than anybody else that ever lived—just to make the melody complete by singing some of those alto notes we sometimes hear which you and I, because we have not gone so far astray, will never be able to utter! I wonder whether one has stepped into this Chapel, this morning, whom God has selected to take some of those alto notes in the scale of praise? Perhaps there is one such here. Oh, how loudly will he sing, if Grace, Free Grace, shall have mercy upon him!

And now, farewell, with just this parting word. My Brothers and Sisters, members of this Church, strive together in your prayers, that God may bless you. Be not content with what you are, however prosperous you may be, but seek to increase more and more. Pray that you and your children may be added to the Church of Christ, here, and may live to see others added, too. Do not neglect your Prayer Meetings. Christmas Evans gives us a good idea about prayer. He says, "Prayer is the rope in the belfry. We pull it and it rings the bell up in Heaven." And so it is. Mind you keep that bell going! Pull it often at home and come up to the Prayer Meetings and keep on pulling it! And though the bell is up so high that you cannot hear it ring, depend upon it, it can be heard in the tower of Heaven and it is ringing before the Throne of God, who will give you answers of peace according to your faith. May your faith be large and plentiful, and so will be the answers! 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.

"PEACE IN BELIEVING"
NO. 2626

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 11, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 19, 1882.

"Peace in believing."
Romans 15:13.

ON whatever subjects I may be called to preach, I feel it to be a duty which I dare not neglect to be continually going back to the Doctrine of the Cross—the fundamental Truth of God of justification by faith which is in Christ Jesus. This topic is essential to the life of the soul. Men are not saved but by faith in Jesus and, therefore, to this great central point we must return again and again and again, hoping that God will bless His own Word to those who hear it proclaimed. I notice that some of our friends, who are bakers, have in their shop windows divers articles of confectionery, and I suppose they have their set days for making their various kinds of cake and sweetmeats. But one thing I know they never forget to do and that is to bake, every day, a batch of bread because, if their customers do not need this or that confectionery, they always need bread—and what is the good of a baker if he has no bread? I wish that every preacher felt that, albeit there are certain things which are sweet and toothsome, which some mouths are always craving, yet the chief business of the minister, like that of the baker, is to have a constant supply of good bread. It may be a very ordinary kind of food.

Some may even call it commonplace and what a mercy it is when bread is a commonplace thing! I have known some people who would have been glad if they could place it in common upon their tables, but they have not been able to get it, and the necessity has grown into a luxury. And what a mercy it is when the Gospel is a commonplace thing—when you have so much of it that you really understand it, enjoy it and feed upon it! It is then as it ought always to be with the true ministry of the Gospel. So, preacher, whatever you choose to neglect, never neglect to preach Christ Crucified and the simple, soul-saving precept, "Look and live."

What if there are some prophetic passages which you cannot understand? The day shall declare them! What if there are certain deep Doctrines that are too profound for you? You and your people shall learn them in eternity, if you learn them not in time! But as for this Doctrine, that, "he that believes on the Son has everlasting life"—it must be learned now or never! And if it is not learned now, men will be shut out

of Heaven eternally. Therefore, let this Truth of God be proclaimed again and again and again! Let it still be preached, even though some who have itching ears weary of it, for there is an urgent necessity that it should be made known whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. Better that the sun should not rise than that Christ should not be preached! Better that the wheels of time should stand still than that the name of Jesus should not be sounded forth! Better that the dews be withheld and the rain fall not again upon the earth, than that the glorious Gospel of the blessed God be hidden from the sons of men!

So, then, this is my reason for coming to you, again, as I have come so many hundreds of times before, with the same old message, "Believe and live." I am comforted by the persuasion that all who are saved by believing are the most ready to hear this story over and over again. It is not what I do not know so much as what I do know that I delight to hear—and many others are of the same opinion as I am in that matter. It is a curious phase of human nature, but it is true. You may talk to a congregation about discoveries in the center of Africa and yet you may lose their attention. But if you speak about the village, or hamlet, or street in which one of them was born or lived, he will prick up his ears at once. The very thing that he knows best is that which, somehow, holds his attention the most. So have I often seen it in the highest affairs—they who understand the Gospel best are the most ready to hear of it again and yet again. If I were to take *Luther on the Galatians*, intending to give it as a present to someone who would be sure to appreciate it, I would not bestow it upon a man who was not a believer in Jesus Christ, or give it to one who did not understand the Doctrine of salvation by faith—I would hand it over to the man who has long believed in Christ and found rest in Him—for I would be certain that the strong and racy utterances of the great Reformer would be appreciated by him. They love the Gospel most who know it best!

Another thing comforts me, too, namely, that in such a congregation as this there are always some persons who are just ready to believe. I throw the fly with confidence because there are always fish rising to it. God is plowing the hearts of many and so preparing the soul for the good Seed of the Kingdom! Little children die. Aged mothers are carried away. There is sickness in the body, or loss in the business, or suffering of various kinds—all this is the passing of God's great plow up and down these furrows—and when I scatter the good Seed, I know that the furrows are gaping for it. They are hungry for it, so they gladly receive it! Here are many of those who are ordained unto eternal life to whom the Truth of God concerning "peace in believing" comes as the very message of God to their soul, the good news that they are most glad to hear! So they receive it and go on their way rejoicing. Doubtless, there are some hearers of that kind here right now—oh, that we may very soon hear of their conversion, for it would gladden our heart to have such good tidings! Therefore, by the help of God, let us at once get to our work.

I. And, first, having to talk about faith and one of its sweet results—for our subject is that faith brings peace to the soul, "peace in believing"—the first head shall be that IT IS A FILLING PEACE.

In the verse from which our text is taken, the Apostle says, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing," so that the peace which arises from faith is a filling peace. There is, in the heart of an awakened man, *a great vacuum caused by sin*. He is like some of those great artificial harbors which I have seen, in various places, out of which they sometimes allow all the water to run and there remains a dreary expanse of mud. What is the use of it? What is needed in order to make it of service once more? Why, simply that the tide should come into it, fill it and cover up all that mud! As I look on some of you, dear Friends, I know that your heart is just like that great harbor full of mire. What is to be done for you? What is to be done *with* you? Well, the Grace of God can come in and cover all your transgressions and your iniquities till they shall never be mentioned against you ever again! What a blessed peace that is which quiets the conscience—which takes away the sense of guilt and puts in the place of it, consciousness of perfect pardon, of justification and of acceptance before God! This is "peace in believing." It fills the vacuum that sin has made.

Then this Divine flood, when it has covered that part of our distress, flows in *over our sinfulness as well as our sins*, for, in addition to our actual transgression, there is the defilement of our nature. And when a man is awakened, it is a cause of moaning and unrest to him that he not only *has* sin, but that he *is* sin—that his very nature is a fountain of evil containing much that is adverse to God and in alienation from Him. But, by believing, there flows into the heart a flood of life which removes our death—a purifying stream which takes away our corruption and we have peace with God, for "we which have believed do enter into rest" about that matter, too. And though we sometimes have to cry, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Yet we "thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord," that we are delivered from the dominion of sin and that we shall, by-and-by, be delivered from the very existence of it and shall be like unto God in purity and true holiness. That is, indeed, a blessed peace—a peace that comes of a changed nature, of a renewed heart and of reconciliation to God.

You will tell me that those blessings are enough to fill a man with peace and, truly, I think they are. But as when the tide comes in, it not only rolls up the main stream of the Thames, but it also flows into every creek and fills every tiny streamlet, so is it with the Grace of God. There is a black stream that sometimes runs into the river of a man's life and makes it turbid—that is *the fear of death*. But, oh, I have seen the great flood of eternal life come rolling up and drive the black stream back till all was pure, all was quiet and calm! Is it not so with the man who believes in Jesus? He loses the fear of death. Sometimes, instead of fearing it, he almost longs for it! As Mr. Flavel, when living in sweetest communion with Christ, said, "I never saw a face more beautiful than that of

death when I saw the light from the face of Christ fall on it. Then I longed to die much more than to live." And good Dr. Watts sang—

"Oh, if my Lord would come and meet,
My soul should stretch her wings in haste,
Fly fearless through Death's iron gate,
Nor feel the terrors as she passed!"

Yes, this "peace in believing" will fill your soul so as to drown the fear of death!

Perhaps another says, "*The fear of life* is that which is upon me, the fear of the troubles incident to my condition and my position among my fellow men, the fear which arises out of those three questions, 'What shall we eat? What shall we drink? And how shall we be clothed?'" Beloved, the peace which comes through believing will chase these fears away and fill your soul with perfect rest concerning them. Indeed, these things will seem to you to be only trifles after which the Gentiles seek—and you will scorn to be troubled by them, for you will remember that "your Heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things," and He will supply your need in His own good time and way.

Then, sometimes, will come upon us, to break our peace, *the cravings of desire*. A man is never perfectly at peace if he is ambitious and craving for this or that which, as yet, is beyond his reach. "Peace in believing" makes us say of Christ, "He is all my salvation and all my desire." He loves us to know that all things are ours and, therefore, that there is nothing left in the region of desire, for—

"All things are ours—the gift of God—
The purchase of a Savior's blood!
While the good Spirit shows us how
To use and to improve them too."

Oh, what a blessed, blessed rest it is when a man's desires are satisfied with the favor of God!

One very natural cause of disturbance of mind is *solicitude about our families*—anxiety as to how we shall bring them up in the fear of God, earnest longing that they may become believers in Christ, honorable Christian men and women, but Faith learns to bear even this without having her peace broken, for she pleads the promise, "Unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Faith falls back upon the Inspired Word—"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto the children's children, to such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them." I know of no cause of disquietude which faith will not remove. I know of no groundswell disturbing the mind which faith cannot quiet. I know of nothing on earth, in Heaven, in Hell, in time, in eternity, in life, in death which is not fully met by the Covenant blessings which are within reach of faith and which faith learns to appropriate. This "peace in believing" is a sea that has no bottom nor shore—it is a peace of intense restfulness! Oh, that we were all plunged in it this very hour!

II. Now, very briefly, let me remind you that, according to the text, IT IS FAITH'S PEACE that is such a filling peace as I have tried to describe.

I may be addressing some persons who are needing to find peace for their souls, but they have never sought faith's peace. *There is a false peace that some get*—the peace of carelessness—they do not even think about eternity. They "count it one of the wisest things to drive dull care away." They scarcely think of what will happen even a month ahead, but they say that they are content to live by the day. This is the way in which the man protects himself when, after the thief has broken into his house, he covers up his head, lies in bed and thinks that he and his property must be safe because he cannot hear the burglar at work. This is the kind of philosophy of men who, when they are ready to fail in business, shut up their books and never take stock because they would be so disturbed if they knew their real condition! It is a beggarly, cowardly kind of peace that is fit for fools and madmen, but is not fit for you who are reasonable, responsible beings. Oh, I would scorn to have a peace in my heart which consisted in shutting my eyes! The truth ought to be faced and, the more dangerous the truth, the more urgently does it call upon us to look at it! And he is the wise man who can stand before the truth that frightens most men and, having looked it in the face, can say, "Now I am not afraid. I am, rather, the more established in my conviction of my safety, now that I have seen that which would have destroyed me if it had not been for faith in Christ." Shun, I pray you, the safety which is but in appearance, and does but thinly film the deadly ulcer that needs to be eradicated from your body!

Some others seek *a peace which comes of hardihood*. They not merely shut their eyes, but they lie against the Truth of God. "The fool has said in his heart, There is no God," and he gets peace out of that foolish and false declaration. Men deny the immortality of the soul. They deny the Divinity of Christ. They deny the Inspiration of the Bible and so they think that they shall sew pillows together that shall make it easy for their heads to rest! Let those do this who dare, but, as for some of you, you cannot do it, for you know too much and you have felt too much to ever be self-deceived in such a fashion as that! Can he ever be an infidel who has seen his mother die joyfully triumphant? Is it possible for me, for instance, to find a shelter from my sins by denying that there is any hereafter, when I have stood by the bedside of saints and seen their ecstasy, and have heard the strange things, scarcely lawful for a man to utter, which they have told concerning that which is within the veil? Some of us are spoiled for infidelity, for we have had familiar communion with the Eternal! We have spoken with Him, "as a man speaks with his friend" and, therefore, this escape from thought avails us not! Thank God that it does not avail us, for the abhorred of the Lord fall into this deep ditch and how seldom do they come up out of it! May God grant that we may never need to tell a lie and violate our conscience in order to give it peace! That is not the rest of faith which I commend to you!

Some have tried to get *peace from self-confidence*. They think they are as good as others, if not rather better. As they see those who are mere professors of religion, they thank God that *they* are not professors of religion, for they are not hypocritical and, therefore, they do not pretend to

be what they are not. Yet there is often a worm at the root of that proud boasting and, in your sober moments, you who talk in this fashion do not really think thus of yourselves. You are not insane and you know that you are not doing that which is pleasing to God, or living to His Glory. Self-righteousness is sometimes a delusion, but it generally begins by a man's attempting to delude himself. But there is no real peace to be obtained by any works that we can perform, or by the pretense that we have performed works which are meritorious in the sight of God. There is no promise of peace to come in this fashion.

But, perhaps, you have patched up your self-righteousness with a few ornaments stolen from the Church of God. Were you, as an infant, "baptized" and made "a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven"? Have you been confirmed, and taken the "sacrament"—as it is wrongly called—and is there not much efficacy in that? Sirs, listen to me! There is *nothing* in it! There is nothing whatever in it unless you have first believed in the Lord Jesus Christ! Or, if there is anything in it, you have participated in ordinances to which you had no right, for these things are only for Believers—and if you have not believed in Jesus, you are intruders into His Church and you have stolen from His altar that which He reserves for His own people—and little advantage will this be to you. Beware of trusting in your church-going, or your chapel-going, or your Tabernacle-going! Beware of trusting in your prayers, or your Bible reading, in your hymns and holy thoughts and almsgivings. They are all lighter than vanity and, as chaff from the fan of the winnower, shall they be blown away! There is no peace in them though you multiply them as the sand upon the seashore. Our text speaks of "peace in believing," and there is no peace worthy of the name that is to be found in any other way!

III. But now, thirdly, this "peace in believing" is A WELL-FOUNDED PEACE. But what is it?

It is, first, *a peace which is the result of believing the Word of God, who cannot lie*. God, the ever-blessed Father, says, "Listen to Me. I have given My Well-Beloved Son to be a Savior to you. Trust in Him and you shall be saved." I trust in Him and I am saved. How do I know that? Why, because God said so! And God cannot lie! Is there any better foundation for peace in this world than the Word of God? What God has spoken must be true. "Let God be true and every man a liar." And I, believing what He has said, have a right to all the peace that can come out of that sure Word which I have believed!

Remember, too, that *this Word of God comes to us by the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit*. If you do not believe that Book to be Inspired, I have nothing to say to you just now. But most of us do believe that every part of it is "God-breathed." Well, then, knowing that Book to be the Infallible Word of God, if we get peace through believing what is in that Book, we have sure ground to stand upon! Either the Book is a lie, or else our faith is fully warranted, and our peace is perfectly justified. Oh, what a blessed thing it is to feel that you have Scripture at your back! Many saints that I have read of have asked, when dying, to have their fingers

laid upon some precious promise of the Word, and they have thus witnessed to their conviction that the passage was the very Truth of God to their souls. One said, "Guide me to that glorious Eighth of Romans." Another had his finger laid upon this text, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." And another on this verse, "Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me, Your rod and Your staff they comfort me." You know how you take one another's word and trust to it. And when you get a note of hand in black and white from a good tradesman, you do not mistrust it. Then, shall we ever mistrust the black and white of *God*—the record of His dear Son which He has given us in Holy Scripture? No! Nor will we mistrust the peace that comes into our heart through believing it!

And then, my Brothers and Sisters, also mark that *our peace is founded on God's testimony concerning His Son.* He tells us, in this Book, that the Only-Begotten took upon Him human form and came down among men—that being here, He lived the life of a servant and, at the last, taking upon Him man's sin and as the Substitute for guilty men, He went up to the Cross and there bore His Father's wrath, dying in the place of the guilty, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." I recollect how I grasped that Truth of God when I first understood it—it was that Doctrine of Substitution which brought peace to my troubled spirit. I saw that if Christ died for me, then I should not die! And that, if He paid my debt, it *was* paid and I was clear! And I knew that this was the case as soon as I believed in Him. So I did believe in Him and I was filled with "peace in believing." And that "peace in believing" meets every need of the heart. Are you troubled? "All things work together for good to them that love God." Are you afraid that you shall fall? Rest content about that, also, for, "He will keep the feet of His saints." Are you afraid that you shall ultimately perish? Has He not said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand"?

Our faith is, indeed, well-founded, and can be abundantly justified! Faith in Christ is nothing but common sense of sanctified of God. It may be common sense to trust some banker who has long maintained his credit and not to be always worrying about whether he is solvent or not, but it is infinitely greater common sense to trust God—to trust His Son—to trust His Spirit—to trust His Word! If you trust these, you shall enjoy a calmness of spirit which will not be the effect of a mistaken confidence, but the result of the most glorious facts—a peace which may be questioned and cross-questioned, examined and cross-examined, but the answer it shall give to all enquiries will be satisfactory. Faith's building may be searched, tried and tested from foundation to top stone, but no flaw shall be found in any part of it. It is a good, wise, true, just and proper thing to trust the Lord Jesus Christ—and so to have "peace in believing!"

IV. I have done when I have noticed just one more point, namely, that I believe this "peace in believing" to be A MOST FRUITFUL PEACE.

I wish you all knew it, for*, first, it makes even this world a better and a happier place*. It takes the sting out of all troubles to have "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." There is no man who is so ready to cope with the troubles of life as the one who knows that all is right for eternity. Some of you often get worried in your daily calling and when you come home from business, you cannot rest. When you go to bed, you cannot sleep, for there is within you a fear of death and of a dreaded something after that. But suppose that a man can say, "That matter is all settled"—

'Tis done! The great transaction's done!
I am my Lord's, and He is mine!—

"I have trusted myself with Christ, and I know that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day"? He goes to his business feeling that he has a burden off his shoulders—the great burden he had so long carried—and he is ready for anybody and ready for anything! If you set a man to run up a hill and lay heavy weights on his back, he must make slow work of it. Take off those weights and now watch him! Why, he turns into a gazelle and he leaps from crag to crag when the burden is gone! Ah, dear Friends, if you were relieved of your burdens, your very office work would grow lighter! Your bargaining would be more wisely done! You would be able to deal better with your fellow men when you have come to your proper position before God and all is made right there.

This peace with God *is fruitful in the growth of all other Graces*. Have you a garden? If so, have you some fruit trees in it? Do you dig them up every year? Do you take them out of the ground two or three times in a season, and carry them about the garden and then plant them in a fresh spot? If so, I would not give you a penny for all your fruit! But when you plant your tree in good soil and it is well-watered and fertilized, when the fruit-bearing season comes, there is your fruit. It is a blessed thing to get the very roots of your being entwined around Christ—now you can grow, now you can bring forth fruit! Now you will get patience. Now you will get hope. Now you will get love and soon you will get full assurance! You will have the work of sanctification going on, you will be more and more consecrated and devoted to Christ—and you will become "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." God give you "peace in believing," that you may grow in every other Grace!

And this, I know, *will help you to serve others*. A man who is enjoying the blessings of true religion, living *in* it and living *on* it, wants other people to know about it and to share it with him. I think that nobody would give a recommendation to a new kind of food which he did not like, himself, and which did him no good. He would say, "Well, if this is intended to keep me from being ill, I would rather be ill than eat it! I certainly shall not recommend it to others." But he that has eaten it, loves the flavor of it and finds that nourishment comes from it, says to his friend, "You are getting emaciated, and thin, and debilitated as I was—you should try what I have tried." He is sure to commend it because it has done so much for him. And when we enjoy the Gospel, we are sure to

recommend it to others. God's happy people are God's working people! Those who fear and tremble and never have any joy in the Lord are generally a barren generation. But they who delight themselves in the Lord are sure to speak of Him to others and to bring others to Christ!

Lastly, I believe that "peace in believing" is *one of the best instrumentalities for bringing others to Christ.* If you are soon to be very happy in a time of trial—if you are known to be very patient in great pain—and especially if the Lord helps you to be triumphant in the solemn article of death, you will be a soul-winner! Those who come round your bed will never forget the joyous look on your face—it will be a life-long sermon to them. I do not advise you to sit up like Addison and make a show of it, and say, "Come see how a Christian can die!" No, that is a style of thing I do not admire. But when you can honestly, straightforwardly, without any parade, sweetly fall asleep in Jesus Christ, triumphantly entering into Glory and let those around you hear your shout of victory as you enter in to be "forever with the Lord"—if you can do that, the memory of it will abide—and those who were unconvinced, before, are most likely to be decided! While those who never hesitated will be more than ever confirmed in the faith!

In conclusion, to gather up all in a word, you who have no peace may have it even now. Believe! That is, trust! Trust Jesus with your souls and you shall have "peace in believing." And you who have it, though it is somewhat broken, may have it to the fullest! Where you obtained your first peace, you can get more! Where peace has only trickled in, it can come pouring in, it can rush in like a Heavenly deluge and flood your entire nature, to the praise and glory of your gracious God! May He make it to be so, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 8:14-39.

Verse 14. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.* Leading implies following and those who are enabled to follow the guidance of the Divine Spirit are most assuredly children of God, for the Lord always leads His own children. If, then, you are following the lead of God's Spirit, you have one of the evidences of sonship!

15. *For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.* The spirit of bondage is the spirit of servants, not of sons—but that servitude is ended for us who are made free in Christ Jesus. We are no longer afraid of being called the children of God. We are not afraid of our own Father—we have a filial fear of Him, but it is so mixed with love that there is no torment in it. Whether Jew or Gentile, we cry, "Abba, Father."

16. *The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.* Our spirit knows that we are God's children and then God's Spirit adds His testimony to the witness of our spirit that we are the children of God.

17. *And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we map be also glorified together.* This would not necessarily be true of any man's family, for he might have children who were not his heirs. But in God's family, all who are born into it are born "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." We must take our part of Christ's portion—His portion here, and His portion hereafter—the rule for us who are in Him shall be, "share and share alike." He Himself has said, "Where I am, there shall also My servant be." And all that He has, He will divide with us. Are you willing, dear Brothers and Sisters, to take shares with Christ? If not, then I question whether you can be rightly reckoned among His saints.

18. *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* "Light afflictions" are contrasted with "an exceeding weight of glory." Temporary afflictions, but for a moment, are to be followed by everlasting crowns that fade not away. What a contrast!

19. *For the earnest expectation of the creature waits for the manifestation of the sons of God.* All creation is, as it were, watching and waiting on tiptoe for the day when God shall manifest His sons and daughter, who, at present, are hidden. In due time, they shall come forth, acknowledged of God, and then shall the whole creation rejoice!

20-23. *For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who has subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself shall also be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now. 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.* We have already obtained salvation for our souls, but our body is still under bondage—subject to weariness—to pain, to infirmity—to death. But, by-and-by, with the new creation, our newly-molded bodies shall be fit to live in the new world and fit for our newborn souls to inhabit. This is the full redemption for which we are waiting!

24-28. *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? But if we hope for what we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groans which cannot be uttered. 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. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.* "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." That is a wonderfully positive statement, Paul! There are certain persons, nowadays, who say that we *know* nothing, yet the Apostles constantly say, "We know this" and, "We know that." These people tell us that there is a great distinction between believing and knowing—but, evidently it is a distinction of which the In-

spired Apostles knew nothing at all! Read the Epistles of John and note how he continually says, "We know, we know, we know," and how frequently he adds, "We believe," as though believing and knowing were the same thing! Agnostics may declare that they know nothing, if they please, but, as for us who do know, because we believe what we are taught of God in this Book, we will speak! He who has something to say has a right to say it! We know and therefore we speak!

Mark, Brothers and Sisters, how the Apostle speaks here. He does not say that all things *shall* work together for good. No, but that they *do* work together. They are *now* working for your present good. This is not merely something which shall eventually turn out right—right now it is all right! "We know that all things are working together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." No sooner does the Apostle mention that word, "purpose," than he must begin a long discourse upon it. He was not afraid or ashamed to speak of the purposes of God! There are some preachers who say nothing about God's purposes, or God's decrees—they seem to be afraid of them—they say it is "Calvinistic doctrine." Why, it was here, *in the Scriptures*, long before Calvin was born! So what right have they to call it by *his* name? Listen to what the Apostle has to say—

29, 30. *For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. 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.* There is no separating these golden links of love and mercy! That foreknowledge, to which all future things are open and present, begins the deed of love. Predestination comes in and chooses a people for God who shall be eternally His. Upon this, in due time, follows effectual calling by which the chosen ones are brought out, from the impure mass of mankind, and set apart unto God. Then follows justification by faith, through the precious blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ! And where this is, glory will certainly come, for "whom He justified, them He also glorified."

31, 32. *What shall we say, then, to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 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?* Notice, it is not simply "freely give us all things," but, "with Him, also freely give us all things." You shall get all things with Christ, but you shall get nothing without Christ, for all the other gifts come in this one! God first gave us His Son and He gives us everything in Him.

33. *Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God who justifies.* Ring out the challenge in Heaven itself! Trumpet it through all the caverns of Hell! Let the whole universe hear it! "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" None can, for "it is God who justifies," and His justification blocks every charge that is brought against His people—

"Who shall the Lord's elect condemn?
'Tis God that justifies their souls

And mercy, like a mighty stream,
O'er all their sins divinely rolls."

34. *Who is he that condemns?* None will answer to that challenge, for

34, 35. *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. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?* Oh, this blessed question—this touching question! It seems to come at the end of all the others—a rear-guard which effectually prevents our treasures from being taken from us. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

35. *Shall tribulation?* That has been tried. Have not the saints been beaten like wheat upon the threshing-floor? Has not affliction been to them a stern test of the reality of their faith? But Christ has loved them none the less for all the suffering that He has permitted to fall upon them.

35. *Or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?* When they have been in famine or poverty, has Christ ever forsaken His saints? Ah, no—He has loved them all the more! Have any of these things separated us from our Savior? No, but they have, to our own consciousness, knitted us even more closely to our Divine Lord. Cruel men have tried every form of persecuting the saints of God. They have been more inventive in the torments which they have applied to Christians than in almost anything else! Yet no torture, no rack, no imprisonment has ever divided them from Christ. They have clung to Him after the manner of John Bunyan, who, when they said that he might go free if he would promise not to preach the Gospel, said, "I will lie in prison till the moss grows on my eyelids rather than I will ever make such a promise as that! If you let me out of prison today, I will preach tomorrow, by the Grace of God."

36. *As it is written, For your sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.* But there has been no triumph over the saints in this case.

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—*

"Not all that men on earth can do,
Nor powers on high, nor powers below,
Shall cause His mercy to remove,
Or wean our hearts from Christ our love."

Glory be unto His holy name! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—23 (VERSION I),708, 775.

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

THE BEST FRIEND
NO. 2627

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Your own friend, and your father's friend, forsake not.
Proverbs 27:10.

TRUE friends are very scarce. We have a great many acquaintances and, sometimes, we call them friends and so misuse the noble word, "friendship." Perhaps, in some later day of adversity, when these so-called friends have looked out for their own interests and left us to do the best we can for ourselves, that word, friendship, may come back to us with sad and sorrowful associations. The friend in need is a friend, indeed, and such friends, I say again, are scarce. When you have found such a man and proved the sincerity of his friendship. When he has been faithful to your father and to you, grapple him to yourself with hooks of steel and never let him go! It may be that because he is a faithful friend, he will sometimes vex you and anger you. See how Solomon puts it in this very chapter—"Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend." It takes a great deal of friendship to be able to tell a man his faults. It is not friendship that flatters! It is small friendship that holds its tongue when it ought to speak. But it is true friendship that can speak at the right time and, if necessary, even speak so sharply as to cause a wound. If you are like many other foolish folk, you will be angry with the man who is so much your friend that he will tell you the truth. If you are unworthy of your friend, you will begin to grow weary of him when he is performing on your behalf the most heroic act of pure charity by warning you of your danger and reminding you of your imperfection! Solomon, in prospect of such a case, knowing that this is one of the greatest trials of friendship among such poor imperfect beings as we are, tells us not to forsake, for this reason—nor indeed, for any other reason—the man who has been to us and to our family a true friend. "Your own friend, and your father's friend, forsake not."

I do not think that I would waste your time if I were to give you a lecture upon friendship—its duties, its dangers, its rights and its privileges—but it is not my intention to do so. There is one Friend to whom these words of Solomon are especially applicable. There is a Friend who is the chief and highest of all friends and when I speak of Him, I feel that I am not spiritualizing the text in the least. He is a true and real Friend and these words are truly and really applicable to Him. And if ever the text is emphatic, it is so when it is applied to Him, for there was never such another Friend to us and to our fathers! There is no Friend to

whom we ought to be so intensely attached as to Him. "Your own Friend, and your father's Friend, forsake not."

I want, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to speak upon this subject. First, here is *a descriptive title* which may be fitly applied to Christ by many of us. He is our own Friend, and also our father's Friend. Secondly, here is *suggestive advice* concerning this Friend. "Forsake Him not." And before I have done, I shall say a little upon *a consequent resolution*. I hope that we shall turn the text into a solemn resolve and say, "My own Friend, and my father's Friend, I will not forsake."

I. First, then, here is A DESCRIPTIVE TITLE for our blessed Lord and Master.

First, he is a *Friend,* the Friend of man. I know that Young calls him the "great Philanthropist." I do not care to see that title—it is not good enough for Him—though truly the great Lover of man is Christ. Better still is the title which was given to Him when He was upon earth, "the Friend of sinners."—

"Friend of sinners is His name."

Their Friend—thinking of them with love when no other eye pitied them, and no other heart seemed to care for them. Their Friend, entering in most tender sympathy into the case of the lost, for "the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost." Their Friend—giving them good and sound advice and wholesome counsel, for whoever listens to the Words of Christ shall find in His teaching and in His guidance the highest wisdom. Their Friend, however, giving far more than sympathy and mere words—giving a lifetime of holy service for the sake of those whose cause He had espoused and going further even than this—doing for them the utmost that a Friend can do, for what is there more than that a man should lay down his life for his friend? Friend of man and, therefore, born of man. Friend of sinners and, therefore, living among them and ministering to them. Friend of sinners and, therefore, taking their sin upon Himself and bearing it "in His own body on the tree," so fulfilling Gabriel's prophecy that He would come "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness."

Christ has done for us all that needed to be done! He has done much more than we ever could have asked Him to do, or expected Him to do. He has done more for us than we can *understand*, even now that He has done it, and more than you and I are likely *ever* to understand even when our intellect shall have been developed and enlarged to the utmost degree before the eternal Throne of God, for even there I do not think we shall ever fully know how much we owe to the friendship of our best Friend! However self-denying and tender other friends may be, our Lord must always stand at the head of the list and we will not put a second there as worthy of any comparison with Him!

It is a very blessed thing, next, to have the Lord Jesus Christ as having been our *father's Friend*. There are some of us to whom this has been literally true for many generations. I suppose that there is some pride in being the 14th earl, or the 10th duke, or having a certain rank among

men. But, sometimes, quietly to myself, I glory in my pedigree because I can trace the line of spiritual Grace back as far as I can go to men who loved the Lord and who, many of them, have preached His Word. Many of you, I know, in this Church, and in other Churches, have a glorious heraldry in the line of the Lord's nobles. It is true that some of you have had the great mercy of being taken, like trees out of the desert, and planted in the courts of our God, for which you may well be glad. But others of you are slips from vines that, in their turn, were slips from other vines loved and cared for by the great Husbandman! You cannot tell how long this blessed succession has continued—your fathers, and your fathers' fathers, as far back as you can trace them, were friends of Christ! Happy Ephraim, whose father Joseph had God with him! Happy Joseph, whose father Jacob saw God at Bethel! Happy Jacob, whose father Isaac walked in the fields and meditated in communion with Jehovah! Happy Isaac, whose father Abraham had spoken with God and was called "the Friend of God!" God has a habit of loving families. David said, "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them." Grace does not run in the blood, but often the stream of Divine Mercy has run side by side with it and, instead of the fathers, have been the children whom the Lord has made to be princes in the earth!

Some of you, perhaps, have fathers and mothers still living, whose example you may fitly follow. I charge you, never forsake your father's God, or, what is still more tender, the God of your mother! Others of you have parents in Heaven. Well, they are still yours—that sacred relationship is not broken. You remember your mother's last grasp of your hand when she bade you follow her to Heaven. You recollect your father's appeals to you, in his long sickness, when he pleaded with you to take heed to your ways and not neglect the things of God, but seek Him in the days of your youth. Well, did you ever hear your father say anything against his God? Did your mother ever, in her confiding moments, whisper in your ear, "Mary, do not trust in God, for He has betrayed your mother's confidence"? No! I know they did not talk like that, for He was their best Friend and He who was such a Friend to the dear old man whom you can never forget. He who cheered the heart of that gracious matron whose sweet face rises before you now—oh, I beseech you, forsake Him not! "Your own Friend, and your father's Friend, forsake not."

Still, the sweetest part of the text lies in these words, "*Your own Friend*." I do not think that I can preach on those words. I can take them in my mouth and they are like honey for sweetness, but they must be *personally* enjoyed to be fully appreciated. There are some precious lines we sometimes sing—

"The health is of my countenance,
Yes, my own God is He"—

which exactly describe the blessedness of "your own Friend."

Now, if it is true that Christ is your own Friend, then you have spoken with Him. You have held sweet conversations with Him, you have placed your confidence in Him, you have told Him your lost estate and sinful-

ness and you have reposed in Him as your own Savior. You have put your cause into His hands and you have left it there. If He is, indeed, your own Friend, then He has helped you. You were a stranger and He has taken you in. You were naked and He has clothed you. You were spiritually sick and in prison, and He came to you and healed you. Yes, and He wore your chains and bade you go free! And He took your sicknesses and bade you take His health—and so He made you whole. Yes, and He restored you even from the grave—and went into that grave, Himself, that by His death, you might live! You know that it is so and day by day you keep up communion with Him—you could not live without Him, for He is such a Friend to you, and you rest on Him with all your weight as you come up from the wilderness with Him, leaning on your Beloved, "your own Friend."

Nor is the friendship all on one side, though your side is a very little one. You would make it greater if it were in your power, for you have confessed His name, you have united yourself with His people, you love to join with them in prayer and praise. You are not ashamed to be called by Christ's name as a Christian, or to speak well of that name, and you desire to consecrate to Him all that you have. Better than all this, while you do call Him, Friend, He also calls *you,* Friend, as He said to His disciples, "You are My friends, if you do whatever I command you." Dare I say the words, yet, dare I doubt the truth of the words—Jesus is *my* Friend? There is one we read of in the Bible who was David's captain of the host, and there was another who was David's counselor. But there was one man whom we always call, "David's friend, Jonathan." And I envy him such a title. Yet Jesus gives this name to all those who come and put their trust in Him and so find Him to be their Friend!

Now, inasmuch as the Lord Jesus is "your own Friend, and your father's Friend," the injunction of the text comes to you with peculiar force—"Forsake Him not." Can you forsake Him? Look at His face, all red with bloody sweat for you. Nor His face, alone, for He is covered all over with that gory robe wherein He worked out your redemption. He that works for bread must sweat, but He that worked for your eternal life did sweat great drops of blood falling down to the ground! Can you forsake Him? He stands at Pilate's bar, He is mocked by Herod's men of war. He is scourged by Pilate, and all for you—and can you forsake Him? He goes up to the Cross of Calvary and the cruel iron is driven through His hands and feet and there He makes expiation for your guilt. He is your Friend, even to the ignominy of a felon's death—and can you forsake Him? He lays His pierced hand on you and He says, "Will you, also, go away?" Or, as He worded it to the twelve, "You also will not go away, will you?" So it might be read, "Many of my supposed friends have gone and so have proved themselves to be not friends, but traitors. But you, also, will not go away, will you?" And He seems to make an appeal to them with those tearful, tender eyes of His—"as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set"—"You also will not go away, will you?"

And when you turn your eyes another way and think not merely of the shame your Friend endured for you, but recollect what is an equal proof

of His love—that He is not ashamed of you now that He is in His Glory! Amidst the throng of angels and cherubim and seraphim that frequent His courts above He does not disdain to know that He is the Brother of these poor earthworms down below, for even there He wears the body which proves Him to be our next of kin—yes, and wears the scars which proved that for us He endured the death penalty, itself, and even now He is not ashamed to call us Brethren! As you think of all this, can you forsake Him? Because you are somewhat better off than you once were, will you leave the little gathering of poor folk with whom you used to worship so happily, and will you go to some more fashionable place where there is music, but little of the music of the name of Jesus—where there is gorgeous architecture, it may be, and masquerading, and mummery and I know not what, but little of the sweet savor of His Presence, and the dropping of that dew which He always brings with Him wherever He comes? Oh, it is a pity, it is a sorrowful pity, it is a meanness that would disgrace a mere worldling—when a man who once confessed Christ and followed Him—must turn his back upon his Lord because his own coat is made of better material than it used to be, and his balance at the bank is heavier! I had almost said—"Then let the Judas go, be his own place what it may—it were almost a dishonor to Christ to wish the traitor back!

Oh, will you go away, either from the Crucified or from the Glorified? If you will forsake this Friend, "Behold, He comes!" Every hour brings Him nearer! The chariots of His Glory have glowing axles and you may almost hear them as they speed toward us! And then what will you do when you have forsaken your own Friend and your father's Friend, and you hear Him say, "I never knew you; I never knew you"? God grant that it may never be the lot of any of us here present to hear those awful words!

II. Now I pass on to our second head, as the Holy Spirit may help me. It is, SUGGESTIVE ADVICE—"Your own Friend, and your father's Friend, forsake not."

There is, to me, in the text, a suggestion which the text itself does not suggest. That is to say, *it suggests something by not suggesting it.* The text does not suggest to me that my own Friend and my father's Friend will ever forsake me. It seems to hint that I may forsake Him, but it does not suggest that He will ever forsake me—and He never will! If the Lord had ever meant to forsake me, He has had so many good reasons for doing it that He would have done it long ago! The Apostle says of those who are journeying to the better country that, "if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned." And, certainly, our blessed Lord and Master, if He had desired to leave us to perish, had many an opportunity to return to Heaven before He died. And, since then He has had many more occasions when He might have said, "I really must withdraw My friendship from you," if He had ever wished to do so. But His love is constant—"Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." His is a friendship which never changes! You shall never fall back on Him and find that He has withdrawn the arms with which He formerly upheld you. You shall find, in life and in death, that "there is a Friend that

sticks closer than a brother." Let us be cheered by the assurance that He will never forsake us!

Now let us go on to what the text *does* suggest in so many words. It suggests to us the question, *In what sense can we forsake Christ?* Well, there is more than one sense in which a man may forsake Christ. Two passages rise to my mind at this moment. "Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled." That was one sort of forsaking—they were all afraid and ran away from their Lord in the hour of His betrayal into the hands of sinners. But it is quite another kind of forsaking when we read, "From that time many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him." The first forsaking was the result of a sudden fear, much to be deplored and very blameworthy, but still, only temporary in its effects. The other was the deliberate act of those who, in cold blood, refused to accept Jesus Christ's doctrine, or to follow Him any farther, and so turned back and walked no more with Him. This last forsaking is incurable. The former one was cured almost as soon as the sudden fear that caused it was removed, for we find John and even Peter following the Master to the judgment hall and the whole of the disciples soon gathered around Him after His Resurrection.

I would say to you, dear Friends, "Your own Friend, and your father's Friend, forsake not" in any sense at all. Forsake Him not even in your moments of alarm. Pray God that *then* you may play the man and not forsake Him and flee. And then, in the other sense, let no quarrel ever arise between you and Christ's most precious Truth so as to lead you deliberately to leave Him, for this is the worst of all kinds of forsaking! If we never forsake Him in any sense at all, then it is quite certain that we shall never forsake Him in the worst sense. I remember a little merriment I had with a good Wesleyan brother, the clerk of the works, when the Tabernacle was being built. He wanted me to go up a ladder right into those lantern lights and I said, "No, thank you. I would rather not." "But," he replied, "I thought you had no fear of falling." "Yes," I answered, "that is quite true. I have no fear of finally falling away, but the belief that the Lord will preserve me does not exercise any evil influence over me, for it keeps me from running unnecessary risks by climbing up ladders! But you, good Brother, who are so afraid of falling, do not seem to show it practically in your conduct, for you go up and down the ladders as nimbly as possible."

I have sometimes met with persons who think that if we believe that we shall never fall so as to perish, we are apt to become presumptuous—but we do not, dear Brothers and Sisters! There are other Truths of God that come in to balance this one, so that what they think might come of it is, by God's good Grace, prevented. And I am not quite sure that those who think that they may finally fall and perish are sufficiently impressed with that belief so as to always be careful. The fact is, that your carefulness of walk does not depend merely upon your view of this doctrine or that, but it depends upon your state of heart and a great many other things—so that you have no reason to judge what you might do if you believed such-and-such a Truth of God, because if you did believe it, per-

haps you would, at the same time, be a better man—and the possibility that appears to linger around the doctrine would vanish so far as you are concerned. Let this be the language of all of us who love the Lord, as we look up confidently and reverently to Him—

"We have no fear that You should lose
One whom eternal love could choose,
But we would ne'er this Grace abuse.
Let us not fall. Let us not fall!"

I know that if we are truly the Lord's, He will not allow us to forsake Him. But I must have a wholesome fear lest I should forsake Him, for who am I that I should be sure that I have not deceived myself? I may have done so and, after all, may forsake Him after the loudest professions, and even after the greatest apparent sincerity in vowing that I never will turn away from Him.

So, I ask again—In what sense can we forsake our Lord? Well, there are many senses, but perhaps you will see better what I mean if I describe *a general process of forsaking a friend.* I hope that you have never had to undergo it. I do not know that I ever have, but, still, I can imagine that it is something like this. The old gentleman was your father's friend. He also had been your own friend and has done you many a good turn. But, at last, he has said something which has provoked you to anger, or he has done something which you have misunderstood or misinterpreted—and now you feel very cool towards him when you meet. You pass the time of day and, perhaps, say very much the same things which you used to say, but they are said in a very different fashion. Now, that is how we begin to forsake our God. We may keep up the appearance of friendship with Christ, but it is a very cool affair. We go to a place of worship, but there is no enjoyment, no enthusiasm, no earnestness.

Then the next thing is that you do not call to see your friend as frequently as you used to do. It has not come to an open rupture between you, so you do look in at certain set times when you are expected, but there are none of those little flying visits and that popping in upon him unawares, just to get a look at his face as you used to do. And, on his part, he does not come to see you much, either. And that is how our forsaking of Christ generally continues. We do not go to talk with Him as we once did, and when we do go to His House, we find that He is not there. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Then, by-and-by, perhaps there is a sharp word spoken, and your friend feels that you do not need him. You have said something that cuts him to the quick and grieves him. It was not anything so very bad if it had been spoken to a stranger—but to be said to him who was your father's friend, to him whom you always expected to come in and whom you loved to see—to say it to him was very hard and he naturally took offense at it.

That is how it comes to pass between Christ and professors. There is something done which might not be of so much account in the case of non-professors or the openly ungodly, but it is very bad in one who professed to have Christ for his Friend. And do you know what happens, by-and-by, when your friend is being discarded? At last he does not call at all—and you do not go to see him. Perhaps the breach is still further

widened and little presents are sent back or treated with contempt. There is that oil painting which your father would have, though he could scarcely afford it, because he loved his friend so much, and which he hung up in so conspicuous a place in his house. Well, the other day, the string broke and you did not buy a fresh piece of cord to hang it up again. In fact, you put the picture away in the cellar and you do not really care what becomes of it! The little tokens of past affection are all put away, for there is an open rupture, now, and when somebody spoke to you about him, lately, you said, "Oh, pray don't mention him to me! He is no friend of mine now! I used to be on intimate terms with him, once, but I have altered my opinion about him altogether."

So do some professors act towards the Lord Jesus Christ. Those little tokens of love which they thought they had from Him, they send back. They do not remain in fellowship with His Church. They do all that they possibly can to disown Him. In the meanwhile, the blessed Lord of Love is obliged to disown them, too! And His Church disowns them. And, by-and-by, the rupture has become complete. May that never be the portion of any of you!

"No," says one, "it never will be." My dear Friend, if you are so confident as that, you are the person about whom I am most afraid! I remember one who used to pray among us, but we had to put him out of the Church for evil living. And there was one of our members who said, that night, "If that man is not a child of God, I am not one, myself." I said, "My dear Brother, do not talk like that. I would not pit my soul against the soul of any man, for I do know a little of myself, but I do not know other men as well as I know myself." I am very much afraid that neither of the two men I have mentioned was a child of God. By their speech they seemed to be Christians, but their acts were not like those of God's people. It does not do for us to talk as that man did, but to pray to the Lord, "Hold me up and I shall be safe." That is the proper prayer for us—or else it may happen even to us as happened to them—and we may forsake our own Friend and our father's Friend.

Now, *what reasons can we possibly have for forsaking Christ?* We ought to do nothing for which we cannot give good reasons. I have known persons very properly forsake their former friends because they have, themselves, become new creatures in Christ Jesus and they have, rightly and wisely, given up the acquaintances with whom they used to sin. They cannot go, now, to the house where everything is contrary to their feelings. But it is not so with Christ. Some so-called friends drag a man down, lower him, injure him, impose upon him and, at last, he is obliged to let them go. But we cannot say that of Christ. His friendship has drawn us up, helped us, sanctified us, elevated us—we owe everything to that friendship! We cannot have a reason, therefore, for forsaking this Friend. I have known some to outgrow an acquaintance or friend. They really have not been able to continue to have common views and sympathies, for, while their friend has remained in the mire, they have risen into quite different men by reason of education and other influences. But we can never outgrow Christ. That is not possible! And the more we grow

in a right sense, the more we shall become like He. A man who has been the friend of our father and of ourselves is the very man to still have as a friend because he probably understands all about the family difficulties, the family troubles and he also understands us. Why, he nursed us when we were children and, therefore, he knows most about us. I remember that, when lying sorely sick, I had a letter from a kind old gentleman who said that he had, that day, celebrated his 80th birthday, and the choicest friend he had at his dinner table was the old family doctor. He said, "He has attended to me so long that he thoroughly knows my constitution. He is nearly as old as myself, but the first time I was ill I saw him and he has attended me, now, for 40 years. Once," he said, "when I had a severe attack of gout, I was tempted to try some very famous man who very nearly killed me and, until I got back to my old friend, I was never really well again."

So he wrote to advise me to get some really good physician and let him know my constitution and to stick to him, and never go off to any of the patent medicines or the quacks of the day! Oh, but there is a great deal of truth in that in a spiritual sense! With the utmost reverence, we may say that the Lord Jesus Christ has been our family Physician. Did He not attend my father in all his sicknesses, and my grandfather, too? And He knows the ins and outs of my constitution—He knows my ways, good and bad, and all my sorrows and, therefore I do not go to anyone else for relief. And I advise you, also, to keep to Jesus Christ, do not forsake Him! If you are ever tempted to go aside, even for a little while, I pray that you may have Grace enough to come back quickly and to commit yourself again to Him, and never go astray again. There is the blessing of having One who is wise, One who is tried, One whose sympathy has been tested, One who has become, as it were, one of your family, One who has taken your whole household to His heart and made it part and parcel of Himself. Such a Friend to your own soul, and to your father's soul, forsake not!

Do not forsake Him, dear Friends, because, I almost tremble to say it—*you will need Him some day*. Even if you would never need Him in the future, you ought not to forsake Him. I do not quite like that verse of the hymn at the end of our hymn book—

"Ashamed of Jesus! Yes, I may,
When I've no guilt to wash away,
No tear to wipe, no good to crave,
No fears to quell, no soul to save."

No, I *may not*. When all my guilt is gone, I shall not be ashamed of Jesus. When I am in Heaven and need no more the pardon of sin, I certainly shall not be ashamed of Him who brought me there! No, but I shall glory in Him more than ever! Your friendship to Christ, and mine, ought not to depend upon what we are going to get out of Him. We must love Him now for what He is, for all that He has already done, and for His own blessed Person and personal beauties which every day should hold fast our love, and bind us in chains of affection to Him.

But suppose you *do* think of forsaking Christ, where are you going to get another Friend to take His place? You must have a friend of some

sort—who is going to sit in Christ's chair? Whose portrait is to be hung up in the old familiar place when the old Friend is discarded? To whom are you going to tell your griefs and from whom will you expect to receive help in time of need? Who will be with you in sickness? Who will be with you in the hour of death? Ah, there is no other who can ever fill the vacuum which the absence of Christ would make! Therefore, never forsake Him.

III. Now I must close with THE CONSEQUENT RESOLVE about which I can say very little, as my time has gone.

Let this be your resolve, by His Grace, *instead of forsaking Him, you will cling to Him more closely than ever.* You will acknowledge Him when it brings you dishonor to do so. You will trust Him when He wounds you, for "faithful are the wounds of a friend." You will serve Him when it is costly to do it, when it involves self-denial, resolved that, by the help of His ever-blessed Spirit, without whom you can do nothing, you will never, in any sort of company, conceal the fact that you are a Christian! Never, under any possible circumstances, wish to be otherwise than a servant of such a Master, a friend of such a Lord! Come now, dear young friends who are getting cool towards Christ, and elder friends to whom religion is becoming monotonous—come to your Lord once more and ask Him to bind you with cords, even with cords to the horns of the altar! You have had time to count the cost of all Egypt's treasure—forego it and forswear it once and for all. But the riches of Christ you can never count—so come and take Him again to be your All-in-All!

Those about to be baptized will feel, I trust—as we shall when we look on—and say, each man and woman for himself, or herself—

"'Tis done! The great transaction's done!
I am my Lord's, and He is mine."

Nail your colors to the mast! Bear in your body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Yes, let everyone of us who has been baptized into Christ feel that our whole body bears the watermark, for we have been "buried with Him by baptism into death." It was not for the putting off of the filthiness of the flesh, but as a declaration that we were dead to the world and quickened into newness of life in Christ Jesus our Savior. So let it be with you, too, dear Friends, as you follow your Lord through the water! Cling to Him, cleave to Him! "Your own Friend, and your father's Friend, forsake not." May God add His blessing, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 15:9-27.

Verse 9. *As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you.* Oh, drink this nectar down! It is as when Cleopatra dissolved the pearl into a single draught, for here is the choicest pearl of the Truths of God that was ever dissolved into a single verse to be a delicious draught for His people to drink! "As the Father has loved Me"—as surely as the Father has loved Me and, then, "as"—that is—in the same manner "as the Father has loved Me"—without beginning, without ending, without measure, without change, "so have I loved you."

9, 10. *Continue you in My love. If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love.* Note this point of the Lord's discipline—not that Christ ever casts away His people, but that He does take from them the sweet sense of His love, the realization of it, if they are disobedient to Him and keep not His commandments.

10, 11. *Even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love. These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you.* That He might joy in us—feel a sacred delight in thinking of us as He does when He sees us keeping His commandments and treasuring up His Words, and so living in His love and being mighty in prayer.

11. *And that your joy might be full.* If Christ is not pleased with us, we cannot be glad. And if He has no joy in us, we cannot have joy in Him. These two things rise and fall together. When the father of the family looks with joy upon his boy, then the boy is happy. But when the father has no joy in his son, then be sure of this, the son has no joy in his father, but he is sad at heart. O God, may we never grieve You, for if we do, we shall be grieved! At least, I trust that we shall—we would not have it otherwise. But, oh, that we might have the testimony that Enoch had before his translation, that we have pleased God! Then shall we have true pleasure in ourselves.

12-14. *This is My commandment, That you love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.* Obedience, then, is rewarded with a holy friendship, for Christ becomes in the highest sense our Friend! But we are not His friends till we cease to delight in sin and turn away from it into the paths of holiness.

15. *Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his lord does: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you.* The servant works in a building and it is enough for him that he is laying part of a line of brick or stone. Perhaps he has never seen the design of the structure, nor had a wish to do so. But you and I have the great Architect constantly coming to us to tell us what the building is to be and to explain to us His plans—and so we work with greater pleasure and joy than a mere laborer might. The very heart of Christ is laid bare to His people. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." Happy are His people—glad to be His servants—more glad, still, to be His friends!

16. *You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatever you shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it to you.* There you see Divine Election leading on to fruit-bearing and perpetuated in perseverance—"that your fruit should remain." It brings to every one of its objects this conspicuous favor, prevailing power in prayer—"that whatever you shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it to you."

17. *These things I command you, that you love one another.* O you professors who have no love to one another, you are breaking the King's commandment! You are living in direct violation of a plain command that

is most dear to His heart. Oh, that we might constantly hear it and obey it! "These things I command you, that you love one another."

18. *If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you.* That is what you have reason to expect, and you may feel honored if they treat you as they have treated your Lord.

19-22. *If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep your's also. But all these things will they do unto you for My name's sake, because they know not Him that sent Me. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin.* There is an awful increase of sin produced by Christ appearing to a man. And if any of you have been very near to the Kingdom, and your conscience has been awakened, and your mind has been impressed by the Truth of God and yet you have gone back to your sin, you have multiplied that sin a thousand-fold! The times of your ignorance God may have winked at, but now you are sinning against the Light of God and knowledge—and unless you repent, your doom will be terrible!

23-26. *He that hates Me, hates My Father, also. If I had not done among them the works which no other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father. But this came to pass that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated Me without a cause. But when the Comforter is come.* And He has come! He is here! He has never been taken away! He still abides with and in the Church!

26. *Whom I'll send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceeds from the Father, He shall testify of Me.* By this mark you may know whether that which has been taught you is of the Spirit of God. If it does not testify of Christ—if He is not the head and front of it all—there is nothing in it for you to accept. If any man comes to you with what he calls a revelation, if it is not all concerning Christ, by this shall you judge it—it is not of the Spirit of God if it does not testify of Christ.

27. *And you also shall bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.* May we all bear witness according as we have been with Christ, for there is no bearing witness to Christ unless we have first been with Him.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—376, 668, 667.

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

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

"ALL HAIL!"
NO. 2628

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JUNE 25, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 5, 1882.

"And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail! So they came and held Him by the feet and worshipped Him. Then said Jesus to them, Be not afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go into Galilee, and there will they see Me." Matthew 28:9, 10.

ON Sabbath mornings, lately, we have been meditating upon the sorrows of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have been, in thought, traveling with Him from dark Gethsemane to still darker Golgotha. We have pictured Him under accusation before Caiaphas, Herod and Pilate. We have, in imagination, heard the cruel shouts of the Jews, "Away with Him! Crucify Him!" These solemn events have been full of pain to us—even the bliss that comes to us through the Cross of Christ has been toned down with intense sorrow as we have thought of the agonies our Savior endured there. But as soon as we get to the other side of the Cross and realize that Christ has risen from the dead, everything is calm, quiet and peaceful! There are none of those rough winds and stormy blasts that come sweeping around us as we stand outside Pilate's palace and Herod's judgment hall. All is spring-like—summer-like, if you will—yes, and autumn-like, for there are most luscious fruits to be gathered in the garden wherein was a new sepulcher out of which the living Christ arose in all the glory of His resurrection from the dead!

There was just one painful memory during the interview which Christ had with His disciples, when he said to Peter the third time, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?" And "Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, Do you love Me?" But all the rest of the manifestations of our Lord to His disciples were singularly placid, joyful, restful.

So, dear Friends, I want it to be with you, now, as you enter into the spirit of the scene described in our text. I pray that the Master may set you on the other side of the sepulcher and make you feel as if He breathed upon you as He breathed upon His disciples and said to you as He said to them, "Peace be unto you!" We need this experience, at least sometimes, for while the lessons to be learned at Calvary are inestimably precious and it is beyond all things necessary to sorrow over our sin as we see how we are reconciled to God by the death of His Son, yet we must ardently desire to gather all the fruit that grows even on the accursed tree—and part of that fruit will give us the sweet rest of reconciliation through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

This is the time for fellowship with your Lord, Beloved. You cannot tread the winepress with Him. You cannot pour out your blood to mingle with His, for the Atonement is complete and needs no suffering on your part—anything added to it would spoil it. But now, on the other side of the tomb, you can stand beside your risen Savior. He can come into our midst and say, as He has often done, "Peace be unto you!" As we journey to our homes after this service, we can walk and talk with Him as they did who went to Emmaus in company with Him. We can take Him with us into our daily labors, on the morrow, even as He went to the sea where His disciples were fishing and taught them how to catch a multitude of fish. Familiar acquaintance with Christ should spring out of the fact that He is no longer dead, that He is not, now, in the grave, but that He has risen in fullness of life and that, most wonderful Truth of all, that life is in all His people!

I. Our meditation upon this text will, I trust, help us to enjoy fellowship with Christ. Read the beginning of it and learn from it this first lesson. THE LORD JESUS OFTEN MEETS WITH HIS PEOPLE IN THE WAY OF HOLY SERVICE. "As they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them."

My Brother said, just now in prayer, that we do not expect to actually meet Jesus in flesh and blood, but we know that there is a great blessedness in store for those who have not seen Him with their mortal eyes and yet have believed in Him. But we do expect to meet Him, after a *spiritual* fashion, so that faith can recognize Him. No, more, we know that He is here in His real, though invisible Presence. We may expect this blessed experience when we are in the way of holy service. I grant you that our Lord Jesus comes to us at other times as well—

"Sometimes a light surprises
The Christian while he sings—
It is the Lord who rises
With healing in His wings!"

Yes, and sometimes the light of the Sun of Righteousness surprises the Christian when he cannot sing! "Before I was aware," says the sweet singer of the blessed Canticle—"Before I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib," for the Presence of Christ may be suddenly manifested to His people—and they may be as though they were caught away altogether from earthly scenes—and were with Christ in the Heavenly places!

We have known this to happen, sometimes, in the lonely night watches. And we have said with David, "When I awake, I am still with You," even in the darkness of the night. We have known it to happen in the very midst of the hurry and worry of business. All of a sudden everything has been calm and quiet. We could not make it out—it seemed like a Sabbath in the middle of the week—a very oasis in the wilderness! The Lord Jesus Christ has come to some of us when we have been amidst the busy throng in Cheapside. In fact, there is nothing but sin that can keep Him away from us since He is not dependent upon the ordinary rules that regulate the movement of earthly bodies. He was not so on earth after He had risen from the dead, for though I doubt not that He often came and went just as others did, yet, at other times, He came like an

apparition, "the doors being shut," and He could be here and there at His own sweet will, passing from place to place, holding the eyes of those to whom He was nearest, or opening their eyes just when He pleased to do so!

And that is how He acts toward us now. Do not some of you remember when Christ first appeared to you? Ah, it is years ago with some of us, but we mind the place, the spot of ground where Jesus first manifested Himself to us. The joy of marriage—the joy of harvest—these were as nothing compared with the joy that came to us from the vision of His face! Many days have passed since then and we have had fresh visitations from Him. He has come to us, and come again, and yet again. He has not been a stranger to us and now some of us can say that we are not strangers to Him, for He is our dear familiar Friend! Yet there are times, even with those who dwell with Him, when the light is clearer and the voice is nearer, and the sense of His Presence is more delightful than usual.

These times, I say, come by Christ's own appointment whenever He pleases, yet I again remind you of the lesson we learn from our text, which is, that we may expect these visits from Christ when *we are going about His business*. These devoted women had been to the sepulcher and had there seen "the angel of the Lord," who had bid them go quickly and tell His disciples that He was risen from the dead and would meet them in Galilee. So they hastened with all their might to tell the cheering tidings to the sorrowing followers of Jesus! "And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them." It is better to be actively working for Christ than to sit still and read, and study, and hope to enjoy His company. There must be alternations between the contemplative and the active life of a Christian! Sometimes it is best to sit quietly with Mary and leave Martha and the dishes alone. But, at another time it is better to bestir yourself and to run here and there with all the diligence of a Martha, for then Jesus will be most likely to meet with you.

I notice—and I think that my observation is correct—that my Brothers and Sisters who do most for Christ know most about Him and have most fellowship with Him. The Sunday school teacher, diligent in his class and weary, perhaps, now that the Sabbath is well-nigh spent, yet rejoicing that he has set forth Christ before his class, is the one to whom the Lord will come and manifest Himself! The man who has been preaching in the street, or going from door to door trying to speak for Christ by a tract or by his own voice—and all of you, indeed, who have done anything for your Lord and Master—are the most likely persons for Him to meet with at this time.

I have known some who have been for years members of churches, but who have never done anything for the Savior. They are the kind of people who do not get on with my ministry very long—they say that they are not able to feed upon it. They are generally wanderers who go about from one place to another looking for new light—and they never get to be very happy or very useful. Nor do they often have much communion with Christ. No, our Lord is very choice in His company and He does not frequent the house of the sluggard! But wherever there is one who spends and is spent for Jesus, there we may expect that Jesus will be! If we

heartily serve Him, the state of mind into which we shall be brought will be congenial to His own—fellowship will be likely between the laboring Savior and His laboring servant. Follow the example of Him who went about doing good and you will thus be in sympathy with Him—and you will find that He will come and walk with you because you two are agreed!

That is certainly one reason why Christ comes to those who are busy about His errands—because He is in agreement with them and they are, therefore, traveling on the right road to meet with Him. "If any man will not work, neither shall he eat," is a rule that Christ observes. And those who will not work for Him get but scant morsels from Him. Few of the bits my Brother spoke of, that are dipped in the dish with Christ, come to those who never lift a hand to do Him any service. But if He brings us into loving obedience, into joyful alacrity and sacred earnestness in doing His will, then it is that He will, in all probability, meet with us by the way and manifest Himself to us. Sit down, then, you who have come to the end of another day of holy service, and pray, "Jesus, Master, come and meet us now." Oh, that you might feel as though He stood behind you and looked over your shoulder—as if the shadow of the Christ fell upon you and you felt, even now, His pierced hand touching you—and that prostrate at His feet your spirit might lie, holding Him by the feet and worshipping Him!

I do not feel as if I need to preach upon this subject. I want only to set you longing for larger and deeper communion with Christ and aspiring after it—especially you to whom this Sabbath has been a day of service, from which service, perhaps, you have not as yet seen any good come. You have come from the field weary—not weary *of* it, though weary *in* it—for you are still ready to serve your Lord. Now I want you to feel that Christ is here and that He comes to commune with you.

II. So we advance a step to our second remark. WHEN JESUS MEETS US, HE ALWAYS HAS A GOOD WORD FOR US. "Jesus met them, saying, All hail!"

That is, first, *a word of salutation*, as if He had said, "Welcome, Friends! Glad to see you, Friends! All hail, My Friends!" There is nothing cold and formal about that word—it seems full of the warmth of brotherly kindness and affectionate condescension. "All hail!" says our Lord to the women. "You are glad to see Me, and I am glad to see you. 'All hail!'" How much more sweet that sounds than that bitter sarcasm of the soldiers, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And yet it seems almost like an echo of it, as though Christ caught up the cruel word, crushed the bitterness out of it and then gave it back full of delicious sweetness to the holy women before Him. "All hail!" He says. "All hail!"

My dear Christian Brother or Sister, would you be glad to see the Savior if He could now be made visible to you? Yet you would not be so glad to see Him as He would be to see you! He is very dear to you, but He is not so dear to you as you are to Him! Out of two friends, the greater affection is always found in the one who has conferred the most favors upon the other. I will not dare to compare, for a moment, the love which exists between you and Christ, for what have you ever done for Him compared with what He has done for you? He loves you more than you can

ever love Him. Well, then, He says, "All hail! I am glad, My Sister—I am glad, My Brother—I am glad, my Friend, that you have come up to this place where My people meet. All hail! I welcome you."

Besides being a word of salutation, it is *a word of benediction*. Our Lord, by this expression, seems to say, "All health be to you—everything that can do you good! I wish for you every good thing." He speaks it to you, Believer. "May you have the haleness, the wholeness that makes holiness and, so may it be all well with you—all hale with you!"

Then it is also *a word of congratulation*, for some render it, "Rejoice," and, indeed, that is the meaning of the term—"Let us joy and rejoice together." Jesus gives to you, Beloved, this watchword as He meets you—"Rejoice." The children in your class are not yet all converted. Nevertheless, rejoice in Christ. All in the congregation, about whom some of us are concerned, are not saved. Nevertheless, let us rejoice in Christ. You, yourself, cannot run as quickly on your Lord's errands as you wish you could. Nevertheless, rejoice in Christ Jesus, though you can have no confidence in the flesh. It is a blessed thing when it becomes a sacred duty to be glad. What man to whom our Lord Jesus Christ says, "Rejoice," can have an excuse for misery? So, "All hail!" is a word of congratulation.

And, according to some versions, it may be read, "Peace be unto you!" That is *a word of pacification*—as though our Lord had said, "Ah, you women did not run away from Me as the men did. But, still, you were afraid and very timid. Sad though you were at the sepulcher, you went there trembling. You did not believe My Word, or you scarcely believed it—that I would rise from the dead—but I am not going to have any back reckonings with you. 'Peace be to you!'"

Now, dear Friends, have you heard your Lord and Savior say to you, "It is all forgiven—every omission and every commission, every slip and every fault—all the lukewarmness and all the coldness is all gone"? That is the meaning of the greeting, "All hail!" from the lips of Christ. "There is nothing between Me and you, dear Heart, but perfect peace and unbroken love. I rejoice to see you and I would have you rejoice, and rest, and be quiet, for I have come near unto you, to bless and cheer you."

That is the second lesson I learn from the text. First, that, when we are running on our Master's errands, we may hope that He will meet us. And, next, when He does meet us, we may expect that He will always have a good word for us.

III. Thirdly, WHEN JESUS MEETS US, IT BEHOOVES US TO GET AS NEAR TO HIM AS WE CAN. "And they came and held Him by the feet."

Note that they first stood still. They had been running quickly to carry the angel's message to the disciples, but at the sound of their Lord's voice they stopped, half out of breath, and they seemed to say by their looks, "It is, indeed, our blessed Master! It is the very same Lord whom we saw laid in the tomb, the Best-Beloved of our soul!" Then, next, they approached Him. They did not flee away backward at all, but they came right up to Him "and held Him by the feet." Now, dear Friends, if Jesus is near you, come still closer to Him! If you feel that He is passing by, come near to Him by an act of your will. Be all alive and wide-awake—do not be half asleep in your pew, but say, "If He is here, I will get to Him. If He is anywhere about, I will speak with Him and beg Him to speak to me." If

ever our heart was active, it ought to be active in the Presence of Christ! And let us try to be all aglow with joy, for so were these women. They were delighted to behold their risen Lord, so they drew nearer to Him and, all intent with earnest, burning, all-conquering love, they came so close to Him that they could grasp Him, for they felt that they must adore Him.

Now, Beloved, let it be so with you and with me. Do not let us lose a single word that our Lord is ready to speak to us. If this is the time of His appearing to us, let Him not come and find us asleep. If He is knocking at the door, if He is saying to us, "Open to Me, My Sister, My Love, My Dove, My Undefiled," let us not reply that we cannot leave the bed of sloth to let Him in—but now, more than ever, let us breathe a mighty prayer, "Come, O You Blessed One whose voice I know full well, and commune with me." If Jacob held the Angel whom he did not know—if, as our hymn puts it, he said—

"Come, O You Traveler unknown,
Whom still I hold, but cannot see!
My company before is gone,
And I am left alone with Thee"—

let us much more say—

"Come, O You Traveler well-known,
Whom still I hold, but cannot see,

I must have your company. My spirit craves it, sighs for it, pines for it! I must have You. I will hold You. Leave me not, but reveal Yourself to me now!"

That is the third lesson we may learn from our text.

IV. And the fourth I have almost touched upon. I could not help it. It is this, WHEN JESUS MEETS US, WE SHOULD RETAIN HIM AND WORSHIP HIM. "They came and held Him by the feet and worshipped Him."

When Mary Magdalene first sought to hold her Lord, Jesus said to her, "Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended to My Father." But now He permits what He had formerly forbidden—"They came and *held Him by the feet*"—those blessed feet that the nails had held but three days before! He had risen from the grave and, therefore, a wondrous change had taken place in Him—but the wounds were there, still visible, and these women "held Him by the feet." And, Beloved, whenever you get your Lord Jesus near to you, do not let Him go for any little trifle—no, nor even for a *great* thing, but say, with the spouse in the Canticles, "I found Him whom my soul loves: I held Him, and would not let Him go." The saints, themselves, will sometimes drive Christ away from those who love Him. Therefore the spouse said, "I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that you stir not, nor awake my love, till He pleases." Be jealous lest you lose Him, when you have realized the joy, the rich delight, of having Him in your soul! You feel, at such a time as that, as if you scarcely dared to breathe—and you are so particular about your conduct that you would not venture to put one foot before the other without consulting Him, lest even inadvertently you should cause Him grief! Bow thus at His feet. Be humble. Hold Him by the feet. Be bold, be affectionate. Grasp Him, for though He is your God, He is also your Brother, bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh!

But take care that in it all, you *worship* Him—"They came and held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him." This is not the Socinians' christ—they cannot worship their savior, for he is but a mere man. This is *our* Christ, "the Son of the Highest," "very God of very God," "God over all, blessed forever." As we hold Him by the feet, we feel a holy awe stealing over us, for the place where we stand is holy ground when He is there! We hold Him, but still we reverently bow before Him and feel like John in Patmos when He wrote, "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead." Well spoke one of old, to whom it was said, "You cannot see Christ and live." "Then," replied the saint, "let me see Him and die." And we would say the same, for, whatever happens to us, we wish for a sight of Him! I have read of one who cried, under the overpowering weight of Divine manifestations, "Stop, Lord! Stop! I am but an earthen vessel and if You fill me fuller, I will perish." Had I been in his place, I think I would not have spoken quite as he did, but I would have said, "Go on, Lord, with the blessed manifestation of Yourself! Let the earthen vessel be broken if necessary—it cannot possibly come to a better end than by being crushed and even annihilated by the majesty of Your glorious Presence!" At any rate, we will hold Him and worship Him—may the Lord help us to do so more and more!

V. The last remark I have to make is a practical one. It also comes out of our text. FROM SUCH A MEETING WITH CHRIST, WE SHOULD GO ON A FURTHER ERRAND FOR HIM. "Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid. Go tell My brethren to go into Galilee, and there will they see Me."

When we have such a meeting with Christ as these women had, let us go on some further errand for Him as soon as He permits us to do so. It is a very blessed thing to have fellowship with Christ, but it would be a very ill result of our communion with Him if it led any one of us to say, "Now I shall not go back to my service. I shall not go to my class again. I might be provoked by the scholars. I might be careless and so I might lose the fellowship I am now enjoying with Jesus. I shall not go and preach again. I shall stay at home and have communion with Christ all day." I knew one Brother who got into such a condition that he really thought that to see the face of his people on the Lord's Day robbed Him of fellowship with Christ! All week long he never saw anybody, for his fellowship with Christ, he said, was so intense that he could not bear to look upon mankind! And when the Sabbath came and he had to meet with his people, he would, if he could, have preached out of a box so that they might hear his voice, but he might never see them. Now, I do not think that such a spirit as that is at all right! Who is the man who can best bear witness for Christ, but the man who has been with Him in secret and sacred fellowship? And what is a better return for Christ's wondrous Grace to us than that we should consecrate ourselves to the holy task of showing forth His Glory among our fellow men?

There is a striking legend illustrating the blessedness of performing our duty at whatever cost to our own inclination. A monk had seen a beautiful vision of our Savior and, in silent bliss, He was gazing upon it. The hour arrived at which it was his duty to feed the poor at the convent gate. He would gladly have lingered in his cell to enjoy the vision, but under a sense of duty he tore himself away from it to perform his humble

service. When he returned, he found the blessed vision still waiting for him, and heard a voice saying, "Had you stayed, I would have gone. As you have gone, I have remained." So, dear Friend, ask yourself, "Since Jesus is very precious to me, what more can I do for Him? I was running to His disciples when He met me, so when He bids me go to them, I will run the faster that no time may be lost to the disciples before they, also, share the enjoyment with which my Master has indulged me! And when I get to them, I shall have more to tell them than I had before. I was going to tell them that I had seen the angel of the Lord, but I shall be able to tell them that I have seen the Lord, Himself, and I shall tell the message so much more brightly and powerfully now that I have had it confirmed from His own lips."

Those holy women were full of fear and joy—strangely mingled emotions, before—but now, surely fear must have taken flight, for Jesus had said to them, "Be not afraid." And it must have been joy, and joy, alone, with which these blessed women would break in upon the eleven and say, "We have seen what is far better than a vision of angels, for we have seen the Master Himself! We held Him by the feet till we knew that it was really our Lord! We held Him till we had worshipped Him and heard Him say, 'Be not afraid.' And then He gave us a message from His own dear lips, and this is what He said to us, 'Tell My brethren to go into Galilee, and there shall they see Me.'"

Happy preacher who, on his way to his pulpit, is interrupted by meeting his Master! Happy preacher who has lost the thread of his discourse, for few discourses are worth much that have too much thread in them, but who has found something infinitely better than thread—some links of sacred fire—some chains of Heavenly love that go from end to end of the discourse, so that he tells what he knows, and testifies what he has seen, for men must give heed to such a witness! His countenance is all aglow with the light that shines from the face of Jesus! It is bright with the joy that fills the preacher's own soul! And those who listen to him say, "Would God we knew that joy!" And those that do share it say, "Yes, we know it," and they respond to it till hearts leap up to speak with hearts—and they sing together a chorus of praise unto Him whom they unitedly love! I wish it were so at this moment. I would like, dear Friends, to be able to tell my message better because of having met my Master. And I would like you to go out to the work and service of another week strengthened and rendered mighty and wise for all you have to do, because Jesus has met you and has said to you, "All hail," and you have held Him by the feet and worshipped Him!

There I leave the subject with you. Perhaps some of you are saying, "We wish we could hold Him by the feet." Yes, but in this blessed supper, which is spread upon the table, you have an outward emblem of how to hold Him better than by the feet, for, in the eating of the bread and the drinking of the wine in memory of Him, He sets forth to us how His whole Self can be spiritually received into the innermost chambers of our being—how He can come unto us and sup with us, and we with Him—how He can dwell in us and we can dwell in Him. Not only the peace of God, but His very Self can now come and abide in your very self, and there

can be a union between you and Him that never shall be broken! God grant that you may enjoy it even now!

But I know that some here present cannot understand what I have been talking about. It must have seemed like an idle tale to them. Ah, dear Friends! And if we were to go into a stable and were to talk to horses about the ordinary concerns of our home life, what would they know about it all? They understand about oats, beans, hay and straw—but what can they know of the themes that interest intelligent human beings? So, there are some men in this world, of whom Dr. Watts truly says—

"Like brutes they live, like brutes they die."

They have no spiritual nature, even as the horse has no immortal soul, and they cannot, therefore, comprehend spiritual things! And as I might pity the horse because it is a stranger to mental enjoyments, so I would pity the unregenerate man who is a stranger to spiritual enjoyments. For, as much as the mind of man is above the living something that is within the brute, so much is the spirit of the Believer above the ordinary mind of the unregenerate man. We have joys, the sweetness of which is such that honey is not to be compared! We have bliss, the like of which all Solomon's wealth could not have purchased! And we have been introduced into a world which is as much fairer than this material universe as the sunlight is better than the darkest midnight of a dungeon!

Oh, that you did all know it! May God, of His Grace, give you His Spirit, create you anew and breathe faith in Jesus into your soul! Then will you know the bliss of meeting with Him and of serving Him! God bless the Word, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ACTS 3:11-26; ACTS 4:1-4; 2 PETER 3.

You remember, dear Friends, how Peter denied his Lord in the time of His trial. Now notice what a change was worked in him after the Holy Spirit had fallen upon him on the day of Pentecost. We have often read the story of the man healed at the beautiful gate of the Temple. Now let us see what followed:

Acts 3:11. *And as the lame man, which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.* It is always easy to draw a crowd, but there was really something wonderful to be seen that day! The Apostle was careful to turn to the very best account the curiosity of the crowd. See how quickly he carried their thoughts away from the man before him to the greater Man, the Divine Man, the Son of God whom they had rejected.

12-23. *And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, 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 walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His Son Jesus; 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, who God has raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. 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. And now, brethren, I know that through ignorance you did it, 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. For Moses truly said to the fathers, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; Him shall you hear in all things whatever He shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. Hear this, then, you who have heard Christ through His Word and through His servants, and have heard Him preach—yes, scores and hundreds of times! Let me read this text to you again and as I read it, may it sink into your hearts. "It shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people."

24-26. *Yes, and all the Prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. You are the children of the Prophets, and of the Covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in your seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you, first, God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.* They were to have the first proclamation of the Gospel. From among them would be gathered many of the first converts. The preacher did not know immediately what result this sermon produced. It was not like the sermon preached at Pentecost, for he did know what happened after its delivery. This is quite as good a sermon in every way and we have every reason to believe that many were converted by it. The Spirit of God was with Peter, yet even the Spirit of God does not always work in the same way upon men. You see, the Apostles had no opportunity to have a talk with the people afterwards, and to find out what had been done, as they had on the day of Pentecost.

Acts 4:1-4. *And as they spoke unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the Temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was now eventide. Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed and the number of the men was about five thousand.* So that, though they could not tell then and there how many were converted, and though they could not baptize them at once, for they were taken away, yet, though there was no meeting, later, there were probably just as many saved as at Pentecost! Just as grand a result came of it! You cannot judge the result of a sermon on the particular day that it is preached—it may seem as if that sermon had produced no effect and it may be so—but, still, this time it was not so. Whenever you go home sad

that you have not had a later meeting, or you are interrupted and cannot tell what good was done, though *you* do not know what has been accomplished, the record is in Heaven and God will reveal it, by-and-by! And, perhaps, even here you will discover that you made a mistake and that the service which seemed lost was one of the most blessed that you ever conducted. God grant that it may be so, for Christ's sake! Now let as read Peter's second Epistle, the third chapter.

2 Peter 3:1-3. *This second epistle, Beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy Prophets, and of the commandment of us the Apostles of the Lord and Savior: knowing this first that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking according to their own lusts.* This prophecy is most certainly being fulfilled in these days.

4. *And saying, Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.* "Inviolable laws still govern the material creation. Men are still swift to sin. Oppressors are not overthrown and, oftentimes, the good are left to languish in poverty and suffering. 'Where is the promise of His coming?'"

5. *For this they willingly are ignorant.* Ignorant that there has been one great interposition of God to avenge the insults to His holy Law and to overturn the rule of sin. "For this they willingly are ignorant."

5, 6. *That by the Word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.* God did destroy man, once, with water, and sweep away sin.

7. *But the Heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same Word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the Day of Judgment and perdition of ungodly men.* There will come a second interposition—we know not when, but assuredly it shall come! And if the visitation tarries, we must wait for it, for it shall come—it will not really tarry, however long it may seem to be delayed.

8. *But, Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.* There are no years to Him! There are no days to the great Ancient of Days. A thousand years must seem to be a mere speck in comparison with His everlasting existence—as a dream when one awakes, it has swiftly passed away. But God still remains!

9. *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* Therefore does He wait. If men ask why there is no interposition of wrath to overthrow the ungodly, the answer is because this is part of God's great reign of love. He waits because He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Yet there will be a limit even to His patience.

10. *But the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night in which the Heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth, also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up.* The next and great judgment will be by fire.

11, 12. *Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the Heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?* This should be the practical outcome of the anticipation of coming judgment. Let us look on "all these things" as passing away.

13. *Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new Heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.* The end of this world will be the beginning of a new and better one, of which "righteousness" will be the great characteristic!

14. *Therefore, Beloved, seeing that you look for such things, be diligent that you may be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless.* There is, again, the practical note.

15, 16. *And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul, also, according to the wisdom given unto him, has written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood to them that are unlearned and unstable, wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction.* The Scriptures are given for our learning and, rightly used, guide us to the Savior. But, alas, some "wrest" them "unto their own destruction." Let none of us ever be found committing such fatal folly as that.

17, 18. *You therefore, Beloved, seeing you know these things before, beware lest you, also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in Grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen.* I should like to point out to young Christians and to all Christian people how Peter finishes this Epistle, first with a warning and then with a counsel. He says, "Beware lest you be led away." And then he puts in a, "but"—"but grow in Grace." If you go into a plantation at a certain time of the year, you may see a great number of trees that have no leaves on them. How are you to know which are alive and which are not? Well, you would soon know if you could look at their roots. If a tree has been growing, if its roots have taken hold upon the soil, you may pull it, but you will not stir it. There it stands and, in like manner, growth in Grace brings steadfastness in Grace. You who have faith, pray God that you may have *growing* faith. A living faith is a growing faith, and a growing faith is a living faith! Pray, therefore, that you may "grow in Grace."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—974, 814.

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

GOD'S WORK IN MAN
NO. 2629

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 2, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, IN THE SUMMER OF 1857.

"And it shall be in 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.

WITHOUT any preface or prelude, we shall draw from these words three on four lessons.

I. The first lesson from the text is this, that GOD SPEAKS CONCERNING HIS PURPOSES OF GRACE IN MAN WITHOUT NOTICING EITHER MAN'S WILLINGNESS OR UNWILLINGNESS—AND WITHOUT ALLOWING HIS OWN PURPOSE TO BE CHANGED BY THE ONE OR THE OTHER.

According to the free-will plan of salvation, it would be absolutely necessary for God to put it thus—"At that day, says the Lord, *if you are willing*, you shall call Me, Ishi, and shall no longer call Me, Baali. And if you will believe and repent, if you are willing, I will take away the names of Baalim out of your mouth. And if you are willing, they shall no more be remembered by their names." But note that God puts in no, "ifs," at all, but talks about men as if they had absolutely nothing to do in the matter—and as if He, Himself, did it all! One might object, "But suppose they are unwilling to forget the names of Baalim?" "Ah," says God, "but I have their will in My hands! I have the key of man's will—I can open it and no man can shut it. I can shut it and no man can open it." "But suppose they should be hard-hearted and will not repent?" "Yes," says the Lord, "but I have the hammer that can break the heart in pieces and make it fly into shivers!" "But suppose they should be stony-hearted and will not melt?" "No," says the Lord, "but I have a fire that will melt the most adamantine rock that was ever known. Yes, that can consume the rock out of the heart and utterly burn it away." Therefore, speaking concerning the Israelites, who were serving Baalim, who were drunk with sin, who were desperately set on worldling iniquity and who had gone far away from God, He puts in no, "if," but distinctly says even concerning them, "I will take away the names of Baalim out of their mouth, *and they shall no more be remembered by their name*."

Have you ever noticed, throughout Scripture, how positively God speaks with regard to His acts of salvation in men? "He *shall* call upon Me, and I *will* answer him." "All that the Father gives Me *shall* come to Me." "Him that came to me I *will* in no wise cast out." "He *shall* see of the travail of His soul and *shall* be satisfied." The free-willer might rise up and say, "But suppose they are not willing to be saved? Will God save them against their will?" To this we reply—There is nothing said about *their will* at all—the only reference is to God's will! It is evident that God has such a power over men that He can work in their hearts just what He pleases, apart from their willingness or unwillingness, so that, when I come into this pulpit to preach, if God the Spirit should so please, though you all should gnash your teeth in anger, yet He could, under the sound of the Word, convert you all. Though you should set your hearts desperately against God's Word and enter His House with a curse upon you, yet He could, before you left the place, change you to another mind!

And though you should have come here with all levity of spirit, hardened in heart, despising God and His Gospel, yet He has such strength that He could, by one word of His mouth, by the breath of His Spirit, transform you into His living children who should do the very reverse of what you are now doing! It is in vain, then, for an infidel to say that he could never be converted, for God could convert him. It is in vain for a man to say, "God will never bend *my* knees in prayer." God knows how to make your knees bend, be they ever so stiff. "I never will, like a coward, cry for mercy," says one. But God knows how to create penitent cries in your heart and how to make them struggle for utterance, too! He has you in His hand, He has the bit even in your mouth. And desperately as you may be set against Him, yet He can turn you wherever He pleases. He who binds Leviathan and cuts the dragon in two will not be stopped by a poor puny mortal like you! But if He has purposes of Grace towards you, He will work those purposes out. If He is determined to save you, He will, Himself, lure you into the wilderness and give you a new heart and a right spirit! And if He has so decreed it, struggle as you may against Him, the hour shall come when, with one blow from the hammer of His Word, your heart shall be broken in pieces! And with one sip of His blessed cordial of Grace, your soul shall rejoice in pardon bought with blood!

This is a great Doctrine of the Gospel—the Doctrine of the power of Grace—the Doctrine that God saves whom He wills, that "it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy." "Ah," says one, "if I am willing to be saved, will not God save me?" Sir, He *has* saved you! If you are willing to be saved, God has *made you willing*, and therein He has given you the very germ of salvation, for your *willingness* to be saved in God's way is the very essence of being saved! "But," says one, "if I am unwilling to be saved, will He save me?" No, Sir, not while you are unwilling, but, if He so pleases, He will *make you willing* and then He will manifest in you His power to save! God saves no man against his will—and yet it is against his will. Ralph Erskine puts it thus—he says, "I was

saved with full consent against my will." He means to say, "against my *old* will, that always willed to do evil, but yet, with the full consent of all my powers, they being renewed, created anew in Christ Jesus and, therefore, at once willing to submit to everything that God laid down."

Oh, how I rejoice to preach a Gospel that does not borrow strength from me, but gets its power from God! What a consolation that, go where we may to preach God's Word, if God wills it, that Word shall be rendered effectual among the very worst of men—among mockers, scoffers and despisers! Why is it that men go not to preach the Word among the Romanists of Ireland? Because they say they will not hear them. Oh, but they would! And we should at least free ourselves from their blood if we did but stand up and testify the Word of God! However unwilling they might be, God could yet, by His abundant Grace, change their hearts! "It is of no use," said one, "to go to the Bechuana in his kraal—he cannot be saved—he would never be willing to give up his old habits." But you do not depend upon *his* will at all! You go to him with the Gospel and God gives him a new will and the great change is worked! All you have to do is to preach the Word! "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God," for, with the Word of God, there goes forth His Holy Spirit which changes men, renews their characters and hearts and makes them what they never were before. Oh, I bless God's name that, though all the people in the world should lift their hands against the Most High and declare that they never would be saved, yet God could, in an instant, if so it pleased Him, make the whole of them bend their knees before Him, cry for the mercy they once rejected and seek the Savior whom they once despised! Here lies the power of the Gospel, in that it gains the mastery over man's evil will and without his consent changes his nature, and then fully gets his consent after his nature has been changed!

That is the first Doctrine of God, I think, we may fairly draw from the text.

II. Now for the second, which is, that GOD WILL MAKE THOROUGH WORK OF IT WHEN HE SANCTIFIES A MAN.

Note that these Jews were idolaters, yet God says, "I will not only make them leave off their idolatries, but I will do more—I will take away the names of Baalim out of their memories—for they shall no more be remembered by their name." God's sanctifying work either is already, or it will yet be a complete one. I said that it either is or it will be complete—it is so in yon bright spirits before the Throne of God and, for the rest of us, if God has begun the good work, He will carry it on to ultimate perfection until the very name of sin shall be clean taken out of our mouth and the remembrance of it shall be purged from our conscience and memory!

It is worthy of remark that this promise has had a literal fulfillment in the case of the Jews. They have many sins, but there is one sin that they have not—except *spiritually*—that is, they are not idolaters! Before the time of their captivity, they were constantly worshipping one false God or

another. It was the hardest thing in the world to keep them from bowing down before blocks of wood and stone. But now, go where you may, you can scarcely find a Jew who is an idolater. Here and there, one or two of them have joined the Romish church and so have become idolaters by bowing down before images and saints' relics—cast clouts and rotten bones and such things. But, taking the Jews as a race, they are the last people in the world to become actual idolaters! That ancient message, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord," seems to have been burnt into them and you cannot get it out of them—neither will they acknowledge any form of faith that seems to deny the unity of the Godhead, or implies that worship is to be given to any save the incomprehensible and mysterious Being whom they, as well as we, worship as Jehovah. The name of Baalim has been taken clean out of their mouths—they do not remember it, neither do they call it to mind!

And it is also a very notable thing, which we have often seen, that men, when they are converted, usually become the most clear of the very sin with which they were once the most defiled. You will note that a man who has been, before his conversion, a great drunk, will, in some instances, not only become exceedingly sober afterwards, but he will even carry his views, if possible, to an extreme. He will be so desperately set against everything that once injured him, that he will even look with suspicion on others who indulge themselves in moderation. You will note it is so with the man who has been an habitual Sabbath-breaker. So surely as he is converted, he will become the most precise Sabbath-keeper you ever knew! The sin that hurt him will be the sin that he will kill, if possible. The burnt child dreads the fire and it is the same with the man who has been burnt by sin. He does not like to touch it again. He must keep clean away from it, turn from it, pass by it and utterly abhor it. So was it with the Jews—the worship of Baalim had been their favorite sin, so the name, Baalim, was to be taken out of their mouth and to be no more called to their remembrance.

But, my Brothers and Sisters, what noble beings you and I will be when not only has our sin been purged, when not only have our daily corruptions been done away with, but when all our sinful nature has been utterly removed! Well said the Apostle, "It does not yet appear what we shall be." No, Brethren, we can scarcely guess what we shall be! But we can for a moment contemplate it. What a noble being man must be when he is thoroughly refined—when all his sin is gone—when there is not an evil passion left—when there is not a lust hidden in a snug corner, but when his soul has become thoroughly pure and his heart entirely renewed! Oh, what a noble creature! And just remember this, poor, weak, and worthless though we are, that faith which we have in us will ultimately purify us and we shall be holy, like yon bright spirits before the Throne of God!

What a grand man would he be who had no sin in him! Suppose him to come into this world? He would lead a life exactly like that led by our

Lord, Jesus Christ, and He was the grandest of all men! It is marvelous to consider the different attributes of His Character, as they are manifested in His life, but remember that we, too, shall be like He when we see Him as He is. We shall be as pure as Adam was in the Garden, with this addition—that our purity shall be not merely spotless, but it shall be so white that it shall be beyond the possibility of ever being spotted! Our nature shall be not merely pure, but so pure that it can never be impure! God will stamp it so indelibly with the stamp of purity that it will be pure throughout eternity! Oh, what a blessed thought—the name of Baalim out of my mouth, sin out of my heart, the lustful glance forever gone from my eyes, evil things from my imagination all gone! Oh, will we not praise our Lord in the bright moment when we wake up in His likeness, when our glorified spirit shall be white as driven snow in the glad companionship of the Immaculate, the Pure, the Perfect? Oh, what joyous shouts we shall raise then! What choral symphonies, what bursts of song, what hallelujahs of gratitude! Verily, words fail to express the emotions we shall then feel, when, pure and holy, clean and purged, we shall be presented, "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," before the Throne of God!

"I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name." I think the first day in Heaven will be a day full of surprises. We shall not know what to make of it! Never will there have been a day before, in our lives, when we had not some trouble, or some sin. The first day we are there, when we shall have no devil to tempt us, and no sin to pain us, and no trouble to grieve us—when we find ourselves all pure, I think we shall scarcely know what to do, we shall be so surprised! Mr. Medley's hymn has caught the right idea—

"Then let me mount and soar away
To the bright world of endless day
And sing with rapture and surprise,
His loving kindness in the skies!"

We shall be almost like poor Caspar Hauser who was kept for many years—in fact, from his childhood—in a dark dungeon where a ray of light could scarcely enter. He was, afterwards, taken out by his keeper to see the light of the sun and to mingle among men, whom he had never seen before, and to hear their voices even though there was scarcely an intelligible sound he had been taught to utter. Oh, what a delightful thing it would have been for him if he had been uninjured by his confinement! But you and I, uninjured by our confinement in this cavern below, shall be at once snatched from the earth, set down in the streets of Paradise and find ourselves pure! The surprise of a beggar, who wakes up and finds himself a king would not be one-half so great as the surprise of a saint, when he shall wake up in Christ's likeness and find himself transformed into the pure image of God! Let us contemplate this with joy and gladness and, amid all our daily conflicts, let us count upon the

victory! Let us anticipate the conquest by faith and let us already seize the palm branch and put the crown upon our heads with the ecstasy of hope and with the full assurance of faith, for if we fight, we shall reign! If we suffer, we shall triumph! If we endure, we shall obtain "the crown of life" that fades not away!

That is the second lesson of our text, that Christ will make thorough work of it, wherever He has begun to save and to sanctify.

III. And now I bring to you a third lesson. THERE ARE SOME THINGS, WHICH ARE NOT EVIL IN THEMSELVES, THAT A CHRISTIAN MUST HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH BECAUSE THEY HAVE BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH EVIL THINGS.

I will explain what the Lord meant when He said, "You shall call Me, Ishi; and shall call Me no more, Baali." Was Baali a bad name? Not at all—God calls Himself Baali in two or three places in Scripture. You remember that blessed passage, "Your Maker is your Husband"? It is really, "Your Maker is your Baali." And there are several other instances where the word, Husband, is used in reference to God which might have been left untranslated—and they would have read like this, "Your Maker is your Baali." Why, then, is God not to be called, Baali? The Jews did, at one time, call Him so. They prayed to Him under that title—why might they not continue to do so? Because the heathen had made a wrong use of the word—they called their false God, Baali, and, therefore, God said, "Do not apply the title to Me, because they have used it for their false gods." I can suppose a Jew, like some young man in these times, saying, "Now, no man is going to step between me and my conscience. I believe the name Baali is a very good one. I have always used it and many good men have used it. I use it very sincerely in prayer and it is nothing to me that other people make a bad use of it—I cannot help that! I know that it expresses my thought—it means *husband*, lordly husband—and I cannot be quite so particular as the Prophet Hosea, so I shall keep on using it."

That is how many argue in these days. Says one, "I am a Christian. I intend to serve God, but there are certain pleasures that stand on the boundary line between the allowable and the unallowable." "I intend," says one young man, "to follow them, because I do not see that there is any harm in them. I confess that they are the cause of great injury to others, but they do *me* no hurt. I used to practice them when I was in the world, but they are no hurt to me now—you cannot bring anything in Scripture to prove they are wrong. There is such-and-such a place, I sometimes truly worship God there. I may be mistaken, but I cannot see why I should not do such-and-such a thing when I see nothing exactly wrong in it, though I admit that it has a connection with wrong and others are thereby injured." That is just it—you are not to use the title, Baali, not because it is a bad name, but because others have used it for an evil purpose! So, Christian, there are many things you are not to do, and many places you are not to frequent—not because they are absolutely wrong, but because they have a connection with wrong—and if you

tolerate them, you will be sharing in the sin which is committed by them! And, moreover, whether you know it or not, your going there is but the little and little of which it is written, "You shall fall by little and by little." So that the best way is to stand out against the *littles*—to be rather too strict than too loose—and in so doing, God will give you a reward, for He will make it become a greater happiness to you to abstain from fleshly pleasures than it would have been to have partaken of them. "You shall call Me no more, Baali," because, though the name may be all right in itself, others have misused it.

I can never look upon dice except with abhorrence. If you ask me why, I reply—Because the soldiers at the foot of the Cross threw dice for my Savior's garments, and I have never heard the rattling of dice but I have conjured up the dreadful scene of Christ upon His Cross—and gamblers at the foot of it with their dice spattered with His blood! I do not hesitate to say that, of all sins, there is none that more surely damns men and, worse than that, makes them the devil's helpers to damn others, than gambling! And yet many say, "Well, I only play for the fun of it—you know there is nothing in it." Of course there is nothing in it, but look at the connection of it. Lord So-and-So thinks it a very nice thing for him to go and see a horserace, he says that I cannot prove it to be wrong. Nice company he will meet there! They don't speak very well for the thing.

Another says, "I can do this, that, and the other. It does not hurt me." I daresay you can, but look at the connection of the affair. You are to avoid a thing, not merely from the moral wrong of it, or the injury it is to you, but because it encourages others in their sins! A good pious Jew kneels down to pray and cries to God, "Baali, hear me!" There is a poor idolater by his side and he says, "That good, venerable-looking man just now prayed to Baali—and so may I." "Quite a mistake, my dear fellow," says the Jew. "I did not pray to Baali! I was praying to God Almighty, not to your Baal." "But you said, Baal, my dear Sir." "Ah, my Friend, but you do not understand me! I was praying to the God of Heaven and earth, and not to that poor, paltry idol which you call, Baal." Yet the poor heathen naturally thought the Jew was worshipping the false god.

We are to take care not to do what appears wrong in the sight of others, so as to lead them astray. We are not to be judged by other men's consciences, but, at the same time, we are not to lead others to offend. As far as we can possibly do it, we must seek to cut off those things that are likely to do injury to others. If I were to hear of any of my members going to a theater, I think I would go after them, and they would never go, again, as church members. I might, perhaps, do as Rowland Hill did. He took a box-ticket for the theater and saw some of his members there. "There you are," he said, "I never would believe it from hearsay." And then he walked away and immediately turned them out of the church. It may be that I may have the misery of looking after some of you who make a profession of religion and do not carry it out. I am not now speaking to you worldly men who choose to frequent these places. But I

say to you who profess to be Christ's followers, "Put away even the *name* of such things. Your business is not to talk of its being allowable, but to put it away because others make a bad use of it." You may say, "Baal," perhaps, without any very great sin, but by doing so you encourage others in sin.

A man who makes a profession of religion ought to be something more than other people. He who talks about being saved by Grace and washed in the precious blood of Jesus. He who expects to live up yonder and wear the white robe, and sing the praise of the Eternal before the Throne of God must be different from others. The things which another might do with impunity, he must not dare do. A native of India might live in a jungle and not die, but we, who are not natives of the country, might very soon die of the jungle fever. So, the man who is not a Christian may, perhaps, go into many amusements and yet not become any the worse for them—but a Christian must not go there because he is not an inhabitant of that land! It is not his native air, it is not his proper place and he knows it is not! Therefore, his business is to go as far away from it as he can!

I have read of a lady who wanted a coachman. She advertised for one. Three presented themselves. She called them in, one by one, and she said to the first, "My good man, you want a coachman's place, do you?" "Yes, ma'm." "Well, there is one question I want to ask you—How near to danger could you drive me?" "Well, ma'm, I think I could drive within a yard." "You won't do for me," said she. A second one was brought in and she said to him, after asking other questions, "How near to danger could you drive?" "Well ma'm, for the matter of that, I could drive you within a hair's breadth." "You won't do for me," she said, "you are not the sort of driver I want." The third was introduced. He was a careful soul and when the question was put to him, "How near could you drive to danger?" He said, "If you please, ma'm, I never tried that. I always drive as far off as ever I can." Said she, "You will do very well. You are just the coachman I want." I would recommend you all to imitate that coachman! Do not test how near you can drive to danger, but say, "My business is to drive as far off as I can." Do not to see how much you can endure of that which is not right, but how much you can avoid it, pass it by and not mingle with it!

IV. Now we come to the last lesson from the text. GOD HAS PRECIOUS TITLES TO BE USED ONLY BY BELIEVERS. "It shall be at that day, says the Lord, that you shall call Me, Ishi; and shall call Me no more, Baali."

I left this part of the subject to the last because I am not sure that what I am about to say has all the weight that some would attach to it. There is a difference between the words, Ishi, and, Baali. The word, Ishi, means, "my husband." So does the word, Baali, but the word, Ishi, is the word that the wife would use to the husband as a fondling expression, expressive of her love. The word, Baali, is the word she uses for him as a

humble expression, on those very rare occasions in which she feels herself to be subject to him for a moment. It is expressive of her humility. It is the kind of word Sarah used, when, rather out of the ordinary way, she did reverence to her husband, "calling him, lord." The word, Ishi, is the term she would have used when she called him simply by the loving epithet of "my own dear husband," her man, her Beloved. She would most likely have used the word, Baali, when her husband had spoken a little sharply to her and claimed a little of the headship that the husband has. But when they sat down together, in their softer moments, she would not call him, Baali, any longer, but it would be, Ishi, my much-loved—not feared, but much-*loved* husband.

"Now," says God to His Church, "you shall no more call Me, Baali—'my Master, my Lord, my haughty Husband,' yet, after all, having all the right attributes of a husband, too, but you shall call Me, Ishi—'my loving Husband.'" Mark, there is nothing wrong in the word, Baali, as I said before, because it is applied to God in that very passage, "Your Maker is your Husband." And there it has a kind meaning, as well as the aspect of superiority, but, still, the word, Ishi, is the fonder title of the two and is, by far, the better. It is the one which we would always wish to use towards God. If we are His people, He does not like us to come crouching and cringing before Him. He does not wish us to come and cry, "Baali," but He wants us to come to Him as to a loving Friend and Father, with the sweet word, "Ishi," upon our lips. He wishes us to come, speaking of Christ as Emmanuel Ishi—"God With Us"—not as Emmanuel Baali—"God Our Ruler." He wishes us to speak of Him as "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh"—"our Man, our Husband"—and not as, "our Man, our Lord."

There is a very blessed distinction here. I think the Christian can perceive it, though the worldling cannot. When a sinner is in his sin, he sometimes attempts to serve God. Conviction of sin works in him some kind of legal repentance—he tries to be better, but the sinner always tries to be better with Baali on his lips—"O Lord, I must do right, else I shall be punished for it. I must mend my ways, or Hell stares me in the face. I must grow better, or else I shall die and share eternal torment." So he tries to do better through fear. Not so the Christian! He tries to serve his God, but he puts the name, Baali, away. "O my blessed God!" he says, "You have done so much for me, I do truly love You. I must love You, I will serve You, I will live for You, I will die for You. It is a pleasure to serve You. If Heaven were quenched and Hell blotted out, I would still serve You, for You are my Ishi, my Loved One, whom with all my heart I serve."

But it is not so with the sinner when he first seeks mercy. He kneels down and prays to God to have mercy upon him, but all the while it is Baali to whom he speaks. He can never *say,* Ishi, while he is under conviction of sin. His cry is, "O Lord, I am the chief of sinners!" "I am not worthy to be called Your son." That is all Baali! But as soon as the Lord

has appeared to him and told him, "I have put away your sin," he offers no such prayer as he did before! He comes with boldness and says, "Lord, I am Your child! For Jesus' sake give me these things," and he prays out of his heart with a fullness of confidence, for it is now, Ishi, not Baali! It was the same God before, but under a different aspect. He was a kind God before, but He was the Baali God. Now He is a kind God, but He is kinder—He is the Ishi God to all Believers.

O Beloved Brothers and Sisters, I would you could all keep this word, Ishi, on your lips! It is a Hebrew word. I bless God for having kept a few Hebrew words in the Bible to make us remember the Jews. But, besides this, there is something very sweet in this old term, Ishi—my man, my Husband! Go home, Beloved, sit down and think of this title. God bids you come to Him boldly tonight and call Him, Ishi. Sit down and begin to think of the Son of God, who became Man. When you see Him in His cradle, call Him, Ishi, and fondle the Infant to your breast. When you see Him a grown Man, go up to Him and, by faith, clasp Him in your arms and call Him, Ishi, while He preaches to you the Sermon on the Mount. Find Him in the Garden. Stand and look at Him, not as some marvelous Man, far above you, your superior, a Baali to you—but come and kneel by His side and as you kneel, see, in contemplation, the bloody sweat still streaming from His brow. Bend over Him and say, "O, Ishi, You are my Man, my Husband, paying the costly price for me by this awful sweat of blood!"

Then follow Him along the pavement. See His back all gory with the lash of Pilate's whip and call Him, Ishi, then. And when you see Him on the Cross, oh, it is *there* that Ishi is spelt more clearly than ever! When His heart is opened, when His veins are bleeding, then you can see written in His blood that name, Ishi—Man With You, your Husband. And then see Him in His grave and call Him, Ishi, there. Track Him up to Heaven in His Ascension and call Him, Ishi, as He leads captivity captive. See Him pleading before the Throne of God with outstretched hands. Look on His breastplate, read your own name and call Him, Ishi! And then look forward—see Him as He comes in the clouds of Heaven—and call Him, Ishi, then. See Him when He and all His people shall be gathered home to Glory. He shall be your Ishi, then—not your Baali, your Lord, your superior—but your Ishi, your Man, your Husband—to be embraced and loved, to be in sweet communion with you, to be your Acquaintance, your Friend, your "Fellow," as His Father and yours has been blessedly pleased to call Him!

And, Christian, when you go forth to labor, tomorrow, take care not to do it as a slave. Practice this, "Ishi," out every day. Do not serve God because you dare not do other than serve Him! Do not serve Him because you are afraid not to serve Him! Do not do it from fear. Do not work like a slave, under his master's lash, but go out and serve your Master from pure delight because He is also your Ishi, your Man, your Husband—

"We would no longer lie,

Like slaves beneath the throne,
Our faith would 'Ishi, Jesus,' cry,
And You the kindred own."

Go forth to your work, serving your Lord in love and joy and gladness—

"'Tis love that makes our willing feet
In swift obedience move."

And now, in conclusion, my Friends, there are many here who cannot say, Ishi, for Christ is not Ishi to them! Baali is the only word they can use for God. What shall we do for them, dear Friends, those who know the Lord here? What shall we do for these? We have a little Sister—what shall we do for her, against the day that she shall be spoken for unto the King? If she is a wall, we will build upon her with many prayers, precious as silver! If she is a door, we will enclose her with the cedar of our supplication! We will, day and night, pray for these poor souls who are not yet brought in, but many of whom must be brought in, that there may be one fold and one Shepherd! Poor Sinner, I will preach the Gospel to you before I send you away. Are you trembling and shivering, crouching and cowering before God? Are you afraid of Him? Do you think His sword is out of its scabbard, hunting after you? Do you see the arrow of vengeance thirsty for blood and winged to slay? Do you see the Law of God after you? Then you have got as far as Baali! Ah, Soul, if you know what sin is, in all its blackness, and if you weep on account of it, and if you desire to be pardoned, if you are willing to abjure all sin and all self-righteousness, here is the way of salvation!

Ishi bids me tell it to you, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "Let me go, Sir! Let me go home and pray." No, Sir! Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ! "Let me go out of this chapel and I will run home, and read a chapter." No, Sir! As you are standing there, if you know your need of a Savior, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved! Look at the jailor. He had made the feet of Paul and Silas fast in the stocks and shut them in the inner prison, like a brute as he was. But when there came the earthquake that shook the prison, he said, "What must I do to be saved?" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved," said Paul! He did believe and became a child of God! And he was baptized directly afterwards, walking in the fear of Jesus. I believe conversion is very often gradual, but there is no reason why it should be so. If God has put you, now, in such a condition that you know yourself to be lost and ruined, you have every reason to believe that Christ died for you and to cast yourself upon Him, just as you are, without one plea but that Jesus died for you!

Are you under conviction of sin? Do you feel that God would be just if He were to destroy you? Do you ask, "Can it be possible that all my sins could be blotted out in a moment?" Possible, Sir? It is *certain* that they may be! It is certain that they *will* be! It is certain that they ARE if you now believe in Christ!

A lady called upon me, last Monday, with this trouble upon her. She said she had not heard me preach, but she had been reading my sermons and God had been pleased to bless them to her—not only to her conviction, but to her conversion. She went to the clergyman of the parish, full of joy at having found the Savior. She began to tell him of her gladness and how she rejoiced that all her sins were blotted out. He stopped her, and said, "My good Woman, that is all a delusion! You have no right to believe that your sins are pardoned till you have led several years of piety and devotion!" She went away sad—and she came to ask me if what the clergyman said was true. And when I quoted that verse—

"The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in His crucified God,
His pardon at once he receives,
Redemption in full through His blood!"

"Oh," she said, "I see it clearly now!" And when I went on to tell her that many who had believed in Christ had been black sinners one moment, and white as snow the next—had cast themselves simply on Christ and had instantly found peace—she could not but take to her heart the precious promises of Christ and, believing in Jesus, being justified by faith, she had the peace of God that passes all understanding!

I pray the Lord may give it to you right now! As many of you as shall now look to Christ. As many of you as shall lift up your hearts to Him. As many of you as God has ordained to eternal life and who, therefore, believe in Him, may you now go out of this house, like the publican of old, "justified rather than the other," triumphing that you, who came in here to confess your guilt, crying, "Lord, have mercy on me a sinner," can go out calling Jesus, Ishi, and clasping Him in your arms as your Redeemer, your Savior and your All-in-All!

May the Lord give all of you such faith, for Jesus' 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.

WHAT JESUS WOULD DO
NO. 2630

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 9, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 16, 1882.

"How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not!" Matthew 23:37.

THE theologians have met each other around this text as on a field of battle. They have contended, controverted and dragged the text about as if it were a wild beast which they would tear limb from limb. And yet, if you will look through the letter of it, and come to its inner spirit, you will see that it is not strange that Jesus should have uttered it. It would have been much more marvelous if he had *not* spoken thus, and it would have been a terrible crux in all theology if we had read here, "I never would have gathered your children together even if they had been willing to be gathered." That would have been a thing hard to be understood, indeed! And it would have presented a greater difficulty than any which can be found in our text.

I have long been content to take God's Word just as I find it and when, at any time, I have been accused of contradicting myself through keeping to my text, I have always felt perfectly safe about that matter. The last thing I care about is being consistent with myself! Why should I be anxious about that? I would rather be consistent with Christ 50 times over, or be consistent with the Word of God! But as to being forever consistent with oneself, it might turn out that one was consistently wrong, consistently narrow-minded and consistently unwilling to believe what God would teach. So we will take the text just as we find it and it seems to say to me that if Jerusalem was not saved—if her children were not gathered together in safety as a brood of chickens is gathered beneath the hen—if Christ did not gather them and protect them, it was not because there was any unwillingness on *His* part. There was always a willingness in His heart to bless Jerusalem and, therefore, He could truly say, "How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings!" From this utterance of our Lord, I learn that if any man is not saved, the cause of his non-salvation does not lie in any lack of graciousness or want of willingness on the part of God! They who dare to say that it does, venture very far, and are very audacious in their assertions. This text says the very opposite—and so far as it is applicable to the sons of men in general, it declares that God

wills not the death of *any*, but desires that they should turn unto Him and live.

The next Truth of God that I learn from this passage is that if Jerusalem perished—as it *did* perish in a most awful manner—it was because it would not be saved. It was often invited, persuaded, exhorted, warned and threatened. Prophet succeeded Prophet. Tribulation followed tribulation. The rod of God came as well as the Word of God, but Jerusalem was exceedingly wicked and its people were stiff-necked—they would not have the blessing with which prophetic hands dripped! And even when Christ, Himself, came, the loveliest and the lowliest, the most tender and the truest, bringing to them love and mercy without stint—and when He spoke as never man spoke, in notes of warning, yet wooing love—they still would not listen to Him. But they took Him and, with wicked hands, they crucified Him! It was their own rebellious will that ruined them. They would not come to Him that they might have life. There is where the guilt lies and, when sinners go to Hell it is because they *will* to go there! When they are condemned by the Judge who must do right, it is because they *willed* to pursue the sin which entailed condemnation! If they have not obtained mercy, their ruin shall lie at the door of their own wicked will! This shall be the thunder which shall pursue them through all the caverns of Hell—"You would not! You would not! You would not! On your own head must the guilt of your condemnation fall! You would not have eternal life—you willfully put it from you and refused it!"

Now, there, or somewhere about there—I do not quite know where—there is a great doctrinal difficulty, but I do not think you or I need go fishing for it. If there is a bone in the meat, I do not ask to have it put on *my* plate. And if there is a bone in this text, let any dog that likes have it! As for us, there is the meat on which our soul may feed, the Truth that God lays at man's own door the guilt of his destruction! And Christ puts it thus, "I would, but you would not." I have, at this time, the pleasant task laid upon me of pointing out to you that what Christ would have done for the Jews, but which they would not accept, I am sure He would have done for us. No, I will go further and say that I am *sure* He is willing to do it for us right now! And so, remembering the past a little, I want you to dwell still more upon the present and to notice that, at this moment, *Jesus is willing to gather us*—to gather the children of this city together—as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings! Oh, I trust I may not have to say, "And you would not," but may the sweet Spirit of God be here to move the untoward and wicked wills of men till it shall be said, "Christ is willing to gather you, and you are willing to be gathered." When those two things come together, great blessing must result! I have read what astronomers have said about what would happen if two planets were in conjunction. I know nothing about that matter, but this I *do* know—when *these two things* come into conjunction—when Christ would, and we would—there will be blessed times for us, peaceful days of which we have never dreamed! May the Spirit of God make it to be so even now!

Now coming to the text, let us consider, first, *what Jesus would do. S*econdly, *how He would do it. A*nd thirdly, *when He would do it.*

I. First, WHAT JESUS WOULD DO. "How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings!"

What does this mean? It is a very simple, homely, beautiful, touching simile—the hen gathering her chickens under her wings. And it means, first, that *Jesus would make you feel quite safe*. Look, there is the shadow of a hawk! The bird of prey is poised up yonder and the shadow is seen upon the ground. Or the mother hen, looking up, notices the destroyer and, in a moment, she gives a cluck of alarm and so calls together her little family. And in a few seconds they are all safe beneath her sheltering feathers—her wings become their efficient shield. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ would do just that with us. He would make us quite safe—take us out of the broad road of danger and then compass us about with the wings of His power so that we might not only *be* safe, but also feel quite safe.

I suppose nothing feels safer than a little chick beneath the hen. That tiny creature has no gauge and measure of strength beyond its own weakness, so it reckons its mother to be incalculably strong and feels perfectly safe when it can hide its head within her breast feathers. Ah, but there are some of you who do not feel safe. You have *never* felt secure. Death is truly the king of terrors to you. You do not like to hear people talk about it and if you are ill, how quickly you send for the doctor—not because you have the symptoms of any very serious illness, but because you are afraid to die! Why, there are some of you so afraid that you hardly like to be left in a room in the dark—and you would scarcely dare to go upstairs without a candle! You are not afraid from mere natural timidity, but because you know that there is something that follows death for which you are not prepared! Things are out of order between you and God, and you know it. So the fall of a leaf, or the scratching of a mouse would disturb your mind, for you know that you are not in a state of safety.

You could not bear to be at sea in a storm. The thought of shipwreck would have about it not only the natural terror which is inseparable from such an alarming event, but also the dread that the waves of fire might succeed the waves of the ocean! You are not safe even in your highest joys—a skeleton sits at the feast, for your pleasures are transient and you know it. When, easygoing man as you are, you have your greatest delight in earthly things, you are still conscious that there is a worm in the very center of the sweetest fruit and you are afraid of the consequences of eating it. Oh, but Jesus would have you spared from all this anxiety! He would have you covered so completely that you would not have known fear! He would have you brought into the enjoyment of that "perfect love" which "casts out fear: because fear has torment." He would have you made to be among the blessed ones of whom it is written, "He shall cover you with His feathers and under His wings shall you trust.

His truth shall be your shield and buckler." And He is willing that this should be the case—that you, poor trembler, should come to Him, now, and feel no longer in jeopardy, but be safe forever!

That hymn with which we commenced the service—

"Jesus, lover of my soul"—

is an exact reflex of what Christ is willing to bestow upon all who come to Him. He is willing to clasp to His bosom all who flee to Him for refuge. He is willing to take into the haven of perfect security the tempest-tossed vessel. He is willing to hide, as in the cleft of the rook, the sin and Satan-haunted spirit! It is so, dear Friends! I know it is so, for I have proved it! Look into the eyes, into the heart and into the wounds of Jesus, and you will know that there is no unwillingness in Him to give perfect safety to the souls that trust Him! He would make them to be in safety, "even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings."

But now I will go a step further and say that *Jesus would also make them feel perfectly happy*. Chicks under a hen are not only the picture of safety, but they are the very emblem of happiness. Did you ever disturb them a little? If so, did you not notice the sweet little noises they made—the very sound of perfect contentment! If you have ever watched them as they stand, there, huddled together, you must have seen that it is their little paradise! They could not have been happier in the Garden of Eden than they are there, they are so blest. Beneath their mother's wings they have all that they can desire and, during the whole night, let it be what it may—let it blow cold, or warm—there they are perfectly safe and happy. Her heart is beating above them and her breast is yielding the warmth of life to keep them glad.

I feel sure that I am addressing people who are not happy. The common idea of happiness that many persons have is a very strange one. When our London friends have a day's holiday, their notion of enjoying a rest often amuses me. They pack themselves away, as tightly as they can, inside and outside a van, or an omnibus, or a carriage—and then they go as far as they can till the weary horse can scarcely move to bring them home! And, all the while, to give rest to their ears and to their hearts, somebody blows a trumpet in a fashion that evokes very little music, and they riot all the day as if they were mad and disport themselves as if London consisted of one huge Bethlehem Hospital—and that is what they call happiness!

My view of happiness would be to get as far as I could away from *them*, and to do the very reverse of what they are doing! These people talk about "the place to spend a happy day," "the way to be happy" and so on, but was ever a poor word so trailed in the dust as that word, "happy," is in such a connection as that? But, oh, a peaceful, contented mind that rests in God! A soul whose wishes are all fulfilled and whose very life-breath is jubilant praise or else submissive prayer—that is what I call happiness! The man who knows that all is right with him for eternity, one who drinks from the eternal fountain the joys which belong not to the brute beast, nor even to the man who is without a God—I call him

the happy man! And, oh, how happy some of you would be if you came to Christ as the chicks come to the hen! Oh, how happy Christ would make you! Wretched woman over yonder, this very night you may be happy! Giant Despair has marked you for his own, you say. Then I challenge Giant Despair and call him a liar! If you believe in Christ, you shall find that He has redeemed you with His blood. Trust Him and He will set you free at once—and in Him you shall be as happy as the days are long at the longest and you shall know what true joy means—emphatic joy—"the joy of the Lord," "the peace of God which passes all understanding!"

I remind you of that other hymn we sang just now—

"Take salvation,
Take it now, and happy be"—

not only safe, but happy! And safe and happy forever! I remember how I was enticed to Christ when I heard the Doctrine of the Final Perseverance of Saints preached. I had heard a great deal about that kind of salvation which consists of being saved today and lost, tomorrow, and I never cared a button for it—neither would I go across the street to listen to it now! But I heard a salvation preached which really saves a man—saves him eternally—and I felt that if I could get a grip of *that* salvation, I would be the happiest individual in the world! By God's Grace I did grip it and I found it truthful and *fact*, for Christ does save—saves effectually and eternally—all them that put their trust in Him. And even now, for the unsafe and for the unhappy, Christ is waiting and willing that they may be both safe and happy in Him!

But there is more bliss, even, than that, for *Christ makes them part of a blessed company*. He says in our text, "How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings!" It is not a hen with one chick to which our Savior alludes! I suppose that the one chick might be happy, but the best happiness in the world is always enjoyed in holy company. Christ gives the idea of a Church as His notion of happiness—not one member only, but a body of members! Not one lone sheep, but a flock! So here he says, "How often would I have gathered *your children* together!" Am I addressing some lonely person? You have been in London a long time and you have found out that there is no place so lonely as this great London is. I suppose that in the desert of Sahara, you might find a friend, although in Cheapside you could not. Nobody seems to know anybody here—that is to say, unless he has something to give away—and then the number of cousins that a man has is something amazing! But if you *need* anything, nobody knows you and even your so-called friends forsake you! Perhaps somebody has come to the Tabernacle for a good while and yet has been quite lonely. I am very sorry that it should ever be and I know that there are some earnest souls here that try to speak to strangers. But, oh, dear Friends, my Master would not have you lonely! He would gather you with the rest of His children, "even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings." He would bring you to know a few burdened spirits like yourself. He would bring you to know some others that have been set free, as He

will set you free! And He would lead you to have fellowship here with one, and there with another, till you would say with good Dr. Watts—

"In such society as this
My weary soul would rest—
The man that dwells where Jesus is,
Must be forever blessed!"

You would find that your joys would be multiplied by being shared with your kindred in Christ who, on the other hand, would make you partakers of their joy and would delight to do so! Oh, that you would come to Christ, for then you would have the happiness of Christian fellowship!

It seems to me that there is also another thought in the text, that is, *Jesus would make us know His love.* When the hen gathers her chickens under her wings, there is not only safety, happiness and congenial society, but there is also a consciousness of great love. The poor little chickens do not understand much about it—they do not know what relationship the hen bears to them, but *she* does. Yet they feel that she loves them by the way she picks up every little grain for them and by the way she calls them together so anxiously, and covers them so carefully. It is a truly blessed experience to know a great love—the love that is equal to our own—that blessed marriage love renders life supremely happy where it is purely enjoyed. But how much more blessed is it to have a love infinitely *superior* to your own and yet to know that it is all yours and that whatever there is in that loving One is all for you! Every chick may feel sure that whatever the great bird can do, it will all be done for the little bird that cowers beneath its wings. In fact, the chicks are lost in the hen—look how she covers them! That is what Jesus does to me and to you, if we are truly in Him—He covers us up and hides us from all our enemies. They cannot see us, for we are lost in our Lord and yet we are most sweetly found, and put beyond the possibility of being lost! All that Jesus is belongs to me, and to you, dear Sister, and to you, dear Brother. All Christ is mine, and all Christ is yours! And as the hen gives herself up to her chick and takes the chick, as it were, wholly to herself so that they become one, so does the blessed Christ give Himself wholly to His people—He takes His people wholly up into Himself, so that they are truly one! Oh, that you all had this great blessing! And if you are waiting and anxious and desirous to have it, He is willing to give it, for so He says in the text, "How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings!"

That is what Jesus would do.

II. Now, very briefly, let us consider HOW HE WOULD DO IT.

He would do it, first, *by calling you to come to Him.* That is how the hen gathers her chicks around her, by calling them to her. Christ's call is often given by the preaching of the Gospel and I am truly glad when I can be His call-boy and pass on the message from Him. How I wish these lips had language conformable to the blessed call which He allows me to deliver in His name! He bids me tell you, who labor and are heavy laden, to come to Him, to come to Him, *now*, and He will give you rest. He says,

"Ho, every one that 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." He bids me expressly say that he that comes to Him, He will in no wise cast out. And I am glad that before He closed the Book of the Revelation, He put in this gracious message, "Whoever will, let him take the Water of Life freely." That is how He would gather you by His call—is it not a sweet and gracious one? If you are His child, you will know it and come to Him, even as the chick knows the mother's call and runs to her. There is a pigeon not far from the hen, but it does not come at her call. There is a duck in the farmyard, but it does not come to her. Ah, but the chicks do! And this is how the Lord discerns His elect and redeemed people—that gracious call of His is understood by those who secretly belong to Him and who, therefore, respond to His call. He Himself said, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and he that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out."

How would Jesus gather you to Him? Well, He would gather you, next, *by your coming at His call*. The hen gives a call and then the chicks run to her. What do they bring with them when they come? Do they pick up gold and silver, or bring diamonds in their mouths to pay their way to their mother's bosom? No, not they! All they do is to run to her, just as they are! Can you see them? The mother hen has called them and away they go! They bring her nothing and she asks nothing of them. It is for the hen to give to the chick—not for the chick to give to the hen! And so, poor Sinner, all you have to do is to come and trust Jesus. Run to Him! What shall you bring Him? Bring Him nothing but your need of everything that He can give you! Shall you bring Him a broken heart? Yes, if you have one, but if you have not, come to Him and ask Him to give you a broken heart. Remember that verse of Hart's—

"Come, you needy, come and welcome,
God's free bounty glorify!
True belief and true repentance,
Every Grace that brings us nigh,
Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ and buy!"

So, then, this is Christ's way of gathering sinners to Himself. First, He gives the call, and then they come to Him in obedience to it.

The next part of the gathering is the enclosure of His wing by which *He interposes between us and harm*. The hen gathers her chicks to her by brooding over them, making herself like a wall round about them, her feathers being their soft nestling-place. So Jesus gathers us to Him by brooding over us. He puts Himself between us and justice. You know when He did it and how He suffered in doing it. He puts Himself between us and God, for He is the Mediator, the Interposer, the Daysman acting on our behalf. Oh, how sweet it is when, conscious of guilt and sin, we, nevertheless, can realize the sweetness of that promise which I have already quoted to you, "He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust." He shall Himself be your pavilion! He shall hide you from the righteous wrath of God and put your sin away by tak-

ing it upon Himself! That is the way we are gathered under the interposing Mediator.

How does He gather us? You have it all before you now—He calls us, and we come to Him and we hide beneath Him and cry—

"Cover my defenseless head
With the shadow of Your wings."

That is how we are gathered to Him—may the Lord thus graciously gather us all!

III. Our last remark, concerning our being gathered to Christ, is to be WHEN HE WOULD DO IT. The text says, "How often would I have gathered your children together!" I will not go into an account of the many times in which Jesus, in His infinite love, would have gathered the children of Jerusalem to Himself, but I should like to mention some times when, I think, He would have gathered some of you.

He would have gathered you, first, *when you were literally children.* I mean especially those of you who had early advantages. When you went to bed, after mother had spoken to you about—

"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,"

and given you the "good-night" kiss, you would often lie awake and turn the subject over in your mind till the tears coursed down your little cheeks and you sobbed yourself asleep. I think Jesus would have gathered you then. Do not some of us recall, when we were boys, when we spoke to an elder brother, or, maybe, to a younger brother, and we two reasoned with one another about these things— and prayed in our boyish fashion—and yet in a few days had forgotten it all? I think Jesus would have gathered us to Him then.

In looking back over my own life, there seems to me to have been times when the Lord came very near my childish spirit and touched me, if not with Divine Life, yet with something very near akin to it, for there were many earnest desires after holiness, bitter feelings of repentance and mighty yearnings after the Christ of whom I knew so little, but for whom I longed so much! Ah, my aged Friend, am I describing your case? It is a long while since you were a boy, but you might almost wish you could be a child again to feel as you once felt! Ah, good woman, it is many a day since mother ran her fingers through your curls and said that she hoped you would love her Savior! And you do not feel, now, as you felt then. Those were certainly times when Jesus would have gathered you to Himself.

Since then, I daresay many of you have had *times of serious impression and quiet thoughtfulness.* You do not know why it was, but you suddenly felt unusually thoughtful. It may be that you have been in the midst of gaiety and you have felt that it was all hollow. You could not bear it, so you got away and went upstairs, or into the garden, or you have even walked the street as if nobody else were there but yourself. And you have thought, and thought, and thought, again, and you have almost been persuaded—but you have said to the Heavenly message, "Go your way for this time. It is not yet convenient for me to receive you." Do

you think it will ever be convenient? Or is God to wait your convenience and play the lackey at your door till your supreme will shall deign to listen to His merciful requests? Ah, how often—how often would Jesus, thus, by these solemn impressions, have gathered unto Himself some who are here present!

It may be that I am coming a little more closely home to some when I remind them that they have had *periods of severe illness*. At such times you have lain in bed and listened to the tick of the clock on the bed table and you have looked into eternity—and it has appeared very grim and dark to you. And you have then sought the prayers of good men and you have vowed that if you ever recovered, there should be no more wasted years, Ah, then Christ would have gathered you to Himself and the shadow of His sheltering wings darkened your sick-chamber! But you would not yield and you escaped from Him, again, and yet again.

I think I may truthfully add that in this Tabernacle, sometimes, *when God has helped the preacher*, there have been moments when you have been brought to the very brink of salvation—and you have almost gone in. You have had to put pressure upon your conscience to keep out of the Pool of Mercy! You have had to resist the Holy Spirit. Oh, but it is a dreadful thing when a man has done despite to the Spirit of God and made himself an antagonist of that blessed Spirit, whom to resist is perilous, for it is of Him that we read that there is a sin which is unto death—and there is a sin against the Holy Spirit which shall never be forgiven! I trust that none of you have yet committed that sin! But mind what you are doing—mind what you are doing, for you are in a most dangerous position! Somewhere in that region where you now are lies the sin which ensures damnation! I charge you, Sirs, whatever sin you commit, resist not the Holy Spirit, for, if you do, it may be that it shall be said, "My Spirit shall no longer strive with that man." And then, ah, then—I drop the curtain and say no more, for it is too terrible to think of.

Oh, how I wish that this might be the time when Jesus would securely cover you as the hen covers her chicks! Do you really desire this blessing? I know you would not desire it if He did not desire it. If there is a spark of desire towards Christ in your heart, there is a whole flaming furnace of desire in Christ's heart towards you! You never get the best of Him—long before you have gone half a boat's length, you shall find Jesus Christ infinitely faster than you are! No sinner can ever say that he stopped for Christ, or waited for Jesus. I more willing than Christ? Never! A sinner more anxious for pardon than Christ is willing to pardon him? Never! There was never seen and there never shall be seen, beneath the cape of Heaven, a soul more hungry after Christ than Christ is hungry after that soul! Long before the woman of Samaria said to Christ, "Give me a drink," Christ had said to her, "Give *Me* a drink." He was the more thirsty of the two, even when He had made her thirsty! And He was thirsty after her soul long before she was thirsty after the Water of Life!

O poor, guilty Sinner, do not doubt your welcome to Jesus! The gate of salvation is flung wide open! The door is taken completely off the hinges.

"All things are ready, come!" Your Savior waits for you. The Father waits for you. No, He does more—He comes to meet you! I see Him running! Is it true that I see *you* coming? Then what a spectacle is now before me! I see you coming with feeble footsteps and I see Him running faster than the angels fly! I see the Father falling on the neck of the prodigal. I see Him kiss him and delight in him and cover him as if it were the hen that covered her chick! I see Him delighting in deeds and tokens of infinite love. "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him! And put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet, and bring here the fatted calf, and kill it and let us eat and be merry; for this, my son, was dead, and is alive again! He was lost, and is found!"

"Ring the bells of Heaven!" There is joy tonight, for a sinner has found his Savior and God has found His child! God bless you, dear Friends, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *LUKE 13:18-34.*

Verse 18. *Then said He, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? And unto what shall I resemble it?* For men learn much by resemblances and the things which are seen are frequently helpful to us in seeking to set forth the things which are not seen. Knowing that God is One in all that He has done, we are often able to learn from one part of His works to understand another. What, then, is God's Kingdom like? Is it like a mighty army marching with banners and trumpets? No. Is it like the raging sea, rolling onwards and sweeping everything before it? Not so—at least it is not so visibly.

19. *It is like a grain of mustard seed.* You can hardly see it. You can, however, taste it. Try it and you shall find it pungent enough, but it is so small that you may easily pass it by. "It is like a grain of mustard seed."

19. *Which a man took and cast into his garden.* It must be sown in prepared soil, but there is "a man" who knows how to cast it so that it shall fall where it will live and where it will grow.

19. *And it grew, and grew into a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.* "The fowls of the air" that might once have eaten it, "lodged in the branches of it." See, in this parable, an illustration of the growth of the Kingdom of God, the vitality of the Truth of God, the energy with which, from a small beginning, God's Kingdom advances to a great ending! Have you this mustard seed in your heart? It may seem a very little thing even to yourself. Others may scarcely perceive it, yet, but leave it alone and it will grow. Yet it will not grow without watering. Seeds may lie long in the ground, but they will not sprout until the rain has fallen to moisten the earth. Pray God to send showers of blessing upon your soul, tonight, so that, even if you have no more than a grain of mustard seed in your heart, it may begin to grow!

Is the grain of mustard seed sending up its shoot above the ground? Then pray God that it may grow yet more till it shall not only be visible,

but shall be so prominent that it must be seen—that those who once hated it will be compelled to see it—and to wonder at it as they behold the birds of the air coming and lodging in its branches! I pray that in many hearts, here, the Grace of God may not long continue to be a small thing, but that it may advance to tree-like stature till you shall yield comfort to fifties and hundreds—and many of you shall be like some of the trees in this great city and its suburbs. Did you ever notice them, at nightfall, when all the sparrows of the street come and lodge in the branches and merrily twitter before they go to sleep? There are some Christians like those trees—they have hearts so big and they do for Christ's service so much, that they harbor hundreds of poor little birds of the air that otherwise would hardly know where to go for shelter. God make us such Christians that we shall be a blessing to multitudes all around us!

20, 21. *And again He said, Unto what shall I liken the Kingdom of God? It is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.* Some expositors think that this is a picture of the kingdom of the devil, but it does not say so. If our Lord had meant to represent the power of evil, He would have given us some intimation of that kind, but He has given us none. He means to describe exactly what He had described before, for He says, "Unto what shall I liken the Kingdom of God?" The leaven is buried, as it were—"hid in three measures of meal." It is lost, covered up. Leave it alone. By the force that is *within itself*, it begins to work its way in the meal and it leavens all around it until, at last, the whole three measures of meal are permeated by it and made to feel and acknowledge its power. So is it with the Grace of God where it is placed within a human heart—and so is it with the Kingdom of God wherever its influence is exerted among the sons of men!

22, 23. *And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then said one unto Him, Lord, are there few that are saved?* Oh, that question! Have you ever asked it? Have you ever heard it asked? And there are some people who are very pleased when the answer is, "Yes, very few, indeed, will be saved—and they all go to Salem, or Zoar, or Rehoboth, or little Bethel." There are some who are not quite certain whether all who go even *there* will be saved—they seem to delight to cut and pare down to the very lowest the number of those who will be saved. With such a spirit as that, I trust we do not sympathize for a moment! Certainly, our Lord does not! Listen to His reply to the question, "Lord, are there few that are saved?"

23, 24. *And He said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.* For your own part, take it for granted that there will be so few that will enter that you will have to push to get through the gate—"Strive to enter in at the narrow gate." If you are not narrow in your own mind—and it is a pity that you should be—yet remember that the gate into Heaven is narrow—and make up your mind that there is no getting through it except with many a push and many a squeeze.

25, 26. *When once the Master of the house is risen up, and has shut the door, and you begin to stand outside, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and He shall answer and say unto you, I know not who you are: then shall you begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in Your Presence, and You have taught in our streets.* See, there are some men who will not think of going to Heaven till it is too late! And then, when they get to Heaven's gate and find it shut, they will begin to plead for admittance though they pleaded not for it before! When they might have had the blessing, they would not have it. And when they *cannot* have it, then they grow earnest in crying for it.

27, 28. *But He shall say, I tell you, I know not who you are; depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the Prophets, in the Kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.* Ejected, violently driven away, as those who are abhorrent in God's sight because you despised His mercy!

29-34. *And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the Kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last. The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto Him, Get out, and depart from here, for Herod will kill You. And He said unto them, Go and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless I must walk today, and tomorrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a Prophet perish outside of Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which kills the Prophets, and stones them that are sent unto you; how often would I have gathered your children together, as a hen does gather her brood under her wings, and you would not!* What a terrible contrast! "I would...and you would not." May the Lord Jesus never have to say that to any of us!

—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.

ISRAEL'S CRY AND GOD'S ANSWER NO. 2631

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 16, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 23, 1882.

"And it came to pass in process of time that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His Covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them... Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me: and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh, that you may bring forth My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."
Exodus 2:23-25; 3:9, 10.

GOD had chosen the children of Israel, and He had determined to make of them a great nation and a peculiar people to whom He could communicate the Law and the Testimony, that they might keep the heavenly lamp burning until Christ should come. Jacob and his family had gone down into Egypt and, for a long time, they and their descendants were very happy there. The land of Goshen was very fruitful and the Israelites were greatly favored by the Egyptian king. The mass of them, therefore, had little thought of ever leaving that country—they resolved that they would settle there permanently. In fact, though God would not have it so, they became Egyptians as much as they could. They were a part of the Egyptian nation and they began to forget their separate origin. In all probability, if they had been left to themselves, they would have been melted and absorbed into the Egyptian race and lost their identity as God's special people. They were content to be in Egypt and they were quite willing to be "Egyptianized." To a large degree, they began to adopt the superstitions, idolatries and iniquities of Egypt. And these things clung to them, in later years, to such a terrible extent that we can easily imagine that their heart must have turned aside very much towards the sins of Egypt. Yet, all the while, God was resolved to bring them out of that evil connection. They must be a separated people—they could not be Egyptians, nor yet live permanently *like* Egyptians, for Jehovah had chosen them for Himself, and He meant to make an abiding difference between Israel and Egypt.

Now see the parallel. God still has a people whom He has chosen to be His own in a very peculiar sense, but they are, at present, mixed up with

the world. They are in the world and they are, at least in appearance, *of* the world. They are as fond of sin and as much slaves to sin as others are. They even love the world and the things of it—and many of them are quite happy where they are. They have no wish whatever to became a part of the separated people, set apart unto the Lord. They would rather remain in the world. But God will bring His redeemed out from the rest of mankind. He that bought them with blood will deliver them by power. Christ did not offer His Atonement in vain, but, "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." God will yet call every one of His sons and daughters out of Egypt, even as He called His Firstborn, and He will bring His chosen out of the midst of the people among whom they are sojourning until the time appointed for their emancipation.

The first thing to be done with the Israelites was to cause them to be anxious to come out of Egypt, for it is not God's way to make men His servants, except so far as they willingly yield themselves to Him. He never violates the human will, though He constantly and effectually influences it. Jehovah wants not slaves to grace His throne and, therefore, God would not have the people dragged out of Egypt, or driven out in fetters, against their own glad consent. He must bring them out in such a way that they would be willing to come out, so that they would march forth with joy and delight, being thoroughly weary and sick of all Egypt and, therefore, rejoicing to get away from it. How was this to be done? It was accomplished by a new king coming up who knew not Joseph and his eminent services. This Pharaoh began to be jealous of the people, fearing that, some day, when Egypt was at war, Israel might turn and side with the Egyptians' enemies. He looked upon the people, therefore, as being a great danger, and determined, if he could, to thin their ranks. Hence, he issued the barbarous edict to slay all the male children and, to effectually break their spirit, he put them to hard labor in making bricks and erecting vast structures, so that the treasure cities of Egypt and, perhaps, some of her huge pyramids were built by the unpaid labors of Israelite slaves. The whip fell often and heavily upon their backs, for they were put under brutal taskmasters who beat them most shamefully. They had no rest. They had to toil on and on and on, and scarcely had bread enough to eat to keep body and soul together. At last, the yoke of bondage became altogether intolerable and then, as we have it in the first part of our text, "The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His Covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them."

I want to use this subject in showing to any here who are in soul-trouble and do not understand why they have such sorrows and distress, that God is seeking to make them sick of the world, sick of sin and, therefore, He is putting them into a condition of spiritual bondage so that they may be willing to come out of Egypt! Yes, that they may, by-and-by, with the utmost joy and gladness, leave the land of their captivity!

I. The first thing I have to speak about is THE CRY OF MISERY. "The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning."

Notice, first, that they began to sigh, and to cry because their *time of prosperity had passed*. The land of Goshen might still be very fruitful, but their taskmasters devoured their substance. The country might be fair to look upon, but they had no time to enjoy the prospect. They were worked well-nigh to death and they could no longer get any rest in Egypt. All their prosperity and happiness had departed. Am I addressing any who were once very well content and satisfied to live as ordinary worldlings do? And has everything changed with you? Is there now no joy in what was once such a pleasure to you? Does it seem very dull and dreary if you go where you used to find so much merriment? Those haunts which were once the scene of your greatest delight—are they now avoided by you because you cannot endure them? Do you now feel that you would gladly give up all those things which once you doted on? I am thankful to hear that it is so, for when God is about to give a man a drink of the cup of salvation, He often first puts his taste right by washing out his mouth with a draught of bitters to take away the flavor of the accursed sweets of sin! I always regard it as a good and hopeful sign when a man becomes tired of the world, altogether weary of its sins, and says, "I find no pleasure in them." This happens to some while they are still young and their passions are strong—while their substance is undiminished, while their health is vigorous—while their friends are numerous. In the very middle of the day, their sun of enjoyment seems to go down. There is the honey, but it is no longer sweet. There is the wine cup, but it has no further fascination for them. Their joy has departed just when one would have thought that it would have been most abiding with them. Do I speak to any in this condition? If so, I think that I bring a message from the Lord to them!

But, next, the Israelites had not only lost their former prosperity, but *they began to feel that they were in bondage.* An Israelite in Egypt was at first a gentleman—in fact, a nobleman—for was he not related to the great prime minister, Joseph, who was second only to Pharaoh himself? Every Jew walked through Goshen as an aristocrat, for he was intimately connected with almost the highest in the realm! But now all that was changed with them and they felt that they were slaves—they were in bitter bondage—they must act and move at the will of others. There were hard laws and regulations made for them and cruel taskmasters to put those laws in action. They must rise, not when they chose, but when they were told to, and they might get to their beds only when they were allowed to do so at the slave driver's will. And they felt that they could not bear it any longer.

This was God's way of bringing them out of bondage, by first making them feel that they were in slavery. Have I any here who realize that they are also in slavery? Am I addressing a man who feels that he is in bondage to evil habits which he cannot break, although he wishes that he

could and counts himself degraded by the fact that to will is present with him, but how to perform that which he would, he finds not because he is a slave? His passions rule him. His companions control him. He dares not do what his conscience tells him is right, for there is a fear of somebody or other that makes him into a coward, and so into a slave. I am always glad when the fetters begin to gall. They who are content to be in bondage will never be freed! But when they feel that they cannot and that they will not any longer endure their captivity, then has the hour of freedom struck! It is an untold blessing when the Grace of God makes a man feel that what was once a pleasure has now become a servitude—and what he formerly found to be liberty has now become utter slavery to him.

The Israelites went further than that. They now felt that *their burdens were too heavy to be borne.* They had worked and toiled very hard and they had lived through the work, but now they were made to serve with rigor and their bondage was too heavy to be endured. They could not bear it. And it is the same spiritually! As long as a man can carry his sins, he will continue to carry them. And as long as a man can be content with the pleasures of this world, rest assured that he will delight in them. It is a blessed thing when sin becomes an awful load, so that it crushes a man until he seems to sink utterly hopeless beneath it! It is well with him, for now he will welcome the Deliverer. He will be glad of pardon from Him who, alone, can forgive sins. He will rejoice to accept the word of absolution from the lips of the Great High Priest and, therefore, although it is often a sore sorrow, it is also a very great mercy to be made to feel the intolerable load and burden of sin. If I am speaking to any who are in such a condition—and I hope that I am—I congratulate them on what is yet to come to them!

Oh, well do I remember when I was such a slave—when, as I rose in the morning, I resolved to live better than I had previously done, yet, long before noon, I had made a worse mess of the day than ever! Then I thought that, perhaps, by increasing my prayers, or reading more of the Scriptures, I might get ease from my burden. But I found the more I prayed and the more I read, the heavier my burden became! If I tried to forget my sorrow and so to shake off my gloom, I found that it would not forget me—and I had to cry unto the Lord, with David, "Day and night Your hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." I remember all that painful time so vividly that I can speak to some of you like an experienced friend who is well acquainted with the dark and stony road on which you are walking. I know all about your painful pathway of grief and I long to help you to get over it quickly, and to come to a better and happier place! But this trial is God's way of fetching you out of Egypt. He is making the house of bondage too hot for you. He does not mean to let you stay there, so He is permitting all this to come upon you that you may cry unto Him to deliver you! He will bring you forth and you shall march out with joy and gladness, thankful and happy to do what now seems like a hardship and like self-denial to you.

These Israelites also felt one more thing, namely, their powerlessness to escape out of Pharaoh's hand, and *they thought that there was nobody to help them.* When the young man of 40, who had been educated in Pharaoh's court, came forward and was reckoned to be the son of Pharaoh's daughter. When he came forward like a true hero, he threw in his lot with the despised people and smote one of their adversaries. He thought, perhaps, that it would be the signal for a general revolt and that the banner of Israel would wave defiantly in the face of Pharaoh and that the people would boldly march to liberty. But they were too enslaved—they had been too long ground down and oppressed to act like that—they had lost all spirit and they did not hope to ever be free! They were a nation of hopeless slaves.

Am I speaking to any here who have lost all heart and hope—who have come to this place of worship with a sort of feeble wish for salvation, but with no expectation of receiving it? Are you so shut up in the prison of sin that you cannot come forth? Are your chains clanking in your ears? Do you feel yourself to be in the low dark dungeon out of which you will never come alive? It is to you I have to say that I bless God that you are where you are! Despair is a blessed preparation for faith in Jesus! The end of the creature is the beginning of the Creator. Your extremity is God's opportunity. Now that you are helpless and hopeless, God will come to your rescue!

You notice that in my text there is a gradation, and such a gradation as some of us have felt in spiritual things. "The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage." "Ah, miserable wretch! Woe is me! Alas! Alas!" That is how they sighed when they were at their labor. That is how they sighed when they went home at night, or lay down among the pots by the kiln. And that is how they sighed when they woke up in the morning. When a boy was born, they sighed as they looked at him, for they knew that he must be killed. "The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage." And, then, as their misery grew, a sigh was not enough. "And they cried." Ah, I cannot imitate the expressive language of their grief. There were often many tears and there was the voice of grief which made itself audible in piercing cries. "O God, how long shall this bondage last?" They sat them down and begged for death—and sought it as if they were seeking for hidden treasure, for the life of a slave in Egypt was intolerable to them. And, often, the sigh and the cry were merged into a groan, for we read, "God heard their groaning."

Is that how it has been going on with you, my Brother? You used to sigh a good deal. Sometimes people noticed that you were very absent-minded and that you seemed to have some sorrow upon your spirit which you could not express. Now you have gone further than that, for you have begun to cry and in prayer to God, you pour out your very soul! Perhaps—and that is the worst plight of all—you feel that you cannot pray. You do not seem to be able to offer what you regard as a real prayer. You can only weep—yes, and perhaps you cannot even weep—and so you sigh and groan because you cannot pray. You are troubled because you cannot be troubled enough. And that is the worst kind of

trouble that there is in the world! There are none so brokenhearted as those that are brokenhearted because they are not brokenhearted! I have reminded you that the Israelites groaned and that "God heard their groaning." Ah, from the very bottom of their heart came up their groaning! It was no mere heaving of a sigh. It was no mere utterance of a cry. But all day long it was groaning, groaning, groaning—each breath seemed to be yet another sorrowful groan!

I hope that many of you will find the Savior before you know much about this terrible groaning, but it was not so with me. I became so full of groans that I understood what Job meant when he said, "My soul chooses strangling and death rather than my life." It would be better never to live than to live forever under conviction of sin, for the arrows of God drink up the very fountains of our life, pour fire into the blood and make us feel as if a thousand deaths were preferable to living under an awful sense of God's wrath! Perhaps I am speaking to some who, even when they fall asleep, are startled by dreams concerning the Day of Judgment, the sound of the archangel's trumpet and the setting up of the Great White Throne. And when they wake and go out to their business, they make strange blunders—and all day long they are like men walking as in a dream.

Still, dear Friends, if that is your experience, I am heartily glad of it, for it is to me a sign of better days coming! Looking down upon Egypt, the angels must have been glad when they heard the sighs and cries and groans of Israel. "Why," you ask, "how is that?" Because the angels would say to themselves, "God's greatest difficulty is overcome! He wanted to incline these people to come out of Egypt and now they long to come out—so they will be willing to accept the leader whom God will send to them and, with music and dancing, they will come forth when Moses brings them out of the iron furnace and the house of bondage." Those of us who were, only a little while ago, in the house of bondage, rejoice that we have been set free from it! And we are praying that you who are still in it and are beginning to feel what a horrible place it is, may not stay there long. May tomorrow's sun not see you there, but may you escape at once from that terrible captivity!

That, then, is the first head—a cry of misery.

II. The second is a very blessed one, THE GOD OF PITY. Let me read part of the text again. "They cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His Covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them."

Here, then, is the poor sinner's hope—not at all in himself, but wholly in God! Note the gradations here with regard to God's pity for these people. First, "*their cry came up unto God.*" When it rose up sharp, shrill and intense, it burst through the gates of Heaven and "came up unto God." Not that He does not really hear everything, but, speaking after the manner of men, when it was a mere sigh, it did not reach Him. But when it got to be a cry and deepened into a groan, then it came up before Him and He seemed to stop and say, "What is that? It is the cry of the seed of

Abraham in Egypt." Oh, poor Soul, when your cry comes up from the depths of your very soul, then God will stop and say, "What is that? It is the cry of a man in misery. It is the voice of a soul that is in bondage under sin." "Their cry came up unto God."

Notice, next, for it is a step further—"and God heard their groaning." Do you know what that means? There are some people who seem to hear things, but the sounds pass through their ears and there the matter ends. But if you go to visit a sick woman and you sit down, and she tells you all about her ailments and about her poverty, she is cheered because you listen to her kindly and because you are willing to hear her even if you cannot help her—but it does help her even to tell her sad story. Well now, God heard Israel's crying and groaning. He heard them not merely as men hear a sound and take no notice of it, but He seemed to stand still and listen to the sighs, and groans, and cries of His people. Sinner, tell God your misery even now and He will hear your story! He is willing to listen, even, to that sad and wretched tale of yours about your multiplied transgressions, your hardness of heart, your rejections of Christ. Tell Him all, for He will hear it. Tell him what it is you need—what large mercy—what great forgiveness! Just lay your whole case before Him. Do not hesitate for a single moment! He will hear it, He will be attentive to the voice of your cry. Oh, what comfort there is for you in this Truth of God if you can but grasp it! Dear Christians, pray that some poor sinners may grasp it even now! Pray that they may lay hold upon the sweet thought that God is hearing the sighs and cries of the penitent souls in our midst!

God's pity went further than that, for we read, next, that having heard their groaning, "*God remembered His Covenant.*" I wish I knew how to preach upon that 24th verse—"God remembered His Covenant." He looked on the children of Israel and He did *not* remember their sins—their practically becoming Egyptians, their loving Egypt and Egypt's idols—but He remembered His friend, Abraham. He remembered Isaac. He remembered Jacob whom He loved, and He remembered how He had promised to bless them and to make them a blessing. And not because of any merit in the Israelites, themselves, but for the sake of those whom He had loved and honored, and for the sake of the Covenant which He had made with them, He said, "I will break the power of Pharaoh, and I will bless My people; I will bring them out of bondage, and set them at liberty." Sinner, if God were to look on you to all eternity, He could not see anything in you but what He is bound to punish! But when He looks on His dear Son whom He loves, and remembers how He lived and loved, and bled and died, and made atonement for the guilty. And when He remembers His Covenant with His Well-Beloved, He says, "I will bless these people whom I gave unto Him by an Everlasting Covenant. I promised that He would see of the travail of His soul and so He shall. I will break the power of sin and I will set these captives free to the praise of the glory of My Grace. And they shall be accepted in the Beloved." It is a great blessing that although God cannot see any reason for mercy in us, He can see the best of all reasons for mercy in the Covenant of His Grace

and in His dear Son with whom He made it! "God remembered His Covenant." Do not forget it, dear Friends, but think much upon the Covenant ordered in all things and sure, and upon all the blessings that are to come to you through that Covenant.

God did still more for His people. "*And God looked upon the children of Israel.*" He had given them His ear. He had given them His memory. Now He gives them His eyes. He stood still and He looked upon them in pity and in love. And it is further said, "And God had respect unto them." The margin renders it, "God *knew* them," which is the true meaning of the original. He looked upon a man and He said, "That is one of My children." He looked upon another and He said, "Yes, Egyptian though he is in dress, he is one of my Israelites." He looked upon others and He said, "I know them. I know their sorrows, I know their sins, I know their weaknesses. And I will surely deliver them." Oh, that these lips could utter language in which I might fitly tell you how God looks upon you, my dear brokenhearted fellow sinner—how He looks upon you, my poor troubled Friend who cannot break loose from sin, but feels like a bull in a net and cannot get free from it! I tell you that He is looking upon you in love and pity and that He knows your condition and is ready to help you! I will close my discourse by telling you what He has done to help you and, oh, may He give you Grace to lay hold of it, that you may find liberty this very hour!

III. The last point is THE INSTRUMENT OF DELIVERANCE.

God's power was quite sufficient to bring the people of Israel out of bondage, but He chose to deliver them by means of human instrumentality. God works for men *by* men, so He raised up Moses, and it was through Moses that the children of Israel were delivered. Now, for you, dear Captive, God has raised up a Prophet like unto Moses. One who is infinitely greater than Moses has come to deliver you!

First, remember that *Jesus, the Savior of men, is a Man like ourselves.* This ought to encourage you to come to Him. Full of grief and broken down under a sense of sin, you dare not approach an absolute God—it would not be right that you should attempt to come to Him without a Mediator. But you may come to the one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, for He can fully sympathize with you! He is able to have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way, for He, Himself, in the days of His flesh, was compassed with infirmity. Well did Dr. Watts sing—

"Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find.
The holy, just, and sacred Three
Are terrors to my mind!
But if Immanuel's face appears,
My hope, my joy begins!
His name forbids my slavish fear,
His Grace removes my sins!"

Jesus Christ is a Man—therefore come boldly to Him, even as Israel might come to Moses! And *Jesus is clothed with Divine authority and power,* as Moses was. But more than that, He is what Moses was not, and could not be—*Jesus is actually Divine! Jesus is God!* Oh, come, poor

trembling Sinner, and trust your case in His hands, because nothing ever fails that He undertakes! He can break the power of the Pharaoh of your sins and set you free! Yes, even now He can bring you forth out of Egypt with the silver and gold of His abounding Grace. Only trust Him and follow Him, and be obedient to His commands, and all will be well with you.

This Moses, being a man, yet clothed with Divine authority, gave himself entirely up to the people. He was such a lover of Israel that he lived entirely for the people and once, you will remember, he even said, as he pleaded for them, "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold! Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—and if not, blot me, I pray You, out of Your book which You have written." Our Lord Jesus Christ, whom it is our joy to preach, was really made a curse for us. He actually stood in the sinner's place and bore the penalty of the sinner's guilt. Therefore, oh, trust Him! Perhaps I may be the means of leading some poor sinner to end his delaying and now to commit his spirit into the hand of the faithful Creator and Redeemer who died for him. And, dear Friend, if you will but trust Jesus with yourself, you shall be saved at once! I hope you are willing to come out of Egypt. If you are, you may do so. Christ has broken all the power of sin and He is willing, now, to set you free if you will but trust Him and give yourself up, once and for all, entirely to His power!

Lastly, Moses did bring the people out, every one of them. He left not a little babe in Egypt. No, not so much as a sheep or a goat remained there. He said, "There shall not a hoof be left behind." All that belonged to Israel went marching out when Moses led the way. And God's elect and Christ's redeemed shall all come out of the Egypt of sin. Pharaoh's power—the devil's power—cannot hold the very least of them in captivity! No, not even a bone of one of God's children shall be left in the grasp of death and the devil! They shall die and their bones shall be put into the sepulcher, but not the least *atom* of one of God's own chosen ones shall be left in the power of death! They shall come again from the hand of the enemy.

Yet remember, O you Sinners, that I do not urge you to trust Christ as though He cringed at your feet and could not have honor and glory if you did not welcome Him as your Savior! If you will not come to Him. If you will turn your backs on Him, I shall only say of you, "You believe not because you are not of His sheep, as He said unto you." It is not for Christ's sake, but for your own sake that I plead with you! Oh, that you would come to Him and trust Him! Weary of self, and weary of sin, and hopeless of self-salvation, come and lay yourselves at Jesus' feet, even at the feet of Him whom God has "exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" He has laid help upon One who is mighty! He has exalted One chosen out of the people! Therefore, come and trust Him even now, and you shall be saved! May God grant repentance and faith to this whole congregation for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ACTS 7:14-43.

Verses 14-17. *Then sent Joseph, and called his father, Jacob, to him, and all his kindred, seventy-five souls. So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers, and were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulcher that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem. But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt.* Note those words, "the time of the promise," and remember that every promise has its due time of fulfillment and that there is a time of promise to all the Lord's chosen people, when He will surely bring them out of bondage into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

18-20. *Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph. The same dealt subtly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live. In which time Moses was born, and was exceedingly fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months.* In the darkest night of Israel's bondage in Egypt, her star of hope arose—"Moses was born and was exceedingly fair," or, as the margin has it, "was fair to God"—with a beauty something more than human.

21, 22, *And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son. And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.* He was well qualified for the work to which God had called him, but how much more fully qualified is that great Prophet, like unto Moses, whom God has raised up, in these latter days, for the salvation of men, even Jesus Christ, His Son! He knows more than all the learning and wisdom of the Egyptians! He knows more than the cleverness of the devil, so He can deliver us from all his crafty wiles.

23-25. *And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: for he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God, by his hand, would deliver them: but they understood not.* Alas, it is just the same with Israel now! The Lord Jesus came to His own and, according to one of His parables, the Father said of Him, "They will reverence My Son." But they did nothing of the kind! They said, "This is the Heir. Come, let us kill Him, and the inheritance shall be ours." And, alas, how many, nowadays, are imitating their evil example! They say, "We will not have this Man to reign over us!" They refuse to yield themselves to the Sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ.

26-30. *And the next day he showed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, you are brethren; why do you wrong one to another? But he that did his neighbor wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? Will you kill me, as you did the Egyptian yesterday! Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian where he begat two sons. And*

when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, an Angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush. So that he was *80 years of age* when he began his great lifework! Perhaps, as a rule, the larger part of our time is occupied in getting ready to work. Yet, if we are able to perform a work as good as that which Moses did, it will well repay us for a long season of preparation.

31-34. *When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him, saying, I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and dared not look. Then said the Lord to him, Take off your shoes from your feet: for the place where you stand is holy ground. I have seen, I have seen the affliction of My people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them.* All this must have been very pleasant to the ears of Moses. It was solemn, yet it was exceedingly sweet. But notice what comes next.

34. *And now, come, I will send you into Egypt.* Oh, dear! What a falling-off there seems to be in these words! God first says, "I have heard their groaning and am come down to deliver them." And then He adds, "I will send you into Egypt." Yes, truly, from the grandeur of the Divine working down to the insignificance of our instrumentality is a tremendous stoop! Yet the God who says, "I will save sinners by My Grace; none but Myself can save them," also says to me, "Go and preach the Gospel to them." The same Lord who says, "I will change the heart of stone into a heart of flesh and work a miracle of mercy in renewing those who are dead in trespasses and sins," also says to you, "Speak to the persons sitting with you in the pew and seek to point them to the Savior." It is an amazing stoop, but it is the condescension of Almighty Grace and it brings great honor to the poor, trembling, unworthy person to whom the message is addressed! Moses thought himself very unfit for the task of delivering Israel and he would, if he had dared to do so, have refrained from that task. But God said to him, "Now come, I will send you into Egypt." Ah, Brothers, how different a man did Moses then become! When he went out by himself, without any commission, he was impatient to get to his work and he slew an Egyptian—and so had to flee the country. But when he was sent in God's name, when the Lord said to him, "Now come, I will send you," then the work was accomplished! O my Brothers and Sisters, in your service for the Savior, always seek for power from on high! Ask to be sent of God and pray your Master to go with you—then will you succeed in the task which He entrusts to you.

35. *This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made you a ruler and a judge? The same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the Angel which appeared to him in the bush.* Is not that a shadow of that grander Truth of God, "The Stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the Head of the corner"?

36, 37. *He brought them out after that he had showed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years. This is that Moses which said unto the children of Israel, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me;*

Him shall you hear. Now you see that Moses was thus a type of Christ. God grant that we may not reject Christ, as the Israelites rejected Moses, but may we be willing that He should be to us our Judge and our Deliverer!

38, 39. *This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received the living oracles to give unto us: to whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt.* Though Moses had brought them out of Egypt, they were not obedient to him and they wanted to go back to the land of bondage. And, ah, Brothers and Sisters, this is the great crime of the present day—the crime of mankind in general—that, after all Jesus has done, there is still within so many, the evil heart of *unbelief* in departing from the living God!

40, 41. *Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for as for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we not what is become of him. And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.* This again is another of the ways by which men attempt to make an idol god out of something which they can see and to rejoice in what they, themselves, do, instead of trusting in what the Lord Jesus has done.

42, 43. *Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the Prophets, O you house of Israel, have you offered to Me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness? Yes, you took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your God, Remphan, figures which you made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.* There was still idolatry in their hearts and Moses was rejected by them. God grant that we may not be idolaters and so reject the Prophet like unto Moses, whom the Lord has sent unto us! Amen!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—440, 561, 608.

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

"WHAT SHALL THE HARVEST BE?"
NO. 2632

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 23, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 14, 1882.

"For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: it has no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal: if it should produce, strangers shall swallow it up."
Hosea 8:7.

PRUDENT men look before them to see the result of their actions. Their eyes look beyond the present to the future. They look before they leap. It is only the foolish man who goes blindly on till, at last, he stumbles and has a desperate and probably fatal fall. Brothers and Sisters, I hope that I am addressing those who have enough wit and wisdom to look at the consequences of what they are doing. This is how I wish to live—not merely doing what may give me today's temporary pleasure, but asking myself what will be the result of those actions, by-and-by. How will they appear to me when I come to be old? What aspect will they wear when my eyes are failing me in death? What will be the result in that life after death—that endless future which is so sure to come to me, let me live as I may? I say that I hope I am speaking to those who look a little ahead, and are not, "like dumb driven cattle," satisfied if there is grass enough within the reach of their mouths, but who look before them to see the consequences on the morrow and especially on that Last Great Day for which all other days were made—"the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

We are all sowing, Brothers—we cannot help it. You Sisters, too, are sowing—perhaps but a little garden plot, or possibly a broader acreage in public life—but you are all sowing. And every day there is a sowing. No man goes forth in the morning without a seed-basket. What may be in it is not so easily told. There may be nothing in it but the wind. There may be chaff in it. There may be in it curses which shall grow up to plague yourself and others, but it is certain that we do not move an inch along the furrows of life without scattering some kind of seed. He that does least is seeding his idleness and, like the thistle that stands still, and offers its downy seed to be carried by every wandering wind, so does the sluggard—he does mischief by doing nothing.

As we are all sowing, the great question we have to consider is, "what will the harvest be?" Every wise man will ask himself that question. I may have sown very little in my small plot, or I may have walked far and

scattered the seed broadcast over the wider field committed to my charge—but what have I sown and what shall I reap? What sheaves shall I gather into the garner? Sheaves of fire that shall burn into my soul forever, or sheaves of glory that I shall bring with rejoicing in the Last Great Day? Brothers and Sisters, if it is rightly examined, this matter of the harvest from our sowing will be found to be full of very rich encouragement to those who are seeking to serve God. If you have believed in Christ and received eternal life by faith in Him, and if now you are trying to labor for Him, you are sowing blessed seed—and if it comes not up today, or tomorrow, yet Divine Grace ensures a crop and you shall have precious sheaves which you shall gather in one of these days! Therefore, be encouraged to labor on! The farmer waits for the precious fruits of the earth through the long and dreary winter, through the checkered days of spring, through March winds and April showers he waits, until, at last, the golden harvest rewards him for all his toil. Labor on, then, Beloved, "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." That which you sow, you shall also reap! Your Lord has told you so. Therefore, be not dismayed by the long waiting but—

"Sow and faint not,
Till the seed a harvest bears."

But, while this Truth of God is full of encouragement to God's people, it ought to be a very strong and powerful check to those who are living in sin. As you sow, you will have to reap! Those "wild oats" about which you laugh are easily sown, but they will make hard and sorrowful reaping! That act of iniquity, that indulgence in lust, that lie, that blasphemy, that revolt against God in stifling your conscience and refusing to yield to Christ—all these will produce a harvest in due season! It is easy to toss these pigeons up into the air, but they will all come home to roost. At nightfall you shall see every one of them—and they will have grown greater than when you set them flying. And they will be bearers of messages of misery to the rash hand that sent them flying abroad. It is a dreadful thing to be so living that you would not wish the result of your actions to come home to you! And if any of you are so living, I pray God, the Holy Spirit, now to give me something to say which shall, like a strong hand, lay hold of your bridle and compel you to stand still and race no longer in the downward course to Hell!

My text naturally divides itself into two parts and, at first sight, they do not seem to be very closely connected. But I think that I shall be able to show that they are. From the first part of the text we may learn that *some sowings will have a horrible harvest*. "They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind." Then the rest of the text will teach us that *some sowing must end in failure*. They are such poor, windy things, that they shall never come to anything that is good. If a blade shall come up, yet "it has no stalk." And, if it should seem to come to a stalk, "the bud shall yield no meal." It shall be like the devil's meal—all bran—there shall be no good flour in it. Or, if it should yield meal, "if it should produce, strangers shall swallow it up." The old proverb says, "There's many

a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip," and these sowers find it to be so with their sowing! Strangers come in and steal away the fruit out of the very mouth that hoped to be fed by it so that no good result comes of the sowing as far as he is concerned.

I. The first part of our text teaches us that some sowings will PRODUCE A HORRIBLE HARVEST.

Some have a horrible harvest even in this world, as, for example, *the sowing of oppression which leads to revolt and revenge*. I do not know a better instance of this than France. Some two hundred years ago, or even less than that, the owners of the land in that country treated the peasantry worse than they treated their cattle. Poor and almost naked men might have been seen dragging the plow over the soil, themselves, because they were reduced to such poverty by excessive rents that they could not afford to keep animals to do the hard work. Kings, princes and the great ones of the land cared for nothing but their own pleasures—and those pleasures were often of the most vicious kind. Read the first chapters of Carlyle's *French Revolution* and see in what a state France was. Yet, for a time, everything seemed to go on favorably for the oppressors. If the peasantry revolted, they were put down with an iron hand.

The mighty rulers thought that their empire would never come to an end and, as for the Grand Monarch, himself—was there ever such another mortal as he thought himself to be, and as his courtiers spoke of him? Might not his kingdom last forever—at least, in the hands of his successors? Yet, one after another, those kings and nobles sowed the wind and, at the end of the last century, they reaped the whirlwind! Having, themselves, defied all law and justice, they had taught the people to do the same—and when the masses once rose in rebellion and got the upper hand—you know how they worked the terrible guillotine and how the streets, not only of Paris, but of many another city and town, were deluged with blood! And, at last, the oppressors were made to realize that their cruelty and oppression had come home to them.

It is always so, sooner or later, according to the rule of God's righteous government. Men may stretch the cord for a long while, but at length it snaps and woe be to those that are holding it when it gives way! The people may be, for a time, trodden down beneath the tyrant's hoof, but, in the long run, the tyrant gets the worst of it. France has more than once furnished an awful instance of the retribution that comes upon those who do not regard the dignity of man and who treat him as if he were merely a beast, or something worse! They have sown the wind and they have reaped the whirlwind.

Now take another view of the picture presented by our text. We have lately had, over in Ireland, a terrible proof that *the justification of outrage leads to murder*. Certain persons say, "We never meant to urge our countrymen to commit the crime of murder and we are shocked at the Phoenix Park tragedy. We wash our hands in innocence, for we are clear of guilt in this matter! We denounce it, we have no part in it, we abhor it." So they say, but what led up to that awful deed of blood? When men have used expressions in which they have not condemned, but have al-

most justified outrage and murder in *other* cases, what could come of it but that their disciples should go a little beyond what their masters may have intended? You cannot scatter fire and then when, at last, the city burns, say, "Oh, we never meant it to spread like that! We only intended to burn down that cottage, or that wretched shanty! We never thought of burning down the city! We are as innocent of the crime as newborn babes—we never meant to do anything of the kind." Yes, but you cannot say to fire, "Thus far shall you go and no further." And in like manner, if you sow the wind, you will reap the whirlwind.

There is a whole province of Holland protected from the sea by a dyke and there is a man who wants to let in a little water to the other side for a certain purpose. He says he is only going to let a little stream run through, so he takes his pickaxe and he worlds away till he has made a passage through the dyke. And then, of course, the whole dyke is swept away and the province gets drowned! The foolish fellow says, "God forbid that I should have the blame of this catastrophe! I never meant to do anything of the sort." Of course he did not—he intended something far less than that, but his action naturally produced the result that followed and, therefore, he is rightly regarded as responsible for it! Beware, I pray you, of trifling with the eternal principles of justice and of right and wrong! Beware of ever sanctioning what you consider to be only a little evil, for, if you do, the greater evil is sure to follow at its heels! It is like the boy that the burglar takes and pushes through a little window, that he may open the door and let in those who commit robbery and murder. So, if any of us begin to advocate principles which sap and undermine the foundations of law and order, we cannot tell to what mischief our talk will lead—it is well for us to always be careful not to sow the wind, lest we should, by-and-by, reap the whirlwind!

Passing from those great instances which prove the rule, I want you, next, to notice that there are many persons who fall into this same fault. Take, for instance, *the teacher of error*. He is, perhaps, in other respects, an excellent minister, but he is unsound on one important point. Just so and, before long, his unsoundness on one point will lead to unsoundness all round! It is like a single speck of decay in fruit—it is very apt to cause the whole to go rotten. Have you ever heard the story which was told by Augustine concerning a young man who had been, at one time, a professed Believer in God, but who had given up all trust in Him? It occurred to him, when he was very much tried by the buzzing and biting of flies, that God could not have created such troublesome little creatures. They were such a nuisance to him that he concluded that the devil had made them and, having once gone the length of believing that the devil made flies, he thought it highly probable that Satan created some other nuisances. And he went on till, at last, he actually came to believe that the devil made *everything*—and he did not believe in God at all. "Ah!" remarks Augustine, as he relates the story, "he that errs about a fly soon errs about all things."

Look at the progress of Romanism in our own country. When the most of us were boys, we used to hear our fathers talking of a Mr. Pusey and

of baptismal regeneration—and it was thought, then, to be a strange thing if a man wore a cross around his neck. All England was stirred about the matter and everybody was horrified! But look at the so-called "priests" now—they have gone all the length of Rome. "Where?" you ask. Well, where are they not? They seem to be everywhere now, swarming over the land, and they have brought back rank Popery into what used to be called "the Protestant Church of England!" How has that come to pass? Well, first of all, there was a little of it tolerated and then a little more of it was needed and, gradually, more was sucked down until now I believe that many of the Ritualists would be prepared to receive the Pope and all his cardinals, red hats and all! I really cannot see why they should not, for, if they did, they could scarcely be more Popish than they are, already! Only go a little way in the course of error and it is like sliding down an inclined plane—there is no telling where you will stop. Go to the top of St. Paul's Cathedral and throw a stone down from that height. You say that you only mean to throw it a yard. Ah, but it will never rest until it gets to the ground—and perhaps it will kill someone before it reaches the earth!

So, when once you start in the way of error, there is no possibility of stopping unless Divine Grace shall interpose to save you from the consequences of the first false step! You sow the wind and you reap the whirlwind. A little error leads to more, and that to still more until the very idea of God is given up! I, therefore, love to meet a man who is stiff-backed in his orthodoxy and, in this age of laxness and looseness, I am prepared to clap my hands even when I see a little bigotry! I like a man to believe *something*—to stick to it, to know that it is true and not to be ashamed to avow it in the teeth of his fellow men—let them oppose as they will, for there must be *something* true and, oh, that God's gracious Spirit may teach us what it is! And when we once know it, may we hold it fast, come life or come death—for if we do not, we shall sow the wind and reap the whirlwind!

Here is another instance of the same Truth of God—*an ill example at home*. I will confine it to that one point, though it is of general application. You probably know a man who is very lax in the management of his family. He professes to be a Christian, perhaps, but his sons and daughters are allowed to plunge into every frivolity and every vanity. Yes, and they may even go into open sin and all that they will hear will be some gentle word like that which fell from the lips of soft-hearted Eli when he did but hint that his sons were not doing well when they were doing much that was terribly evil! The man even hears that such-and-such a vice has been committed by his son, yet he scarcely upbraids him. He is so easy-tempered that he says nothing, though he sorrows within his own heart. Perhaps his own example and the example of his wife are not such as could be desired. Family prayer is neglected and holy living is not known in the house. He gets prematurely old—his son has died very early—he has drunk himself to death, or destroyed himself by vice. His daughters, too, are unhappy in their marriages. The whole family has virtually gone to ruin as to any connection with the Christian Church.

What shall I say of the old gentleman? He will not say it, himself, but I must say it for him—he sowed the wind and he has reaped the whirlwind! The father's character is usually seen in his sons. It has been said that ministers' sons often turn out badly—if it is so and I am not sure that it is—it must be because the ministers have not kept their own vineyards, for the rule still holds good, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Generally, though not always, if he does depart from it, it is because there has been some fatal neglect in his training—and there are some Christian parents who are acting thus. They are so indulgent, not only to their children, but to themselves, that they do not like to give themselves the trouble that ought to be taken in all such cases. They are sowing the wind and they will reap the whirlwind!

Let me give another illustration of the truth of the text with reference to *persons who fall into evil habits*. At first those evil habits are under restraint. They admit that they drink, but they say that they cannot be called "drunks." They may, now and then, take more than is good for them but, still, it is not very often. That is the beginning of the evil! And, by-and-by, where are they? They have sown the wind and they reap the whirlwind! Did you ever hear the story of the Persian prince who dreamed that he was drinking from a cup and a fly came and tried to sip from it? He drove it away, but, as he kept on drinking from his cup, it came back—and it had grown as large as a bird! He drove the creature away, but it returned as large as an eagle—the largest kind of bird! He tried to chase that away, but it soon came back in the form of a man who grinned at him most horribly. He strove to get that man away, but soon he was back in the form of a giant who trod on him and crushed him to death! That is just the picture of the growth of an evil habit! At first you say, "Is it not a little one?" But it grows and increases till it becomes unconquerable. That parable illustrates our text—if you sow the wind you will reap the whirlwind! You cannot live in sin, you cannot do wrong of any kind, or in any form, but it will come back to you, not merely as wind, as you sowed it, but as a whirlwind, as a horrible tempest, as a rushing tornado, carrying everything before it!

I will not tarry to give more illustrations of this solemn Truth of God because I want to leave a few minutes for the consideration of the second part of the subject. Only I pray that God may write on the memory and heart of any of you who are living as you should not live, the great fact that as surely as you so live, "That which a man sows, that shall he also reap." And he will reap even worse than he sows, for if he sows the wind he will reap the whirlwind.

II. Now let us turn to the second part of the subject which is that SOME SOWINGS MUST END IN FAILURE.

There are some people who do not think that they are doing any hurt, yet they are *living an aimless life*. Go to them and ask what they are sowing? "Nothing," they answer. They say that they are doing no hurt to anybody, for they are not doing anything at all—but is not that kind of life an injury to themselves and to others? If you have no aim in life, no

high ambition, no objective, no noble purpose—does anything ever come of it? People talk of what they call, "chance," but I never found any chance of a man's getting to be holy without intending to be so! I never yet heard of a man doing any great good in the world if he did not mean to do it! I never heard of a man glorifying God by accident, nor of anyone getting to Heaven, as it were, by the throw of the dice, somehow finding himself there, but not knowing how it all happened. No, if you lead an aimless life, what will come of it will be just what the text says—"It has no stalk" There will be no plant from it and even if there should be some kind of stalk to the seed that you have sown, yet when it springs up, "there shall be no meal." It cannot be any comfort to you, even if things should go pretty well without your intending that they should, for the comfort, after all, lies in the motive and in the intention. And even if your life should somehow turn out to be better than that of other aimless persons, though you never intended it to be so, "if it should produce, the strangers shall swallow it up." If you meant it to be nothing, it will be nothing.

I daresay that I am speaking to a large number of people who do not know what they are living for. You have come into the world and here you are and, in due time, you will go out of it—but that is all that can be said of you. You are doing nothing. You have no noble end in view, no glorious purpose to accomplish, no sublime aspiration to realize. Then take it for granted that if all you sow is the wind, you will reap nothing but wind—only it will come to you in a fiercer form—as a whirlwind, for God will say to you, "I made you for My Glory. I sent you into the world with a purpose. I entrusted you with talents. I made you a steward of My goods and now you are accused of having wasted My goods. Give an account of your stewardship." What will you say? Alas, in that day the trifler, the idler, the mere butterfly in the garden of the world will find things going hard, indeed, with him! God save you all from leading an aimless life!

But there are some who are sowing the wind in another form. They are *leading a selfish life*. Self is the beginning and the end of their life. They open a shop simply to make money. They live at home to be comfortable. Perhaps they enlarge themselves a little by taking the wife and the children into the circle of self, but still, that is all—they have no care for God, no love for Christ, no wish to help the poor, no thought about eternity. That is a life of sowing the wind and it will end, sooner or later, in reaping the whirlwind, for no man lives unto himself without earning for himself a fearful reward! Selfishness is often like the serpent that stings itself to death. It is not possible, within the compass of a man's own soul, that he should satisfy the cravings and desires of that soul. When he loves God and loves his neighbor—he is really most of all blessing himself—for then is he living to true purpose.

But when self is everything to a man, he confines his soul within the morgue of his own ribs—his spirit dies within him and becomes like a stone. In the case of the man who lives only for self, it may be said of his life, in the words of the text, "It has no stalk: the bud shall yield no

meal." He gathers riches, but has no happiness or contentment in them. He is like Solomon, who, with all his possessions, had to cry, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" Or if he gets to be rich and seems to enjoy himself a little, he suddenly dies and strangers swallow up his estate! All that is left of him is a massive tomb and the notice in the newspapers that he died worth so many thousands of pounds—which is not true, for he never was really worth a farthing all his life! He was a worthless man whose only value consisted in the money he possessed.

O my dear Hearers, I implore you, with all my soul, not to live unto yourselves! If you desire the highest, grandest selfishness that can ever be attained, I charge you, throw selfishness away, remembering our Savior's Words, "He that loses his life for My sake, shall find it." He who casts his life away for the sake of Christ and for love of the Truth of God, shall be the man who shall really save his life and find true joy and blessedness! But for anyone to live for self is to sow the wind and to reap the whirlwind.

So, once again, will it be if a man *lives a self-righteous life*. A self-righteous man is generally very great at sowing—so many prayers—so many almsgivings—so many sermons—so many ceremonies. Yes, wind, wind, wind! He is sowing wind, but what will come of it all? This very good religious man—I forget whether his name is Good Enough, or Too-Good, but I believe the families are cousins—is, in his own opinion, so very excellent that he does all he ought to do and perhaps a little more. Yet he is only sowing the wind! And what will he reap from it? Well, if God is very gracious to him, he will soon reap the whirlwind, for he will find, to his confusion, that all his righteousnesses are as filthy rags and they shall be like the sere leaves of the forest borne away by the wind! I pray that he may, in this sense, reap the whirlwind very soon, for, if not, he will do so in the next world when all his pretended good works and all his formal observances of external religion will be nothing but so much whirlwind to blow in his face, and to fan the flames of Hell forever! O dear Friends, shun self-righteousness and trust, alone, to the righteousness of Christ! May the Spirit of God lead you to wash in the atoning blood and then cover you with the spotless righteousness of Jesus Christ! Then it will be well with your soul—but all self-righteousness shall end in delusion and confusion forever and ever. May God grant that none of us may, in this sense, sow the wind!

The text is pre-eminently true of every man who *leads a deceitful life*. Oh, have I the misery of speaking to one who makes a profession of religion and who wishes to be thought to be a Christian, but yet is not really so? It is hard for a true Believer to maintain a Christian character, but it is very much harder to keep up that character when there is nothing at the back of it! Oh, how desperately does the man who is a hypocrite have to labor! He has to patch up here, and patch up there—daub with untempered mortar here, and whitewash there, and he never has any peace. And all the while he is only sowing the wind! There is nothing real in his religion—what will come of it when that hypocrisy is discovered, when he stands revealed before the bar of God? Will his hypocritical re-

ligion do him any good? No, "it has no stalk" even now! It cannot yield him even present comfort! If there is a "bud" that looks a little like self-respect, it "shall yield no meal." I have already quoted the old proverb, "The devil's meal is all bran," and I may add that the hypocrite's meal is all bran. There is nothing substantial in it. And even if he should seem to die in the odor of sanctity, yet the stranger shall come in and devour his supposed religiousness, for somebody shall tell the truth about him and so his fine reputation shall be utterly blasted.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, I have come to the end of this discourse. And what should be the practical result of it but that if we have been sowing anything that we ought not to sow, we should pray God to come and plow it all up! Lord, drive the plow straight through every life that is not according to Your Word! Oh, to have all the evil obliterated—every seed of sin crushed and destroyed! Would God that it might be so with all of us!

What next? Well, let us then go—oh, may the Divine Spirit lead us!—to Jesus Christ and ask Him to give us the good seed! Let us have our hands washed from the evil in which we formerly delighted and He, alone, can cleanse us. Then let us take the clean good wheat which He will give us out of His own granary and let us go and sow it. God help us to sow it right and left, from morn to eve, without weariness, that, at the last, we may gather in a glorious harvest, not to our own glory, but to the praise of Him by whose rich, Free and Sovereign Grace we were enabled to sow to the Spirit, and of the Spirit to reap life everlasting! Amen.

Before we go, we will sing that very solemn hymn in Mr. Sankey's book, "What Shall the Harvest Be?" It will help to impress the subject upon our memories and hearts—

"Sowing the seed by the dawn-light fair,
Sowing the seed by the noon-day glare.
Sowing the seed by the fading light,
Sowing the seed in the solemn night—
Oh, what shall the harvest be?
Sowing the seed with an aching heart,
Sowing the seed while the teardrops start,
Sowing in hope till the reapers come,
Gladly to gather the harvest home—
Oh, what shall the harvest be?
Sown in the darkness, or sown in the light,
Sown in our weakness, or sown in our might,
Gathered in time, or eternity,
Sure, ah, sure, will the harvest be!"

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
GALATIANS 5:13-26; GALATIANS 6:1-10.

Remember, beloved Brothers and Sisters, that the Epistle to the Galatians is one in which Paul, with especial clearness, proves the Doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone. So much is this the case that the famous Commentary of Martin Luther upon this Epistle is, perhaps, the strongest work extant upon the Doctrine of salvation by Grace through faith.

But that doctrine was never intended to be separated from the Scriptural teaching concerning the fruit of faith, namely, good works and, therefore, we find, in the close of this very Epistle, the strongest possible declaration that if men live in sin, they will reap the result of sin—and that only if, by Grace, they are brought to walk in holiness, will they win the rewards of Grace.

Galatians 5:13. *For, brethren, you have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh.* "Do not make license out of your liberty. Remember that liberty *from* sin is not liberty *to* sin."

13, 14. *But by love serve one another. For all the Law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; You shall love your neighbor as yourself.* The condensation of the whole Law of God is contained in that one word, "love." In the First Table we are taught to love God. And the Commandments of the Second Table teach us to love our neighbor.

15. *But if you bite and devour one another.* Finding fault, slandering, injuring, bearing malice and so on—"If you bite and devour one another."

15. *Take heed that you are not consumed, one of another.* "You will eat one another up. You will, each one, condemn his neighbor." Paul represents the great Judge coming and waiting outside the door. And when He hears two men condemning one another, He says to Himself, "I will confirm their verdict. They have mutually condemned each other, I will say 'Amen' to it." What a sad thing it is if professed Christians are found thus condemning one another!

16. *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.* Walk under the Spirit's power, following His guidance. The Spirit never leads a man into sin. He never conducts him into self-indulgence and excess.

17. *For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary, the one to the other, so that you cannot do the things that you would.* How often that is the case! You would be perfect, but, "you cannot do the things that you would." We would, if possible, escape from every evil thought—we would not even *hear* of anything sinful if we could help it.

18, 19. *But if you are led of the Spirit, you are not under the Law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness.* Any kind of sensual indulgence—whatever it may be—a lustful glance, the cherishing of an unclean desire—the utterance of a foul expression—all this is condemned, as well as the overt acts of adultery and fornication.

20, 21. *Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envying, murders, drunkenness.* Is drunkenness actually put by the Apostle *after* murder, as though it were something worse than that terrible crime? Or is it not, oftentimes, the case that drunkenness lies at the bottom of the murder?

21. *Reveling and such like: of the which I told you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.* Paul never said, nor ever thought of saying, that a man might live in sin that Grace might abound. No, no—these evil things

must be given up! Christ has come to save us from every evil work. And this is the salvation that we preach—not simply salvation from Hell, but salvation from sin—which is the very fire that has kindled the infernal flame. But how different from all this evil is the fruit of the Spirit!

22. *But the fruit of the Spirit is love.* Universal love, first, to God. Next, to His people and, then, to all mankind. Have we that fruit of the Spirit? If so, it will make us of a very amiable disposition. It will dethrone selfishness and set up holy affections within our heart.

22, 23. *Joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.* Joy and peace seem to blossom and ripen out of love. Long-suffering, too, is part of the fruit of the Spirit. You will be hourly tried, but the Spirit of God will give you patience to suffer long and to endure much. You will also have gentleness. Some people are very hard, stern, severe, quick-tempered, passionate—but the true follower of Christ will be gentle and tender, even as He was.

23. *Against such there is no law.* Neither God nor man has ever made a law against these things—the more there is of them, the better will it be for everybody. Oh, that they prevailed all over the world!

24. *And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.* A crucified Christ is the leader of a crucified people! Oh, to have all the affections and lusts of the flesh nailed up! They may not be actually dead, for those who are crucified may still live on for some hours, but they are doomed to die. Their life is a very painful one and it is hastening to a close. A man who is crucified cannot get down from the cross to do what he wills and, oh, it is a great blessing to have our sinful self thus nailed up! Ah, Sir, you may struggle, but you cannot get down! You may strive and cry, but your hands and feet are nailed—you cannot go into active, actual sin. The Lord grant that the nails may hold very fast, that none of the struggling of our old nature may be able to pull out those nails that have fastened it up to the cross!

25. *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.* If that is our real life, let it also be our course of action.

26. *Let us not be desirous of vain-glory.* Do not let us want to be accounted as somebody, for, if we do, we prove that we are really nobody! Nobody is anybody till he is willing to be nobody—as long as he wants to be somebody, he is nobody and nothing!

26. *Provoking one another, envying one another.* God save us from that and every other form of evil!

Galatians 6:1. *Brethren, if a man is overtaken in a fault.* He is a slow traveler. He is not speeding swiftly on the way to Heaven, so the fault overtakes him. Had he been quicker of pace, he might have outstripped it, but he is "overtaken in a fault." What then? Throw him out of the Church? Have done with him? No. "If a man is overtaken in a fault"—

1. *You which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.* Pick him up, help him to run better than he did before.

1. *Considering yourself, lest you, also, are tempted.* Paul does not say, "Lest you also fall," but, "Lest you, also, are tempted"—as much as to say, "You will be sure to fall if you are tempted," and that man who

thinks that other people ought to be cast off because they have committed a fault is so proud in his own heart that he only needs to be tempted and he would fall, too! This is a very expressive way of putting the matter! "Considering yourself, lest you also be tempted."

2. *Bear you one another's burdens and so fulfill the Law of Christ.* Help your Brothers and Sisters. If you see that they have more to do than they can accomplish, take a share of their labor. If they have a heavier burden than they can bear, try to put your shoulder beneath their load and so lighten it for them.

3. *For if a man thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.* Paul does not say, "He deceives other people." No, "he deceives *himself*." As a general rule, other people find him out, they learn what he really is, but, "he deceives himself."

4, 5. *But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself, alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden.* There is, after all, a burden which we cannot carry for others and which we cannot shift upon others. There are burdens of care, sorrow and trouble which we can take from other men's shoulders, but the great burden of responsibility before God, each man must carry for himself.

6. *Let him that is taught in the Word communicate unto him that teaches in all good things.* Those who are taught and so receive spiritual things, should maintain those who are their teachers as far as they are able to do so.

7. *Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap.* That is true under the Gospel as well as under the Law.

8. *For he that sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption.* That is what always comes to the flesh—it decays and corrupts.

8. *But he that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.* No corruption shall come to that which belongs to the Spirit! "He that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

9, 10. *And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—416, 95 (SONG I), 654—AND FROM "SACRED SONGS AND SOLOS"—42, "WHAT SHALL THE HARVEST BE?"

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NO. 2633

A SERMON
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"I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham,
the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."
Exodus 3:6.

"Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God:
for He has prepared a city for them."
Hebrews 11:16.

YOU remember, dear Friends, that Paul is writing to the Hebrews concerning Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and he says, "God is not ashamed to be called their God." Then, when you turn back to our text in Exodus, you find that God was called their God at the burning bush and, oftentimes, on other occasions, He is called the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. We must not forget that at the time when God appeared to Moses, in the desert, in the bush that burned, but was not consumed, the condition of the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was very terrible. They were slaves to the Egyptians. They were an oppressed and downtrodden race. Their male children were taken from them and cast into the river. They were entirely in Pharaoh's hands. They were a degraded people, as all slaves gradually become, and they were unable, of themselves, to rise out of that degradation. Yet, at that very time, God was not ashamed to be called their God! There, with Israel in bondage, Jehovah, whose name is the great I AM—a name which makes all Heaven bright with ineffable Glory—did not disdain to say to Moses, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." I do not wonder that the Apostle should note it as a remarkable thing, that He was not ashamed to be called their God!

I have been looking into this text very earnestly and trying to find out exactly what was the meaning of the Holy Spirit in it, and I think I have discovered a clue in two words which it contains. First, "Therefore." "*Therefore* God is not ashamed to be called their God"—and next, "for." "*For* He has prepared for them a city." As a door hangs upon two hinges, so my golden text turns upon these two pivots—"therefore" and, "for."

I. I shall ask you to keep your Bibles open at the 11th of Hebrews, that you may see, first, "THEREFORE." Therefore God is not ashamed to be

called the God of His people. Look at the 13th verse—"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" and so on. "Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God."

To begin with, then, the Lord was not ashamed to be called His people's God *because they had faith in Him*. You read here of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob—and then Paul says, "These all died in faith." If a man believes in God, trusts Him—believes that His promise is true and that He will keep it—believes that God's command is right and, therefore, ought to be obeyed—God is never ashamed to be called that man's God. He is not the God of unbelievers, for they act contrary to His will. They set up their own will in opposition to His—many of them even doubt His existence, they deny His power, they distrust His love—and, therefore, He is *not* called their God. But when a man comes to trust God and to accept His Word, from that moment God sees in that man the works of His Grace which are very precious in His eyes, and He is not ashamed to be called that man's God.

Notice that it is said, "These all died in faith," so that they did not believe in God for a little while and then become unbelievers, but, throughout the whole of their lives, from the moment when they were called by God's Grace, they continued to believe Him—they trusted Him till they came to their graves—so that this epitaph is written over the mausoleum where they all lie asleep, "These all died in faith." Ah, my beloved Brothers and Sisters, it is very easy to say, "I believe," and to get very enthusiastic over the notion that we have believed. But so to believe as to persevere to the end—*this* is the faith which will save the soul! "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." The faith that many waters cannot drown and the fiercest fires cannot burn—the faith that plods on throughout a long and weary life—the faith that labors on, doing whatever service God appoints it. The faith that waits patiently, expecting the time when every promise of God shall be fulfilled to the letter when its hour has come—that is the faith which, if it is in a man, makes him such a man that God is not ashamed to be called his God! I put it to every one of you, have you a faith that will hold on and hold out—not a faith that starts with a fine spurt, but a faith that runs from the starting place to the goal? Some of you, I know, have believed in God these twenty, thirty, forty, or even fifty years. Just before I came to this service, I stood by the bedside of a dear Brother who is the nearest to Job of any man I ever saw, for he is covered from head to foot with blisters—I might almost say, "wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores"—and yet he is as happy as anyone among us, joyful and cheerful as he talks about the time when he shall be "with Christ, which is far better."

Oh, that is the faith we want! "These all died in faith," "therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God." He is not the God of apostates, for He has said, "If any man draws back, My soul shall have no pleasure

in him." If he has put his hand to the plow and looks back, he is not worthy of the Kingdom of God. It is the man who steadily and perseveringly, resting in his God and believing Him against all that may be said by God's foes, holds on until he sees the King in His beauty in the land which is very far off. Of such a man it may be truly said that God is not ashamed to be called his God!

Now let us come back to the Scripture. We cannot do better than keep close to it, for our text is only to be understood by the context. Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture. The locks of Scripture are only to be opened with the keys of Scripture! There is no lock in the whole Bible which God meant us to open without a key to fit it somewhere in the Bible—and we are to search for it until we find it. Now read on in the 13th verse, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises." That is to say, the things that God *promised* to them, He did not *give* them in their mortal life, and they did not always expect that He would do so. *They were a waiting people*. God loves those who are like Himself. I am not now speaking of His love of benevolence, for with that love He loved us even when we were dead in trespasses and sins, but I am speaking of the love of complacency which makes Him not ashamed to be called our God. In that sense, God loves those who are like Himself—and God is a waiting God—He is never in a hurry. How wondrous is the leisure of the Eternal!

When He is coming to help His people, He is quick, indeed! "He rode upon a cherub, and did fly, yes, He did fly upon the wings of the wind." But, oftentimes, He waits and tarries till some men count it slackness. But He does not reckon time as we do. With God, a day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. So, being a waiting God, He loves a waiting people. He loves a man who can take the promise and say, "I believe it. It may never be fulfilled to me in this life, but I do not need that it should be. I am perfectly willing that it should be fulfilled when God intends that it should be." Abraham saw Christ's day afar off, but he never saw Christ—yet he rejoiced in the promise of which he did not receive the fulfillment! Isaac did not see Christ except in a vision of the things that were long afterwards to come to pass. Jacob did not hear that joyful sound, which—

"Kings and Prophets waited for,
And sought, but never found."

But they were perfectly willing to wait and God was not ashamed to be called the God of such a waiting people!

You remember Mr. Bunyan's description of the two children, Passion and Patience? Passion would have his best things now, and he had them. But he soon spoiled them, misused them and abused them. But Patience would have his best things last and, as Bunyan very prettily says, "There is nothing to come after the last." Therefore, when Patience got his best things, they lasted on forever and forever. God, loves not the passion, but He loves the patience. "The husbandman waits for the precious fruit of

the earth and has long patience for it." And I would gladly imitate him. "My Soul, wait only upon God, for my expectation is from Him." The worldly man lives in the present, but that is a poor way of living, worthy only of the beasts that perish.

Look on the sheep and bullocks in the pasture—what kind of life is theirs? They also live in the present. If they have grass enough for today, they are perfectly satisfied. The butcher's knife has no terrors for them and neither do they, in the cold of winter, look forward to the bright days of summer. They cannot look before them and God loves not men who are like the beasts of the field! He is ashamed to be called their God. But He loves the man who gets to live in eternity, for God Himself lives there! To God there is no past, present, or future—He sees all at a single glance. And when a man comes to feel that he is not living simply in to-day which will so soon end, but that he is living in the eternity which will never end. When he is rejoicing in the Covenant, "ordered in all things, and sure," made from before the foundation of the world—when a man feels that he is living in the future as well as the present, that his vast estates are on the other side of Jordan, that his chief joy is up there where Christ sits at the right hand of God, and that his own heart has gone up there where his treasure is, for "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"—when the affection is set, not upon things below, but upon things above—that is the man whom God loves because he has learned how to live in God's atmosphere, in God's own eternity! He has risen above the beggarly elements of time and space. He is not circumscribed by Almanacs, days, months and years—his thoughts range right away from that glorious declaration, "I have loved you with an everlasting love," to those endless, dateless periods when the everlasting love of God will still be the constant delight of His people!

I see, then, why it is written that "God, is not ashamed to be called their God," because they are content to live without having received the promises, but to keep on patiently waiting with a holy, joyful confidence, till the hour of God's gracious purpose shall arrive and the promise shall be fulfilled.

Now read on in the 13th verse, and see whether this description fits yourself, dear Friend. "But having seen them afar off." So *they were a far-seeing people*. God, you know, sees everything. And He loves people who can see afar off. The gods of the heathen have eyes, but they see not. And the Psalmist says, "They that make them are like unto them." So they that worship a blind god are a blind people! But they that worship a seeing God are, themselves, made to see, for they are numbered with the pure in heart who shall see God! It is a grand thing when a man can see infinitely further than these poor eyes can carry, far beyond the range of the strongest telescope, when he can see beyond death—and see beyond the Judgment Seat and see right into Heaven and there behold the Lamb leading His glorified flock to the living fountains of waters, and the saints, with tearless eyes, forever bowing before the Throne of God and

the Lamb! God is not ashamed to be called the God of the people who can do this! God is ashamed to be called the God of you blind people, whose eyes have never been opened. But when He opens your eyes, then He becomes your God and He is not ashamed to be so called, for He it is that gives us this blessed power to see! Until spiritual sight is thus bestowed upon us, we are blind. But when God has given us sight, then He is not ashamed to acknowledge us as His children, nor is He ashamed to acknowledge that He, Himself, is our God!

I appeal to you whom I am now addressing and ask whether you can see God's promises afar off? There are some who say, "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." Yes, it may be so with the poor birds that sing here, but, for my part, I am willing to wait till I can have the one in the bush if it is in the bush that burned with fire because God was there! You may have the bird in the hand, if you will. You will soon pluck off its feathers, it will speedily die in your hand and there will come an end to it. But there are other birds which, as yet, we cannot reach, but which are really ours, and if we cannot at present grasp them, we are willing to wait God's time—because we can see that they will be in our hands in the future, we can already see them "afar off." Unhappy is the man who sees nothing but what he calls, "the main chance," or who sees nothing but that which is within a few feet of him. Wretched, indeed, is he who lives only to get money, or to gain honor—whose whole life is spent in the pursuit of personal comfort, but who never had his eyes opened enough to see the eternal things, and who never was able to set a value upon anything but what could be paid for with pounds, shillings and pence. Beloved, have you seen the promises afar off? Has the Lord opened your eyes to see eternal things? Then it is written concerning you, also, "Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God."

Now pass on to the next sentence, for every word is fruitful with meaning—"and were persuaded of them, and embraced them." *They were people who rejoiced in things unseen.* You will find that, in the Revised Version, the words, "persuaded of them," are left out, and very properly so, for there is no doubt whatever that they were not in the original, but were added by somebody who wished to explain the meaning to us. The Greek is properly rendered, "but having seen them afar off, greeted them," but I like, even better, the translation, "embraced them." It means that as for the things which are promised to us, if we are Believers, like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, we have, from afar, seen those promised things and we have welcomed them. Or, to use our Authorized Version, we have "embraced them." We have pressed them to our bosom, we have hugged them to our heart, we have loved them in our very soul, we have rejoiced in them! They have filled our spiritual nature full of music and all the bells of our being are ringing merry peals because of the blessed promises of our God. Now, when a man is of that mind, God is not ashamed to be called his God!

Let me ask you then, dear Friend—What is it that you are embracing? Is it some earthly thing? Does your heart love and cling to that which you can see, and touch and handle? Is that your chief delight? Then God is ashamed to be called your God because you are an idolater! You are worshipping some created thing. But if you can say of Christ, "He is all my salvation and all my desire," then God is not ashamed to be called your God. Remember what David said—"Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart," for God is able to give to a man his desires when all his heart is delighting in his God—and God is not ashamed to be called his God. The Lord's love is not set upon merely material objects. The infinite heart of God loves truth, righteousness, purity and everything that is holy and glorious. And if your heart does the same, God is not ashamed to be called your God. But if you do not love these things, you have neither part nor lot in God—you are a stranger to Him and, though I speak this solemn Truth of God in gentle language, I pray that it may drop like lye upon your spirit and burn its way into your very soul! What an awful thing it must be to be without God—to have no part nor lot in Him—never to be able to say, "My God, my Father," but only to speak of Him as a God—an unknown God, another man's God, but no God to you! May it not be so with you, my Friends! If you can say that you have seen the promises from afar and have, by faith, embraced them, then God is not ashamed to be called your God.

Pass on to the next sentence—"and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." *They acknowledged that they were not at home here*. Abraham never built a house! Isaac never lived anywhere but in a tent and, though Jacob tried to dwell in a settled habitation, he got into trouble through it and he was bound, still, to be a tent-dweller. The reason why they lived in tents was because they wanted to show to all around them that they did not belong to that country. There were great cities with walls which, as men said, reached to Heaven, but they did not go to dwell in those cities. You remember that Lot did, yet he was glad enough to get out again—"saved, yet so as by fire." But Abraham, Isaac and Jacob kept away from other men, for they were commanded to dwell alone and not to be numbered among the nations. Nor were they—they kept themselves apart from other people as strangers and sojourners here below, so, for that very reason, God is not ashamed to be called their God!

Remember how David said to the Lord, "I am a stranger with You, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were." That is a very amazing expression—"a stranger with You"—blessed be God, not "a stranger *to* You," but, "a stranger *with* You." That is to say, God is a stranger here—it is His own world and He made it, but when Christ, who is the Son of God, and the Creator of the world, came into it, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." And they soon made Him feel that the only treatment which He would receive at their hands was this—"This is the Heir. Come, let us kill Him, that the inheritance may be ours." There was no man

who ever lived who was a truer Man than was Christ the Lord. But there was never a Man who was more unlike the rest of men. He was a homely Man, a home-loving Man to the last degree, yet He was never at home. This world was not His rest. He had nowhere to lay His head and what was true, naturally, was also true spiritually. This world offered Christ no rest whatever.

Now, dear Friends, how is it with us? Do we belong to this world, or to the unseen? How do you feel about this matter? Do you feel at home here? I think that we are often compelled to cry with the Psalmist, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" We wish to do good to others as far as we can. We are men of peace, but when we speak, they are for war and we realize the truth of our Lord's words, "A man's foes shall be they of his own household." The more a man comes right straight out for God, the more opposition he is sure to meet with! Be half-asleep and nobody will say much against you. But wake up and be active for God and for His Christ and you will soon discover that the seed of the serpent still has the serpent's venom in it—and it hates the Seed of the woman as much as it ever did! It must be so and, therefore, always feel that you are only a stranger here and that your business is to go through this world as a traveler passes through a foreign country. He does not speak the language of the people. He does not follow their customs. He is not one of the citizens of the land. He is just a temporary dweller here below and he is on his journey home. If that is the kind of man you are, God is not ashamed to be called your God.

But He is not the God of the earthworms that only want to burrow down into the soil. He is not the God of those who build their nests and say, "Here would we live forever." He is not the God of the man who can say, "Give me a knife and fork, and plenty to eat and drink. Give me suitable clothes to wear in the day and a nice soft bed to sleep on at night. Give me wealth, give me fame—that is all I need—and I will let Heaven go to anyone who wants it!" Jehovah is not the God of Esau, who sells his birthright for a mess of pottage, but He is the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob who have a heritage that they cannot see, and who count the land in which they dwell to be a place of strangers and of sojourners—and they think of themselves as only strangers and sojourners in it.

Now read on a little further. "For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country." The word translated, "country," might, I think be better rendered, "fatherland." "They who say that they are strangers here declare plainly that they seek a fatherland." The word is sometimes translated, "their own country." "A Prophet is not without honor, save in his own country." It is the same word here in the Greek. *It signifies that they sought their own country—their fatherland.* Therefore God, who is the Father of all His people, and whose Heaven is their fatherland, is not ashamed to be called their God. Now, dear Friends, are

you seeking a fatherland? I put the question to every hearer here—Are *you* looking for a fatherland? Sir Walter Scott wrote—

"Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,
Who never to himself has said,
'This is my own, my native land'?
Whose heart has ne'er within him burned,
As home his footsteps he has turned
From wandering on a foreign strand?"

So said the patriot poet and we have said it, too, for we are patriots! But yet I venture to say that this is not my home, this is not my fatherland—

"I'm but a stranger here!
Heaven is my home."

My fatherland lies out of sight, beyond the everlasting hills, where God dwells and where Christ sits at the right hand of the Father. Now, the men who, by Grace, have been brought to say this, "We are out of our own country, we are seeking a fatherland," these are the people of whom it is written, "Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God."

Paul goes on to say, "And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from where they came, they might have had opportunity to have returned." Brothers and Sisters, this is another characteristic of Believers—*we have left the world as our home, and joy, and comfort, to seek a better country, but we may go back if we like*. There is no compulsion to keep a man a Christian but the compulsion of love. He who is enlisted in the army of Christ may desert if he pleases, but the blessed Grace of God will hold us so that we shall do no such thing! We have plenty of opportunities to return. Oh, how many invite us to turn back! I know how they beckon some of you who have lately come out on the Lord's side. Sometimes it is a female voice that would charm you and there is a great fascination about it, and you have to mind what you are doing lest you become unequally yoked together. Sometimes it is the voice of the world promising you wealth—offering you a better situation, perhaps, if you will go back. But, like Moses, you esteem "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." You have plenty of opportunities to return. There are back entrances to Satan's Kingdom—he does not require you to come in at the front door—he lets you sneak in, again, by the back gate. If you want to go into slavery, again, there are many opportunities of returning! But if you are made by Christ to be, in this respect, like God, immutable, so that you say, "I cannot turn. I cannot change. I must be what Christ has made me. I must stand fast for truth and for holiness, and stand fast as long as I live, so help me, my God"—if you are able to talk like that, then God is not ashamed to be called your God! Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, you can get back to the old country whenever you like. But they never will go back—the deep dividing river rolls between them and that land, even as, today, there rolls between some of us and the world the stream in which we have been buried with Christ and, by God's Grace, we shall never cross it again! And, because of that holy determination, God is not ashamed to be called our God.

I finish up my remarks upon the word, "therefore," which is very full of matter, by noticing how the Apostle says, "But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly." That is to say, *instead of going back, we are pressing forward towards heavenly things*. "God is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." "The Father seeks such to worship Him." That is, those who are *spiritual*, who are seeking after heavenly things with all their heart. These are they whom God loves, for God is spiritual. God is heavenly and when He has made us spiritual and made us pant after heavenly things, then He is not ashamed to be called our God.

I have put these points before you as briefly as I could, wishing every moment to be examining myself, and asking you to examine yourselves. Have you a life within you which makes you pant and pine after heavenly things? Whatever you have in this world, do you hold it with a loose hand? Do you feel that it is not your real riches—it is not your true treasure? You know that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were all rich men. God blessed them and gave them a great increase to all that they had, but, still, they did not live simply to gather riches! They did not make that their chief delight. If you had asked them, they would have told you that they were inheritors of a mysterious Covenant by which God had bound Himself to be their God, and the God of their seed. And in that Covenant was included the promise that Christ Himself should come out of their loins—and for Him they waited—He was the hope of their spirit. Now, dear Friends, if that is the case with you, also, you can understand the meaning of my text, "Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God."

II. I must give but a few minutes to the second part of the text, yet it needs a good deal of thought, for it says, "for He has prepared a city for them." The second pivot word is, "for."

Now go back again to the text in Exodus, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Yet Paul says, "These all died," and we know that our Lord said to the Sadducees, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Is He not ashamed to be called the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, seeing that they all died? No, because they are not dead, though they died, "for He has prepared for them a city." These men, though they *lived and died, and passed out of the world without having received the heritage, are not dead!* There is the glory of the matter. When they lay a-dying, the devil might have come and said to them, "Now, what have you got by your Covenant with God? You left father, mother and everything that you had, and went and lived the separated life—and now you are dying out here—what have you got? Nothing but some little holes in the Cave of Machpelah into which they will push your bodies! That is all that you have!"

Oh, but the devil does not know! Or if he does, he is a liar, for they gained *everything* by that life of faith, for they still live and God has prepared a city for them. And now they have entered that city! Abraham,

Isaac and Jacob are at the very head of the celestial company, for our Lord said, "Many shall come from the east, and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven." And, by-and-by, Machpelah shall yield up her dead and Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Jacob shall live, again, in the fullest sense, for their bodies as well as their souls shall live again! And Joseph's bones, which he would not allow to lie in Egypt—for he would not let the Egyptians have a scrap of him—shall live, and thus, in their flesh, shall they see God and shall rejoice before Him. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called the God of these people who all died in faith because they are still living—and they shall continue to live forever and ever!

Somebody may, perhaps, say that these people did not receive the promises. Well, they did not *literally* receive the fulfillment of them. They did not see Christ. They did not witness the descent of the Holy Spirit. They did not hear the Gospel preached. They did not see those wonders that they looked for—so is not God ashamed to be called the God of people who, after all, did not receive the promises? No, because "He has prepared for them a city." *They have received the promises now* and they shall receive them yet more and more! God will yet cause the Believer's life to be all blessing. Do not be afraid of the consequences of trusting in Christ—you may have the rough side of the road, here, but what we sang, just now, is quite true—

"Afflictions may press me, they cannot destroy,
One glimpse of His love turns them all into joy!
And the bitterest tears, if He smiles but on them,
Like dew in the sunshine, grow diamond and gem!
Let doubt, then, and danger my progress oppose—
They only make Heaven more sweet at the close.
Come joy or come sorrow, whate'er may befall,
An hour with my God will make up for them all!"

If God gave to His children gall and wormwood to drink here—yes, if they never had anything but aches and pains from the moment of their conversion till they died—yet they would have the best of the bargain, after all, for there is an eternity of bliss in the Heaven which is prepared for them!

But, further, these people were a sort of gypsies, always moving about and living in tents, different from everybody else. Yes, *they were strangers among the people where they dwelt.* And men often say of us, now, that we cannot be content to go on as other people do. Those Patriarchs were strangers, odd folk, peculiar people. Is not God ashamed to be called their God? No, because they have now gone where they are all right, for their manners and customs are exactly suitable to the place. A very dear old woman, whom I visited when she was dying, said to me, "One thing comforts me, Sir, I do not think that God will ever send me among the wicked, for I never could get on in their company. The best times I have ever had were when I could sit with a few of the Lord's people and hear them talk about Him. And though I could not always be

sure that I was, myself, a Christian, yet I was very much like them and I was very happy when I was with them. I think I shall go to my own company, Sir." Yes, dear Soul, and so she did! And if we are strangers here, we are going to that company where we shall not be strangers! They will understand our language when once we get across the river into the King's own country. "Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God" because they speak the language which He speaks, the language of His own courts—and He is not ashamed to say, "These are My people, and I acknowledge them before you all."

Notice, yet again, that *these people were seekers and desirers all their lives.* "They seek a country." "They desire a better country." Is this a right state of heart for a Christian—to always be seeking and always desiring? Well, Brothers and Sisters, that is the state in which I often am and I wish, still, to stay in that condition—always seeking, always desiring. Whenever God gives me any spiritual blessing, I always seek more. And if He gives me more, I seek for still more! And if He gives me my heart's desire, I pray Him to enlarge my heart that I may desire some greater gift. For, in spiritual things, we may be as covetous as we like! We may say, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended. 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." And God is not ashamed to be called the God of those who are thus seeking and desiring because He has laid up for them all that they seek! And He has prepared for them all that they desire! I would be ashamed to set a poor person desiring if I could not gratify the desire. I would be ashamed to set a man seeking if I knew that he could not get what he sought after. But because God has prepared a city for these seekers and desirers, He is not ashamed to be called their God!

As I stood, this evening, by the bedside of the dear Brother whom I mentioned to you a little while ago, I could not help saying, "Here is a poor soul covered with boils and blisters, but God is not ashamed to be called his God." And there may be a child of God who is very poor, indeed, with hardly sufficient garments to cover him, but God is not ashamed to be called his God, either. Perhaps his own brother is ashamed to be called his brother. I have even known cases where men have been so wicked as to be ashamed of their own parents because they were not so well off as themselves. But God is never ashamed of His poor people. Yes, and if God's people are persecuted, and ill-used. If they are covered with mud from head to foot, or if they are cast into prison, God is not ashamed to be called their God. In those days when God permitted His people to be fastened up to the cross, or when others were taken to the stake and burnt, and everybody hissed at them, and cast out their

name as evil, and said that they were the offscouring of all things—God was not ashamed to be called their God!

I am almost ashamed to say what I am going to say. I really feel my very heart blush that I should have to say it. I have known some professors who have been ashamed to call God their God! Is it not strange that the glorious God of Heaven and earth should call a worm His own, and take mean wretches such as we are, and say, "I am not ashamed to be called their God," and yet that some of these creatures should be so miserably cowardly that they are ashamed to be called the people of God? Oh, write His name on your foreheads! Never be ashamed of it! Ashamed of God? Ashamed of Jesus? Ashamed of the Truth? Ashamed of righteousness? I do not wonder that there is such a text as this—"The fearful"—that is the cowardly—"and unbelieving shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

If you really do love the Lord, come out and show yourself on His side! And if He is not ashamed of you and if your prayer is, "Lord, remember me when you come into Your Kingdom," acknowledge Him as your Lord and Savior now! You who are not members of any Christian Church—you who have believed in Christ, or think you have—and yet have never confessed Him. You who are hiding like rats behind the wall—come out and confess Christ! What are you doing? How can you be soldiers of the Cross and followers of the Lamb if you fear to acknowledge His cause and blush to speak His name? Come out of your hiding places! May God the Holy Spirit draw or drive you out at once! If anything could do it, surely, it should be such a blessed fact as this—that you are numbered among those of whom it is said that "God is not ashamed to be called their God."

God bless you, dear Friends, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—854, 847, 848.

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

"JESUS ONLY" —A COMMUNION MEDITATION NO. 2634

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 6, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 2, 1857.

"Jesus only."
Mark 9:8.

THIS was the last sight the disciples had upon the mountain and it seems to me to have been the best. They saw "Jesus only." Jesus was often with His people. He was usually with His disciples, but they did not often notice Him as "Jesus only." They probably did so, in this case, because He had been accompanied by two great and notable personages, who, all of a sudden, withdrew themselves and then, "they saw no man any more, save Jesus only." The disciples had seen their Lord transfigured and attended by Moses and Elijah, representatives of the Law and the Prophets. Suddenly, Moses and Elijah vanished from their sight and then, "they saw no man any more, save Jesus only."

Beloved, we shall never see "Jesus only," till, like the disciples, we have seen Moses and Elijah, too! Never was there an eye which saw "Jesus only," until it had first seen Moses. We must first pass under the rigors of Sinai and the terrors of the Law of God—we must first look upon the awful countenance of that dread Lawgiver, whose words are thunder, and whose speech is fire. We must be made to tremble beneath the denunciations of the Divine Law and stand abashed, astonished and amazed while the thunders of the wrath of God roll over our heads. We must see Moses first, or else we shall never see "Jesus only." We shall be trusting in our own self-righteousness, putting something *with* Christ—making it Christ and *self*—until Moses comes in and breaks self-righteousness into shivers, and stains self with the filth and mire of the streets. We must have the breaking down by Moses—the smashing hand, the terrible strife that the Law of God brings into the conscience—or else we shall never know the sweetness of relying wholly upon Jesus and placing our confidence in Him alone.

And mark you, Beloved, in another sense, we shall never see "Jesus only" till we understand something about the Prophets. We must see Elijah, or else we shall not see "Jesus only." There are some men who have not yet seen Elijah—they do not understand the prophecies. They think they perceive in the future a great progress of civilization and they expect to see the spread of the Gospel. They expect to hear of great agencies employed, of multitudes of ministers going forth to preach the Word of God and of a gradual conversion of the world to the religion of Christ. But he who understands the Prophets and has seen Elijah, believes not

in the immediate conversion of the world, nor in universal peace—he believes in "Jesus only." He expects that Jesus will first come and, to him, the great hope of the future is the coming of the Son of Man. "I know," he says, "that God shall overturn, and overturn, and overturn, until He shall come whose right it is to reign. I know that empires shall totter to their bases and that the world shall reel to and fro in terror and alarm until He shall appear whose name is Melchisedec, the King of Righteousness and the King of Peace, who shall set His hand upon the floods and His empire upon the rivers—and shall reign 'from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.'" We shall not see "Jesus only," as the world's great Deliverer, as the sinners' one Redeemer, as the earth's bright Sun, as well as her Morning Star until we have studied the prophecies and seen how they all speak concerning Jesus, even of Him who is yet to come! We shall see Moses and Elijah first—and when we have seen them, their united testimony will lead us to see "Jesus only."

And now, beloved child of God, we are about to approach the Lord's Table. I shall only utter a few thoughts which may help you in your meditations there. When we come to the Communion Table, we are to think of "Jesus only." We have no business with anything, tonight, except "Jesus only." We are to forget that we have a wife and children, that we have a house or a barn, that we have fields or a shop. We are not to remember anything about these things, but to say, as far as we can—

"Far from my thoughts, vain world, be gone!
Leave my religious hours alone.
Gladly would my eyes my Savior see—
I wait a visit, Lord, from Thee.
My heart grows warm with holy fire,
And kindles with a pure desire.
Come, my dear Jesus, from above,
And feed my soul with heavenly love."

By God's Grace, tonight, you have nothing to do with any other set of people under Heaven. Remember that you are coming to the Lord's Table simply as God's saints. There are many religious controversies which shake the world, but you have nothing to do with them tonight. When you come to the Lord's Table, you have nothing to do with the question whether Baptism is by immersion or by sprinkling, and nothing to do with the question whether church government should be Episcopal or Presbyterian. You have nothing to do with what anybody else in the whole world believes. Men may be Arminians and you may combat their errors in other places, but not here. You have nothing to think of, tonight, except these two things—you, a sinner, loved by a gracious Savior. Try, if you can, to fix your thoughts on these facts—"I was lost, perishing, and ruined through my own sins but, glory be to God, the all-sufficient Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ has set me free and made me an heir of Heaven!" Oh, make "Jesus only" the subject of your thought and your trust and, at this Table, cast aside everything else and come, just as you are, to Him—and then it will be a precious Lord's Supper to you, indeed!

I am going to speak to you about "Jesus only" and to show you that it must be "*Jesus only" for your justification.* It must be "*Jesus only" for your sanctification.* It must be "*Jesus only" for your object in life* and it must be "*Jesus only" for your hope of Heaven.*

I. First, it must be "JESUS ONLY" FOR YOUR JUSTIFICATION.

We were born fools and we shall continue fools till we get to Heaven—and one of the foolish things that will always be sprouting out of us is our wanting to put something else with Christ in the matter of our justification. You tell me you never do that, but I am sure you do. You may be the most enlightened and intelligent saint, but, unconsciously to yourself, you will be very often joining something to Christ and setting up an antichrist in your soul. How often does even the most orthodox preacher give utterance to sentiments which seem to militate against the great Truth of God that Christ Jesus is our only justifying righteousness! It is a hard thing to stick fast by this great fundamental Truth—"Jesus only" as the rock and foundation of our salvation. Remember, Christian, that the meritorious cause of your salvation is not in the least degree dependent upon yourself—it is dependent on "Jesus only." Your responsibility is now merged in the Divine responsibility of Christ on your behalf. The Lord Jesus has covenanted for you that—

"He will present your soul,
Unblemished and complete
Before the glory of His face,
With joys divinely great."

O Beloved, always hang your confidence where it ought to hang—on "Jesus only!" And when you find yourself full of sin and wickedness, grieve over it, but do not think that the ground of your hope is one whit the less firm for all that! When sin prevails and guilt rises, remember that as *your* righteousness cannot make Christ's righteousness any better, so your sin cannot make it any worse—and, clothed in His righteousness, though black with sin, you may, with deep repentance, yet with holy faith, cry—

"When from the dust of death I rise,
To take my mansion in the skies,
Even then shall this be all my plea,
'Jesus has lived and died for me.'
Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who anything to my charge shall lay,
While through Christ's blood absolved I am,
From sin's tremendous curse and shame?"

And, then, will you please remember that *all your good works do not make you any safer?* If you were to die the moment you believed and never did a good work at all, you would be as sure of Heaven as you would be if you lived to love and serve your Maker with all your soul and all your might! Remember that the saint who lives from day to day, devoting all to Christ, spending and being spent in His Master's service, has more happiness than the saint who is not so full of love, but he is not a whit more secure. Be active and you will be happy—but do not be active in order to be safe! The heir of Heaven is no more secure when he is abundant in good works and diligent in the service of God, so far as his ultimate salvation is concerned, than when he is allowed to backslide and to become faint and weak in the cause of God, for our security lies not in anything that we do, or do not do—it lies only in the Covenant of Free and Sovereign Grace. And the only basis of our salvation is Christ who died for us, "yes, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us."

I want you also to remember that *all your sufferings do not make you any safer*. They make you better, by God's Grace, but they do not make you any more sure of Heaven. They are not meritorious afflictions! Persons often misjudge concerning their troubles—they think that they are punishments for sin. Let the child of God remember that God *never* punishes His children for sin! He *chastises* them for it, but never with the penal punishment of a lawgiver! God's people were punished, once and for all, in the Person of their Scapegoat and Surety, Jesus Christ—and God will never punish twice for the same offense. The chastisements of God's Providence are the fatherly acts of His love—they are not the wrathful acts of His justice! As the righteous Judge, God cannot punish either you or me, if we are believers in Jesus. As holding the scepter of righteousness, He cannot unsheathe the sword against a Believer! He has punished our sins upon the Lord Jesus—the whole of the vials of His wrath were emptied on Christ's head—and they cannot now come on yours or mine. But, as a Father, God uses the rod. As a loving and tender Father, He uses chastisements and, as a kind Physician, He gives us bitter medicines to take.

But, for your own sake, and for Christ's sake, dear Brothers and Sisters, do not get to mingling your own sufferings with the Savior's. Remember, if you suffered ever so much, all your sufferings would not be any atonement for your sins, nor even a punishment for them unless you are one of those who are *not redeemed* and, therefore, bear the penalty of your own sin and perish everlastingly! But, as a child of God, as a redeemed and elect vessel of mercy, your sufferings are not penal and, suffer or not suffer, the Atonement of Christ is enough for you—you, by God's Grace, can say, "Jesus only is the ground of my justification. I will rest there and nowhere else."

And now I will ask you, Beloved, do you not frequently find when you have been in a very good frame of mind, when you have been praying well at the Prayer Meeting and helping the poor, when the minister has patted you on the back and said what a good fellow you were, and the deacons have looked lovingly at you and said you were a very useful man, and when you have got on well at Sunday school, and have had a letter from Mary James, telling you that she was converted through your teaching—do you not find that you have gone home and you do not know how it was, but, in a day or two, you got so dull and low, you could not tell what was the matter with you? Have you ever thought what was the cause of it? You have lost all your hope and confidence and you have been obliged to come, as a guilty sinner, to the footstool of Christ's mercy and take His love and blood to be your only trust? Do you know why it was you were so low in spirit?

It was for this reason. Unconsciously to yourself, you had been leaning a little on your own good works! You had said to yourself, "Well, now, I really begin to think I am sure of Heaven. Look, are not these things the fruits of the Spirit? Oh, may I not rejoice with confidence? Am I not secure? Surely, now I am safe! How I prayed the other day! What a blessed season I had in private prayer the other evening! Now I know I can trust Christ." Stop, my Friend! You are really saying, "*I know I can now trust in myself*," for that is the English of it! And then you get into a heavy, dull

frame of mind for a long time afterwards, only to make you spell out those two words, "Jesus only." And He will make you spell them out until you are bound to say, every day, by a constraint upon your heart and conscience, that it must be there, and there, alone, that you can put your confidence and trust!

That is the first point—"Jesus only" for our justification.

II. Next, it must be "JESUS ONLY" TO SANCTITY US.

Some professors will not say so. "We are justified by God," they say, "but we have to sanctify ourselves." They believe in what they call *progressive sanctification*. Is that Scriptural or not? Well, I have always thought that sanctification is *continual*, but I am not sure that it is progressive. Many divines have written it down as a settled truth, that God's people are sanctified progressively and that, the longer they are here, the more and more sanctified they get. Did any of them ever stop and ask an old Believer whether he found it so? I have asked many and I have heard a venerable saint, whose hairs are silvered over with gray, say, "I think my heart is as bad, now, as ever it was. And I am sure if it is not actually so, I think it is, and it plagues me more than it ever did." It has been the custom to pray God to protect young men in the slippery paths of youth. Why, the paths of old age are quite as slippery! They are *all* slippery paths—all the way to Heaven! The old nature still remains in us, unchanged and unchangeable, and there will have to be a fight between the new nature and the old nature, between the house of David and the house of Saul until, at last, the house of David shall overcome and we shall get clean free from sin. Beloved, do not be looking, with regard to your sanctification, for any great progress! Expect it to be continual every day, but do not expect that your old nature will get holier every day—and in your sanctification take this for your motto, "Jesus only."

If you cannot see Christ in your prayers, and in your good works, away with them! Your good works are sins unless Christ Jesus lies in them! Unless *through* Him, and *for* Him, and *by* Him, you perform your works, your best works are bad works! Remember, it is not the outward fashion of the work, it is the inward spirit of it that makes it good. Therefore, it is not the mere outward appearance of sanctification, it is the inward spirit of it that makes it *true sanctification*. Desire, then, if you desire and pray for sanctification, not after the virtues of a Paul, or after the glories of an Evangelist, or the magnificent excellences of some of God's saints—but desire, first and last, after the Character of Jesus, in all its sublimity and perfection! And pray for the Spirit of Jesus to sanctify you, for, "Jesus only" is enough in sanctification, as the pattern to which you are to attain, and as the One who, by His Spirit, shall make you conformable unto Himself.

Keep your eyes on your Savior, as much in your good works as in your bad ones. After your prayers, look to the Cross, as well as after your sins. After the Lord's Supper, look to the Cross, as well as after a fall. Look to the Savior as much in almsgiving, as much in Bible reading, as much in preaching, as much as you ever do in looking to Him for justification, for, unless you do, your sins will unman you, yet, and bring you down, again, with some sad fall to make you learn the truth of this motto, "Jesus only."

III. Now, dear Friends, thirdly, I will speak of "JESUS ONLY" AS THE OBJECT OF OUR LIVES.

It was my privilege, this morning, to address a congregation, most of you being present, from the text, [Sermon #144, Volume 3—*Waiting Only Upon God*—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org] "My soul, wait you only upon God." Now, if you please, just extract the marrow out of the morning's discourse and put that into the third head. Let "Jesus only" be the object of your life. Oh, I pray the Holy Spirit so to enter into our hearts, minds, consciences, judgments and affections, that every idolatrous love—all affection towards everything but Christ—may be cast out of all the Lord's family and that they may be brought to set Jesus upon the throne of their hearts, and to utterly crush every rival! O Brothers and Sisters, after all, we do not love Jesus Christ much! Oh, if we saw the ocean of Christ's love running towards us, and the little stream of our love running towards Him, what a shocking contrast it would be on our part! There is His love—I cannot see across it! It is a sea without a shore! The wings of imagination flag with fatigue before they can cross that shoreless sea! There is His love—I cannot fathom it! The plumb line fails. But, oh, here is our love—it is a little stream that is almost dry! The heat of worldly joys will sometimes absorb it till the stones stand in the bed of its little brook, unwashed and dry. Oh, it is so small that sometimes it takes an hour to scoop up so much as a cupful of it to give to the Lord's poor family! It will take us, perhaps, a week to get even a consciousness that we love Christ—and we will be singing for hours together—

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

That is because we have so little love—otherwise we would know whether we did love Him or not. If we loved Him more, there would be no doubt about it! But we love Him so little that we have reason to cry, "O Jesus, fill our hearts with Your love! Come and enter our souls and reign there forevermore!" I beseech you, dear Friends, do not be content with the poor little paltry love you already have. Ask Him who gave you that little which you have, to give you a thousand times more! Do not sing that hymn—

"Had I ten thousand tongues, they all
Should join the harmony."

Do not wish for so many tongues. Do not say—

"Had I ten thousand hearts, dear Lord,
I'd give them all to You."

Try and give Him the one you have—that will be enough for you. Ask that your whole heart may be offered on the altar, that your whole tongue may be dedicated to God and that your body, soul and spirit may be a whole burnt-offering, holy and acceptable unto God, presented to Him as your reasonable service. "Jesus only." Put that on your banner and go on fighting for "Jesus only." Strive not for sect or party. Strive not for self or family. Strive not for your own aggrandizement or wealth, but sanctify all you do, sacred or secular, with this motto, "I do it for Jesus only."

IV. And then, Beloved, to conclude—"JESUS ONLY" IS OUR ONE HOPE OF HEAVEN.

What do I hope to have when I die? I may answer, in the words of my text, "Jesus only." "Whom have I in Heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside You." Be not beguiled with the poet's visionary Heaven—he tells you of a Heaven of the intellect, a Heaven of imagination. Be not carried away, like children, by any such fictitious paradise! The Heaven of your heart, and the only Heaven that can content it, is "Jesus only." To lie in His embrace, to be pressed to His bosom, to feel the kisses of His lips, to drink the wine of His eternal love, to be forever steeped in the ocean of His Grace, to know His heart, to behold His Countenance, to admire His beauties and to be swallowed up in His Glory is the highest ambition of the Believer! There is nothing in Heaven that is equal to Christ! There is no flower in all the gardens of Paradise that blooms so sweetly as the Rose of Sharon! There is not a gem with which the crowns of the glorified are now adorned that glistens one half so gloriously as the eye of Christ! There is not a splendor in the realms of Paradise, however God-like and Divine, that is one half so majestic as that head of His, the locks whereof are bushy and black as a raven's. Well may we sing—

"When shall I see Your smiling face,
That face which often I have seen?
Arise, you Sun of Righteousness,
Scatter the clouds that intervene."

And—

"Oh when, you city of my God,
Shall I, your courts ascend,
Where congregations never break up,
And Sabbaths have no end?"

Oh, when shall I behold my Savior and, wrapped in His embrace, be forever blest? So "Jesus only" is our one hope of Heaven!

Now, poor Christian, you have this precious treasure, have you not? I was wondering how a man would feel if he could say that he had nothing in the world but "Jesus only." You do not know, and I do not know. You have a pretty fair income now—you are tolerably well off and you have good strong limbs. You can work and earn your own living. But now suppose a case. Suppose there is a man somewhere on the face of the earth who can say, "There, now, I have not a rag nor a crust. I have not in the whole world so much as would fetch a solitary half-farthing. I have no health, I am as sick as I can be. I have no fame—foul slanders have blasted my character. I have no friends. I have buried the last of my family. I have no earthly hopes, no prospects. All that I have is 'Jesus only!'" Now, I can imagine, no, I can express my firm belief that a consciousness of the possession of Jesus would have such an overcoming effect upon the heart of this poor beggar that he would forget his poverty, forget his nakedness, forget his lack of kindred and forget his hopelessness! This one thought would swallow up all his misery—"I have Christ! How, then, can I be poor when I have Him?"

But, now, there is another case which you need *not* suppose. Perhaps such a man is here tonight. You have a fortune! Or you have money enough for your needs. You have a wife and children. You have houses,

lands, a name, honor and reputation. You seem to have everything! What is there that you have not? I go into your pantry—it is well-stocked. I go into your parlor—it is well-furnished. I go into your treasury and see your coffers—there is abundance—your business yards and warehouses are filled with goods. The whole place is busy, from the highest room to the lowest, and a stream of wealth is pouring in upon you every day. You have everything that heart can wish—except Christ. Now, I cannot, by any flight of imagination, think of you as a happy man! I did not need to stretch my thoughts to think of that poor penniless beggar as being happy, after all, but I cannot imagine that if you know what it is to be without Christ, you can be a happy man. Just think a moment what will happen to you if you continue living as you now are. You will die and your soul will be driven into Hell! Within a little while, your riches will "take to themselves wings and fly away." Your family may die, or if they do not, you will die—you cannot take your money with you. If you are buried in a gold coffin, it will not enrich you! All your lands will belong to another. Somebody else's eyes must see your fair acres. Somebody else's hands shall pluck the fruit from your trees. Think of this and then remember that all this while you will be in Hell—in torments! I cannot think of you as a happy man.

Go home and take your wine—and see damnation in its dregs! Go home and walk over your farm and see death in its clods, and damnation in its meadows! Go home to your house and climb its topmost story and look abroad upon your estates and see the autumn coming on—and remember that "we do all fade as a leaf" and that, if not in Christ, our transgressions, like the wind, shall carry us away! Go home and let the thoughts of eternal fire mingle with all you have! You have all things but Christ. Go, then, and stir up in your most joyous pleasures the prospect of eternal wrath! And if you can be happy after that, you must not be men! You must be brute beasts.

But if you can say, "Jesus," do not be afraid to say, "Jesus only." If you have a prospect of losing all, gladly give it up for Christ. If you are afraid you should not have enough, just be sure of this—that if you have Jesus, you have enough! And remember, if the worst should come to the worst and you were locked up in prison without a bed to lie on, or a crust to eat—if you had Jesus with you, you might be as happy as an angel in your prison! But if you had all the wealth of India, you might be as wretched as a devil if you had not Christ with you. Oh, treasure up the text and make it true of yourself, "Jesus only!"

And you, poor Souls, who are panting to know the way to Heaven, remember, there is only one ladder that can ever take you there. The rungs of it are made by Sovereign Grace. That ladder is called Jesus. The foot rests on the earth, in His humanity. The top leans in Heaven, on His Godhead. Poor Sinner, run up the rungs! Do you think you are so heavy that you will break the them? Oh, no! There have been some stout old sinners up that ladder before now! Many a guilty one has run up it with enough weight of sin upon his back to have crushed the heavens into Hell if God had put their sin there! But the ladder has never been broken, yet, and it never will be! Up with you, Sinner! If your feet are ever so black, they will not soil the ladder. Run up with all your sin, and care,

and woe! Come to the Lord Jesus and He will not cast you away, for He has said, "He that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HEBREWS 11.

This is a very familiar chapter, but it is none the less precious. It is the roll of the heroes of faith. Here you have a list of the men who believed in God and who, therefore, did great things.

Verses 1, 2. *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report.* "The elders"—that is, those who lived in the ancient times—worked wondrous works by faith, and the "report" of them still encourages others to try to do likewise.

3. *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.* That is one of the earliest lessons of faith. We do not discover the secrets of Creation by mere reason, or the teachings of science—it is only by Divine Revelation that the marvelous story can reach us. Faith accepts the Inspired declaration that God made all things, and that the things that are seen were made out of things that are not seen, so that, after all, the foundation of everything is that which is not seen. The visible is but a dream. The things which are round about us are the transient things that shall all pass away. The things that are not seen are eternal and shall abide forever. The things which are seen were made out of the invisible, not out of things which are seen.

4. *By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he, being dead, yet speaks.* Paul begins his list of heroes of faith with Abel. And you will notice that faith works differently in each one of these mighty men. It is the same living principle in all of them, but they are different men and their faith is seen in very different circumstances. Faith is able to work in all manner of ways—it is good at everything. There is nothing that God calls us to do but faith can enable us to accomplish it. In Abel's case, we see that faith is grand at worshipping. Faith brings a right sacrifice—brings it in the right way and speaks even after she is dead, for the blood of Abel cried out of the ground. Oh, that all of us might so live that, even out of our graves, there might come a voice speaking for God!

5, 6. *By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for He that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.* See, here, how faith has learned the secret art of pleasing God. God is the thrice-Holy One. He is a jealous God and a very little sin greatly provokes Him. But faith knows how to please Him. I do not wonder that Enoch did not die—it was a less thing to be translated to Heaven than it was to please God! To live for 300 years in constant communion with God, as he did, to be always pleasing God, was a mighty triumph of faith! May God grant that

during all the years that we live, whether they are few or many, we may so live as always to please Him! "But without faith it is impossible to please Him."

7. *By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his home; by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.* Fear and faith may sometimes dwell together. There is a holy, humble fear that perfect love never casts out, but entertains and cherishes—this is the kind of fear that Noah possessed. "Being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, he prepared an ark." Noah was a practical life-saver—an ark-builder. And so he became the second father of the human race—a sort of new Adam—and that simply by his faith! Oh, what is there that is impossible to the man who believes in God? "All things are possible to him that believes."

8. *By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should layer receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing where he went.* He was self-exiled from his home—a wanderer upon the face of the earth. Yet, when called of God, it mattered not to him where he was bid go! He seemed to say, "Appoint my way, great God. It is for me not to ask the reason why, but to obey Your command"

9-11. *By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God. Through faith, also, Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.* So that faith made the barren woman to keep house and to be a joyful mother! Faith has caused our spiritual barrenness to bring forth abundantly. Oh, that some barren soul here might catch the blessed influences of faith and begin at once to bear fruit for God!

12. *Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.* "Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead." That "one" was Isaac, for he was given up to die and, apparently, nothing could save him from death. Yet God did save him, and from him there sprang "so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable."

13. *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.* "These all"—Paul means Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Jacob "died in faith." They "embraced" the promises—threw their arms round them—hugged them to their hearts—embraced them as those who dearly loved them!

14, 15. *For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from where they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.* If they were seeking a country, might they not have gone back to their own country from where they came out? No. True Believers know nothing about going back! We are bound to go forward to the better land that is before us! Almighty Grace will not permit the people of God to turn aside

and find their rest anywhere else. We are bound for the Kingdom of God and, by the Grace of God, we shall not rest until we enter it, to go no more out forever.

16-19. *But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He has prepared for them a city. By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and be that had received the promises offered up his only-begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall your seed he called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure.* See how faith consecrates natural affection! See also how faith laughs at impossibilities. Abraham expects that God will raise his son from the dead, or do something equally amazing, so that the promise He had given shall be fulfilled. It was not Abraham's business to keep God's promise for Him. It was God's business to do that for Himself and He did it. You remember how Rebecca tried to make God's promise come true for Jacob, and what a mess she made by her plotting and scheming! When we give our attention to keeping God's precepts and leave Him to fulfill His own promises, all will be well. It was Abraham's part to offer up his son—it was God's part to fulfill the promise to his seed according to the Covenant which He had made.

20. *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.* Looking into the future, although he was blind. Poor old man, lying upon his bed, with his eyes so dim that he could not tell one of his sons from another, he could yet look into the future and bless his sons "concerning things to come." Oh, what sharp eyes faith has! Even when the eyes of bodily vision have become dim, we may see far more by faith than we can by sight.

21. *By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.* Ah, that staff of his! You know why he used it? I believe he loved it because it made him remember the Brook Jabbok where "he halted upon his thigh." It had long been his companion, for he said, "With my staff I passed over this Jordan." But it became more than ever necessary to him after he had won that victory and had also learned his own weakness. And now, as if in memory of the God who had blessed him, he leans upon the top of his staff and blesses the sons of Joseph. Now the chapter goes on with a long list of those who, by faith, worked wonders.

22-31. *By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones. By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months by his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of evil for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible. Through faith he kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest He that destroyed the firstborn should touch them. By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyp-*

tians attempting to do were drowned. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days. By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace. What? Has the unchaste Rahab got in here with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph—the chaste Joseph? Yes! "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace." She hid them in her house, although that action would have cost her her life if they had been discovered. And though there was some deception mixed with her faith, which we need not dwell upon now, yet God the Holy Spirit records her faith and hides her fault.

32-39. *And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David, also, and Samuel, and of the Prophets who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mocking and scourging, yes, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy). They wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise.* They did not live to see Christ come. They expected Him, but before the time when Paul was writing—before the actual coming of Christ—they had all passed away. "These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise."

40. *God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.* Is it not wonderful that we, who bring up the rear of the army of faith, are necessary to its completeness? It cannot be perfect without us! Yes, Heaven itself will not be complete without us who are on the road to it! There would be empty seats in the holy orchestra, gaps in the sacred circle—so we who believe must all go there to make them perfect. God help us to hasten on our road, for our Lord Jesus 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.

DEPTHS AND HEIGHTS
NO. 2635

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 13, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 21, 1882.

"His Son, whom He has appointed Heir of all things, by whom He also made the worlds; who being the brightness of His Glory, and the express image of His Person and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had, by Himself, purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."
Hebrews 1:2.

I HAVE nothing to do tonight but to preach Jesus Christ. This was the old subject of the first Christian ministers—"Daily in the Temple and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." When Philip went down to the city of Samaria, he "preached Christ unto them." When he sat with the Ethiopian eunuch in his chariot, he, "preached unto him, Jesus." As soon as Paul was converted, "straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues." For once we count the venerableness of our subject well worthy of mentioning, we shall not be ashamed to preach what the Apostles preached and what martyrs and confessors preached! We hope to proclaim this glorious Gospel of the blessed God as long as we live! And we hope that when this generation of preachers shall have passed away, unless the Lord shall come, there will always be found a succession of men who shall determine to preach nothing "save Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

For, after all, this is the subject which men most of all need. They may have cravings after other things, but nothing can satisfy the deep real need of their nature but Jesus Christ and salvation by His precious blood! He is the Bread of Life which came down from Heaven! He is the Water of Life of which, if a man drinks, he shall never thirst again! Hence, it becomes us to be often dwelling upon this theme, for it is most necessary to the sons of men. This is the subject which God the Holy Spirit delights to bless. I am sure that, other things being equal, He honors preaching in proportion to the savor of Christ that is in it! I may preach a great deal about the Church, but the Holy Spirit does not take of the things of Christ to glorify the Church. I may preach doctrine or practice apart from Christ—that would be giving the husk without the kernel—but where Jesus Christ sweetens all and savors all, there will the Holy Spirit delight to rest upon the ministry and make it quick and powerful to the conversion of men! And I am sure, dear Friends, that the preaching of Christ is always sweet in the ears of His own people. "Your

name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love You." And this theme is most pleasing to God the Father, who loves to hear His Son extolled and exalted. He delights in His Son—and those who delight in Him are friends of God. When Jesus Christ is lifted up, it is as God the Father would have it! It is as the Holy Spirit would have it and, where this is the case, we may expect to have seals to our ministry and souls for our hire!

I want, at this time, as it were, to let Jesus Christ speak for Himself. I cannot speak for Him as He can speak for Himself. Shall I hold my candle to the sun, as if it needed it in order to reveal its light? No, certainly not! And, therefore, I shall, with studied plainness, try to set the text, itself, before you and so to speak of it that you may not so much remember what I have said of it as that you may remember the Subject, Himself. My theme is to be the Savior—the only Savior—the Savior who must save you or else you must perish, "for there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." I am about to speak of Him and I think that all who are aware of the necessity of being saved will only want to hear about Him—and to know how they may get to Him and how He may be made their Savior. And if they can but be told this, they will be only too glad to listen!

So, first, I shall speak of *who the Savior is*. Let me read the text to you again. "His Son"—God's Son—"whom He has appointed Heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His Glory, and the express image of His Person, and upholding all things by the word of His power." That is who Jesus is! Then, in the second place, I shall speak of *what Jesus did.* "When He had by Himself purged our sins." Then, thirdly, I want to tell you *what He enjoys*. After He had finished His great work of salvation, He "sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."

I. It is not possible that any language can fully express WHO JESUS IS. Yet, by the Holy Spirit's gracious teaching, I must tell you what I know of Him.

First, *Jesus is God's own Son*. What do I know about that wondrous Truth of God? If I were to try to explain it and to talk about the Eternal Sonship, I should but conduct you where I should soon be entirely out of my depth and, very likely, I would drown all that I could tell you in floods of words. Deity is not to be explained, but to be adored—and the Sonship of Christ is to be accepted as a Truth of Revelation and to be apprehended by faith, though it cannot be comprehended by the understanding. There have been many attempts made by the fathers of the Church to explain the relationship between the two Divine Persons, the Father and the Son. But the explanations had better never have been given, for the figures used are liable to lead into mistakes. Suffice it for us to say that in the most appropriate language of the Nicene Creed, Christ is "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God." He is co-equal with the Father, though how that is, we know not. He stands in the nearest possible relationship to the Father—a relationship of intense love and delight, so that the Father says of Him, "This is My beloved Son." Yes, He is One with the Father, so that there is no separating them, as He, Himself,

said, in reply to Philip's request, "Show us the Father," "Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me."

Let me pause here and say to everyone who is seeking salvation—What a comfort it should be to you that He, who is come to save men, is Divine! Therefore, nothing can be impossible to Him. No, I do not say merely that He is Divine—I will go further and say that He is the Deity itself! Christ Jesus is God and, being God, there can be no impossibilities or even difficulties with Him. He is able to save you, whoever you may be! Though you have gone to the very verge of eternal ruin, you cannot have gone beyond the range of Omnipotence—and Omnipotence is inherent in the Godhead. O dear Friends, rejoice in this wondrous Truth of God—He that was a Babe at Bethlehem, was God Incarnate! He that, being weary, sat on the well at Sychar, was God Incarnate! He that had no where to lay His head was God Incarnate. And it is He who has undertaken the stupendous labor of the salvation of men and, therefore, men may hope and trust in Him! We need not wonder that when angels heard of Christ's coming to earth, they sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men," for God had taken upon Himself human flesh that He might save the sons of men. So, the first words in our text—"His Son"—are full of good cheer!

Now notice, in the next place, that *Jesus Christ is the "Heir of all things."* Of which Nature of Christ does the Apostle speak in this sentence, "whom He has appointed Heir of all things"? I do not think that Paul, here, separates the two Natures, so as to speak with absolute reference to either one or the other, but he speaks of the Person of Christ, and in that Person there is God, and in that same Person there is most surely and most truly, Man. But we must take this description of Jesus Christ as appointed "Heir of all things" in His Person as Man and as God and Man combined, for, as God, alone, Christ is necessarily, "Heir of all things" without any appointment. But in His complex Person as God and Man conjoined, the Father has appointed Him to be "Heir of all things."

Now, what does this mean but that Christ possesses all things as an heir possesses his inheritance—that Christ is Lord of all things, as an heir becomes lord and ruler among his brethren? This appointment is to be fully carried into effect by-and-by, for, "now we see not yet all things put under Him." Christ is Lord of all the angels—not a seraph spreads his wings except at the bidding of the "Heir of all things." There are no bright spirits, unknown to us, that are beyond the control of the God-Man, Christ Jesus. And the fallen angels, too, are obliged to bow before His Omnipotence. As for all things here below, material substances, men regenerate or unregenerate, God has given Him power over all flesh that He should give eternal life to as many as His Father has given Him. He has put all things under His feet, "and the government shall be upon His shoulders." He is Heir, or Master, and Possessor of all things—let me say, of all sorts of blessings and all forms of Grace, for, "it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." And, as surely as time revolves and you mark the fleeting minutes upon the dial's face, the hour is coming when Christ shall be universally acknowledged as King of Kings and Lord of Lords! Already I seem to hear the shouts go up from every part of the habitable globe and from all Heaven and all space, "Hallelujah! For

the Lord God, Omnipotent, reigns." All must willingly, or else unwillingly, submit to His sway, for His Father has appointed Him "Heir of all things."

To my mind, this is another wondrous encouragement to anyone who is seeking salvation. Christ has everything in His hand that is needed in order that He may save you, poor Sinner! Sometimes, when a physician has a sick man before him—suppose it is on board ship—he may have to say to him, "I think I could cure your disease if I could get such-and-such a medicine, but, unfortunately, I have not the drug within my reach." Or the doctor might have to say to the sufferer, "I believe an operation would effect a cure, but I have not the instruments necessary for it." Never will the great Physician of souls have to talk like that, for the Father has committed *all things into His hand.* Oh, have we not beheld Him as the Glory of the Father, full of Grace and Truth? You great sinner, you black sinner, Christ is not lacking in power to save you! And if you come and trust yourself in His hands, He will never have to look about to find the balm for your wounds, or the ointments or liniments with which to bind up those putrefying sores of yours! No, He is "Heir of all things." So again I say, "Hallelujah!" as I preach Him to you as the blessed Savior of sinners, the Son of God, the "Heir of all things."

Notice, next, that *Jesus Christ is the Creator* "by whom also He made the worlds." However many worlds there are, we know not. It may be true that all those majestic orbs that stud the midnight sky are worlds filled with intelligent beings. And it is much more easy to believe that they are than that they are not, for, surely, God has not built all those magnificent mansions and left them untenanted! It were irrational to conceive of those myriads of stupendous worlds, vastly bigger than this poor little speck in God's great universe, all left without inhabitants. But it matters not how many worlds there are—God made them all by Jesus Christ—"All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made."

I see Him standing, as it were, at the anvil of Omnipotence, hammering out the worlds that fly off, like sparks, on every side at each stroke of His majestic arm. It was Christ who was there—"the Wisdom of God and the Power of God," as Paul calls Him—creating all things! I love to think that He who created all things is also our Savior, for then He can create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me. And if I need a complete new creation—as I certainly do—He is equal to the task! Man cannot create the tiniest gnat that ever danced in the summer evening's ray. Man cannot create even a single grain of dust, but Christ created all worlds, so He can make us new creatures by the wondrous power of His Grace. O Sinners, see what a mighty Savior has been provided for you and never say that you cannot trust Him! I agree with good Mr. Hyatt who, when he was asked on his deathbed, "Can you trust Christ with your soul?" answered, "If I had a million souls, I could trust them all with Him!" And so may you! If you had as many souls as God has ever created and if you had heaped upon you all the sins that men have ever committed, you might still trust in Him who is the Son of God, "whom He has appointed Heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds."

Now go a little further and see what Christ is next called—*the brightness of His Father's Glory*. Shade your eyes, for you cannot look upon this wondrous sight without being dazzled by it! The Revised Version renders it, "the effulgence of His Glory," but I do not see much more in that expression than in the word, "brightness." Some commentators say—and it is not a bad figure, yet we must not push any figure too far—that, as light is to the sun, so is Jesus to the Glory of God. He is the brightness of that Glory, that is to say, there is not any Glory in God but what is also in Christ. And when that Glory reaches its climax, when God the Ever-Glorious is most Glorious, that greatest Glory is in Christ. Oh, this wondrous Word of God—the very climax of the Godhead—the gathering up of every blessed Attribute in all its infinity of Glory—you shall find all this in the Person of the God-Man, Christ Jesus! There is a whole sermon in those words, "the brightness of His Glory," but I cannot preach it tonight because then I should not get through the rest of my text.

So let us pass on to the next clause. "*And the express image of His Person.*" I said, a minute ago, "Shade your eyes," but I might now say, "Shut them," as I think of the excessive brilliance described by these words—"the express image of His Person." Whatever God is, Christ is—the very likeness of God, the very Godhead of Godhead, the very Deity of Deity is in Christ Jesus—"the express image of His Person." Dr. John Owen, who loves to explain the spiritual meaning in the Epistle to the Hebrews by the types in the Old Testament, which is evidently what Paul, himself, was doing, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit—explains the brightness of the Father's Glory by a reference to the Shekinah over the Mercy Seat, which was the only visible token of the Presence of God there. An extraordinary brightness is said to have shone forth from between the cherubim.

Now, Christ is God manifesting Himself in His brightness. But, on his forehead, the High Priest wore a golden plate, upon which was deeply engraved in Hebrew letters, the inscription, "Holiness to [or, of,] Jehovah." Dr. Owen thinks there is a reference in this "express image of His Person"—this cut-out inscription of God, as it were—to that which was on the forehead of the High Priest and which represented the glorious wholeness or holiness of Jehovah, which is His great Glory. Well, whether the Apostle referred to this or not, it is for you and me to take off our shoes in the Presence of Christ, "the brightness of His Father's Glory, and the express image of His Person." To me, these words are like the bush in which God dwelt, yet which was not consumed—they are all on fire—what more shall I say of them?

Now, Christ being all this that Paul describes, who will dare to turn his back on Him? If this is the Shepherd who has come to seek the lost sheep—O poor lost Sheep, will you not be found of Him? If this is God's Ambassador who comes clothed in the crimson robe of His own blood to redeem the sons of men—who will refuse the peace He brings?

Note yet, once again, what Christ is as I mention the sixth point in the Apostle's description—"*upholding all things by the word of His power*," Just think of it! This great world of ours is upheld by Christ's word! If He did not speak it into continued existence, it would go back into the noth-

ingness from which it sprang. There exists not a being who is independent of the Mediator, save only the ever-blessed Father and the Spirit. "By Him all things consist," that is, continue to hold together. Just as these pillars uphold these galleries, or as the foundations uphold a house, so does Jesus Christ "uphold all things by the word of His power." Only think of it! Those innumerable worlds of light that make illimitable space to look as though it were sprinkled over with golden dust would all die out like so many expiring sparks, and cease to be if the Christ who died on Calvary did not will that they should continue to exist! I cannot bring out of my text all the wondrous Truths of God that it contains, I only wish I could. But, surely, if Christ upholds all things, He can uphold me. If the word of His power upholds earth and Heaven, surely, that same word can uphold you, poor trembling Heart, if you will trust Him! There need be no fear about that matter—come and prove it for yourself. May His blessed Spirit enable you to do so even now!

Where there is so much room, I might well tarry, but I must hasten on to the next point.

II. Follow me with all your ears and hearts while I now speak to you about WHAT JESUS DID.

He who is all that I have tried to describe, did what? First, *He effectually purged our sins*—"when He had, by Himself, purged our sins." Listen to those wondrous words! There was never such a task as that since time began. The old fable speaks of the Augean stable, foul enough to have poisoned a nation, which Hercules cleansed, but our sins were fouler than that! Dunghills are sweet compared with these abominations! What a degrading task it seems for Christ to undertake—the purging of our sins! The sweepers of the streets, the dishwashers of the kitchen, the cleansers of the sewers have honorable work compared with this of purging sin! Yet the holy Christ, incapable of sin, stooped to purge our sins! I want you to meditate upon that wondrous work and to remember that He did it before He went back to Heaven. Is it not a wonderful thing that Christ purged our sins even before we had committed them? There they stood, before the sight of God, as already existent in all their hideousness—but Christ came, and purged them. This, surely, ought to make us sing the song of songs! Before I sinned, He purged my sins away—amazing and strange as it is, yet it is so!

Then, further, the Apostle says that *Christ purged our sins by Himself.* That is, by offering Himself as our Substitute. There was no purging away of sin except by Christ bearing the burden of it, and He did bear it. He bore all that was due to guilty man on account of his violation of the Law of God, and God accepted His Sacrifice as a full equivalent, and so He purged our sins. He did not come to do something by which our sins *might be purged*, but He purged them *effectually*, *actually*, *really*, *completely*. How did He do it? By His preaching? By His Doctrine? By His Spirit? No, "By Himself." Oh, that is a blessed word! The Revised Version has left it out, but the doctrine is taught in the Bible over and over again. "Who His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." "By His own blood He entered in once into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies to the purifying of the

flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" He gave Himself for us! Not only His blood, but all that constituted Himself—His Godhead and His Manhood. All that He had and all that He was, He gave as the ransom price for us! Can any of you estimate the value of that price? The acts of One, Divine as He is, are Divine actions, and there is a weight and force about them that there could not be about the deeds of the best of men or even of all the holy angels! "He by Himself purged our sins."

Now, let every Believer, if he wants to see his sins, stand on tiptoe and look up—will he see them there? No. If he looks down, will he see them there? No. If he looks around, will he see them there? No. If he looks within, will he see them there? No. Where shall he look, then? Where he likes, for he will never see them, again, according to that ancient promise, "In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none. And the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found, for I will pardon them whom I reserve." Shall I tell you where your sins are? Christ purged them and God said, "I will cast all their sins behind My back." Where is that? All things are before God. I do not know where *behind* God's back can be! It is nowhere, for God is everywhere present, seeing everything. So that is where my sins have gone—I speak with the utmost reverence when I say that they have gone where Jehovah, Himself, can never see them! Christ has so purged them that they have ceased to be! The Messiah came to finish transgression and to make an end of sin—and He has done it.

O Believer, if He has made an end of it, [sin] then there is an end to it and what more can there be of it? Here is a blessed text for you. I love to meditate on it often when I am alone—"As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." This He did on Calvary's Cross—there effectually, finally, totally, completely, eternally, He purged all His people from their sin by taking it upon Himself, bearing all its dreadful consequences, cancelling and blotting it out, casting it into the depths of the sea and putting it away forever! And all this He did, "by Himself." It was, indeed, amazing love that made Him stoop to this purgation, this expiation, this Atonement for sin! But, because He was who and what He was, He did it thoroughly and perfectly! He said, "It is finished," and I believe Him! I do not—I cannot—for a moment admit that there is anything to be done by us to complete that work—or anything required of us to make the annihilation of our sins complete! Those for whom Christ died are cleansed from all their guilt—and they may go their way in peace. He was made a curse for us, and there is nothing but blessing left for us to enjoy!

III. Now, lastly, I have to speak of WHAT CHRIST NOW ENJOYS. "When He had by Himself purged our sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." Here again I shall have to say that I am quite out of my depth. I have waters to swim in, but I am not a good swimmer in such blessed deeps as these.

There is an allusion here, no doubt, to the High Priest who, on the great Day of Atonement, when the sacrifice had been offered, presents himself before God. Now Christ, our great High Priest, having, once and

for all, offered Himself as the Sacrifice for sin, has now gone into the Most Holy Place and there He sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Notice, first, that *this implies rest*. When the High Priest went within the veil, he did not sit down. He stood, with holy trembling, bearing the sacrificial blood, before the blazing Mercy Seat. But our Savior now sits at His Father's right hand. The High Priest of old had not finished his work—the next year another atoning sacrifice would be needed! But our Lord has completed His Atonement, and now, "there remains no more sacrifice for sin," for there remains no more sin to be purged. "But this Man, after He had offered one Sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever them that are sanctified." There He sits and I am sure He would not be sitting if He had not finished the salvation of His people! Isaiah long before had been Inspired to record what the Messiah would say, "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 Christ is now resting! My eyes, by faith, can see Him sitting there, so I know that—

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

Notice, next, that *Christ sits in the place of honor*—"at the right hand of the Majesty on high." Of course we are talking figuratively, now, and you must not interpret this literally. Jesus sits at the right hand of His Father, He dwells in the highest conceivable honor and dignity. All the angels worship Him and all the blood-washed host adore Him day without night. The Father delights to honor Him—

"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."

Not only does Jesus sit in the place of honor, but *He occupies the place of safety*. None can hurt Him, now! None can stop His purposes, or defeat His will. He is at the powerful right hand of God! In Heaven above and on the earth beneath, and in the waters under the earth, and on every star He is supreme Lord and Master. And they that will not yield to Him shall be broken with a rod of iron! He shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel. So His cause is safe, His kingdom is secure, for He is at the right hand of Power.

And, last of all, Christ at the right hand of God signifies *the eternal certainty of His reward*. It is not possible that He should be robbed of the purchase of His blood. I tremble when I hear some people talk about the disappointed Christ—or about His having died at a chance to accomplish He knew not what—dying for something which the will of man might give Him if it would, but it might possibly be denied Him! I buy nothing on such terms as that! I expect to have what I purchase and Christ will have what He bought with His own blood—especially as He lives again to claim His purchase! He shall never be a defeated and disappointed Savior! "He loved the Church and gave Himself for it." He has redeemed His loved ones from among men and He shall have all those whom He has pur-

chased. "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." Therefore, let us again say, "Hallelujah!" and fall down and worship Him!

It does seem to me that there is no proof of men's natural blindness that is so conclusive as this, that men will not go and trust in Jesus. O Sinners, if sin had left you sane in heart, you would come at once and fall down at His feet! There is all power laid up in Jesus and there is all the Father's love concentrated in Jesus, so come and trust Him! If you will but trust Him, you will prove that He has given Himself for you! That simple trust is the secret mark that distinguishes His people from all others. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." To those who rejected Him when He was upon the earth, our Lord said, "You believe not because you are not of My sheep, as I said unto you." O poor Souls, do you mean to wear forever the damning mark of unbelief? If you die with that brand upon your soul, you will be lost forever! Oh, may you have, instead, that blessed mark of faith which is the token of the Lord's people! May you even now hang out the scarlet line as Rahab hung it out of her window—the scarlet line of confidence in the crimson blood of Jesus! And while Jericho falls—while all the earth shall crumble in one common ruin—your house, though built upon the wall, shall stand securely and not one who is within its shelter shall be touched by the devouring sword, for all who are in Christ are in everlasting safety! How can they be otherwise, since He has purged their sins? God give to every one of you a part and lot among this blessed company, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
EPHESIANS 1.

We frequently read this chapter and the whole of this Epistle because it has been well remarked that the Epistle to the Ephesians is a body of divinity in miniature. Here all the great Doctrines of the Gospel are discussed. Here all the great precepts are laid down for the guidance of Believers. He who would understand the theology of Christ Jesus should read the Epistle to the Ephesians with great care.

Verses 1, 2. *Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father.* There must be "Grace" first. "Peace" comes afterwards. They seek heavenly blessings in the wrong order who try to gain peace, first, and then Grace. "There is no peace, says my God to the wicked." And he who has a peace which does not acknowledge Grace for its parent has a false peace—a peace where there is no peace! But let us first have Grace in our souls, then shall our peace be "as a river, and our righteousness as the waves of the sea." Note here, as Luther has said on a corresponding verse in the Epistle to the Galatians, the Apostle says, "Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father"—and lest that terrible name should frighten us, he has joined there the name of God the Son and sweetly put in—

2. *And from the Lord Jesus Christ.* We can have nothing to do with an absolute God. It is *God in Christ* whom we love—whom we adore—who alone is our Savior!

3, 4. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.* The Apostle commences by laying down the great Doctrine of predestinating love. There is little Gospel preached where Election is denied. We marvel that some of us should be regarded as in error because we preach the Doctrine of God's Divine Sovereignty in giving Grace to men whereas, in former times, the opponents of that glorious system would have been reckoned as the heretics!

Turn to all the great creeds that are preserved and you shall find that Truth of God mentioned. Above all, we can scarcely conceive that any person who is a member or a minister of the Established Church and finding Divine Election in his own Church's articles, can, in the least degree, deny it! It is the glory of that Church [the Church of England] that it has a Calvinistic creed and it is so far in harmony with the Scriptures!

5, 6. *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His Grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved.* Adoption follows predestination. We were chosen of God before time began and the result of that choice is that He puts us into His family. In the fifth verse, the Apostle declares that the only reason for our adoption, or for our election, rests in the good pleasure of God Almighty. There is nothing in man which can merit God's regard and when we enter Heaven, we shall even there sing—

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

Mark here the channel through which all God's mercies run! Jesus Christ is the channel through which Grace flows to us. We are chosen in Him, we are adopted by Jesus Christ to Himself and we are "accepted in the Beloved." It is said of that eminently holy man, Harington Evans, that, when near death, he asked his friends to give this message to his church. "Tell them," he said, "I am accepted in the Beloved." Can we say, my Brothers and Sisters, that we are accepted in the Beloved? Can we put our hand upon our heart and, each one, say, "I may not be accepted by my fellow creatures. I may not be acknowledged by them and, certainly, before my God, I can never be accepted in myself. But in the Beloved, clothed with His righteousness, and standing in His Person, as a member of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones, I am 'accepted in the Beloved'"?

7-10. *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; having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He has purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him.* The main purpose of the Gospel is to exalt Christ and to glorify God. We forget God's great design if we look only

to humanity. If we regard salvation as a means of only lifting up our race from its fall and putting it among the princes, we have made a mistake. We must remember that God's Glory is a greater objective, even, than man's salvation! Not so much to save us did God give His Son, as to honor Himself and to glorify that Son of His! And we must always remember that the Gospel has for its chief aim the glory of all the attributes of the Divine Being. He has determined to gather together, at last, all things in Christ that are in Heaven and in earth.

Some foolish persons have wrested this text to prove the absurd doctrine of the final restitution of the lost. They have said that even the fallen spirits in Hell are to be restored! We find it not in this text—we have it particularly said, "things in Heaven and things on earth." But there is no mention made of those concerning whom it was long ago said, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." I have often thought that these words of the angel are conclusive with regard to the eternity of future punishment. Once dead, immutability is stamped upon our state—once let us die and our destiny can never be changed—

"There are no acts of pardon passed
In the cold grave to which we haste.
But darkness, death, and long despair,
Reign in eternal silence there."

But "things which are in Heaven, and which are on earth" are, "in the dispensation of the fullness of times," to be gathered together in one, "even in Him."

11-14. *In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will: that we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom you also trusted, after that you heard the Word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that you believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory*. I cannot help remarking how continually the Apostle uses such expressions as, "in Christ," "in whom," "in Him." He will not have a Doctrine apart from Christ! He will not mention a single blessing, or a single mercy, without Christ! I believe there is no way of preaching Gospel Doctrines truly apart from the Master. In Christ's own days, if you had asked one of His followers what he believed, he would not have been long telling you! He would not have pointed to 50 Doctrines, but he would have pointed to Christ and said, "I believe in Him." You might have asked him, 50 times, "But what do you believe?" and he would have replied, "I believe in Him! He is, in Himself, the great embodiment of my faith! His Person carries within it all the great Doctrines which I receive from Him. He is the Truth! I believe Him and I believe *in* Him." Let us learn, then, always to trace our mercies to Christ Jesus, to look upon every blessing as being the purchase of His blood and never to ask for any mercy, nor endeavor to obtain any blessing, except entirely in connection with Him. Let us say to Him—

"You are the Way, the Truth, the Life!
Grant us that Way to know,

That Truth to keep, that Life to win,
Whose joys eternal flow."

15. *"Therefore I, also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints."* Whether they live at Ephesus or elsewhere, whether they exactly agree with your opinion or not—

16-23. *Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what it the exceeding greatness of His power to us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He worked in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: 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.* Calvin has a striking remark upon this verse, "the Church is the fullness of Christ." "This is the highest honor of the Church that, until Christ is united to us, the Son of God reckons Himself, in some measure, imperfect." And so He is, for what would a king be without his subjects? A mockery! Yes, and all the members of Christ's mystical body—the Church—are necessary to make a whole Christ! If the very least Believer shall be absent at the last, Christ will not be complete. Even the Almighty Son of God will feel a lack within Himself, or He would, if it were possible that one of those whom His Father had given Him should not at last be found at His right hand! All the sheep of the Good Shepherd will be gathered into the heavenly fold! We rejoice to know that there is such a connection as this between ourselves and Christ! Here is our glory and our boast—and here is our trust! We believe that—

"His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of His sheep.
All that His Heavenly Father gave
His hands securely keep.
Not death, nor Hell, shall ever remove
His favorites from His breast!
In the dear bosom of His love
They must forever rest."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—414, 586, 387.

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THE PERPETUITY OF THE GOSPEL
NO. 2636

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 20, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 28, 1882.

"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Words shall not pass away." Luke 21:33.

LAST Lord's-Day morning I preached upon the perpetuity of the Law of God, [Sermon #1660, Volume 28—*The Perpetuity of the Law of God*—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org] basing my remarks upon our Lord's words, "For verily I say unto you, Till Heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law till all is fulfilled." Tonight, I am not going to speak of the Law, but of the Gospel. And, by the term, "the Gospel," I mean the summary of all that our Lord Jesus Christ spoke when He was here below. Of that Gospel it may be said, as He, Himself, said of the Law, that not one jot or tittle of it shall pass away till all is fulfilled. The Gospel of Christ is not merely the Gospel of yesterday, but, like Christ Himself, it is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever." It is not a Gospel simply for this age, or for some other age, a Gospel which shall, by-and-by, be worn out and cast aside. But when yon blue heavens shall be folded up, like a worn-out vestment, the Gospel shall still be as powerful as ever. "Heaven and earth shall pass away," says our Lord, "but My Words shall not pass away."

I. Without further preface, I remark, first, that THE WORDS OF JESUS MUST STAND, COME WHAT MAY. If you accept the testimony of Christ concerning His own Words—and you who are His followers will not question anything that He says—then this is certain, that the Words of Jesus must stand forever, come what may.

The major change of Heaven and earth passing away includes all lesser changes, but whatever alteration may come before the last great change, Christ's Words shall still stand The world gets more civilized—so I am told, though, when I read the newspapers, I am not quite sure of it. The world gets more intelligent—so I am told, though, when I read the magazines—I mean, the first-class quarterlies—I am not certain that it is so, for, in that direction, the ignorance appears to me to become greater every day. I mean the ignorance among the learned and scientific men, who seem to me, in their discoveries, to wander continually further and further, not only from that which is revealed and Infallible, but also from that which is rational and truthful.

But still, the world does alter and, according to its own notion, it is getting wonderfully near perfection! Was there ever such a century as the

nineteenth? Was there ever such a period of time since the world began? What is there that we are not doing? Lighting ourselves by electricity, speaking by means of the lightning, traveling by steam—what an amazing people we are! Yes, yes, and we are going to do much greater things than these, no doubt. And many matters which are now reckoned as mere dreams will probably because accomplished facts in a few generations! But after these marvels have all come and gone, the Words of our Lord Jesus Christ will still abide—they will not pass away! Fashion follows fashion, systems succeed systems, everything beneath the moon is like the moon, it waxes and wanes and is always on the change! But come whatever change there may, even if the human race should reach that wonderful development which some prophesy for it, yet still, the Words of our Lord Jesus Christ shall not pass away. And when the greatest alteration of all shall take place and this present dispensation shall come to an end—and all material things shall be consumed with fire and be destroyed—yet, even then, there shall remain above the ashes of the world and all that is therein, the imperishable Revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ, for, as Peter says, "The Word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you."

Why is it that Christ's Words will last in this way? I answer, first, *because they are Divine*. That which is Divine will endure. All God's works will not last forever, but His Words will. He will never retract anything that He has said. Even Baalim had Light of God enough to declare. "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: has He said, and shall He not do it? Or has He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" God has never had, as our common saying puts it, to "eat His own words," nor will He! And Christ has never had to retract anything that He has uttered. All His life, He had not even once to make an apology and say, "I spoke too fast, or too warmly, or somewhat inaccurately." Everything that He said has stood and shall stand because the Divinity that is in it makes it everlasting!

Again, the Words of Christ must stand *because they are the Revelation of the innermost heart of God*. This great world, and the sun, and moon, and stars, reveal God—but not as fully and as clearly as the Son of God reveals Him. The Incarnate Word is the most grand manifestation of Deity and the Words of that Eternal Word are the Revelation of the purpose of God which He formed in His Infinite mind before He made the world. That which, in the secret counsels of eternity was planned—that which—

"Ere sin was born, or Satan fell,"

was devised in the heart of the Most High—is revealed to us, as far as it may be revealed, in the Words of the Lord Jesus Christ. God's essential purposes cannot be altered—they must all be fulfilled. His eternal plan was formed in the foresight of all generations that shall exist, so it must stand unchanged and, inasmuch as those purposes and that plan are closely connected with the Words of Christ and, indeed, are made known to us by His Words, therefore the Words of Christ must stand forever.

Further, the Words of Christ must live even when Heaven and earth have passed away because they are pure Truth of God. Everything that is absolutely and purely true must be abiding and enduring. See how long

solid silver lasts. You may buy plated goods for use in your house, but, after a time, in the process of wearing you begin to see the baser metal underneath. But if you have real silver, hall-marked, it will last your lifetime. David truly said, "The Words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." Their surface does not wear off and reveal the dross beneath, for there is none! All is pure throughout. Impurity breeds decay—error is corruption—every evil thing carries within it the seeds of its own death. But God's Truth has no corruption in it. It is the living and incorruptible Seed which, therefore, lives and abides forever. That which is perfectly pure will not ferment because it contains within itself no germs of decay. Nor shall it pass away, but it shall live forever. Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke nothing but pure, unalloyed Truth—the very Truth of God and, therefore, it shall stand fast forever.

And that Christ's Words shall live eternally, we do believe, again, *because no power can prevent it*. What power is there that can prevent Christ's Words from being triumphant? Do you hear the roar from the pit of Hell as that question is asked? The devil and his legions of fallen spirits say that they will prevent the triumph of the Words of Christ and, whereas He has declared that His Kingdom shall come, they conspire to prevent its coming. But Christ has already broken the head of the dragon, He has trampled the old serpent beneath His feet and His Omnipotence is greater than Satan's potency. The devil may be mighty, but Christ is Almighty, and Hell shall suffer dire defeat at the hand of the Crucified Savior! As for the wicked men upon this earth, they often league themselves together and take counsel "against the Lord, and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." You know how futile are all their efforts, for the Psalmist says, "He that sits in the heavens shall laugh. The Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak to them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure. Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion."

There is no power that can effectually resist the Words of Christ. "Where the word of a king is, there is power," but where the Word of God is, there is Infinite power! What He says must be done. Before He said, "Let there be light," there was not a spark amid all earth's gloom that could help to make the day! There was nothing lying here that could have created the light and yet the darkness fled before that fiat of God! And so, today, if there is nothing on earth to help the fulfillment of Christ's Word, He has said to this poor dark world, "Let there be light," and that light, which He has kindled, is growing brighter and brighter—and shall increase unto the perfect day. O devils in Hell, can you blot out that light? Impossible! Christ's Word must stand!

And yet once more, Christ's Word must stand *because His honor is involved in its permanence*. If He had to alter anything He said, it would be manifest that He had made mistakes which He must rectify. I often get books in which there is a slip of paper containing *errata* fastened at the beginning. They are said to be printers' blunders, but I should not won-

der if they are also the mistakes of the writer. But there they are and I have to take a pencil and make these corrections in the volume. There are no *errata* in the Words of Christ, nor can there be any corrections in anything that He has said. David's declaration applies to all the Words of Jesus. "The Law of the Lord is perfect." Christ's Words are all they should be, no less and no more, and cursed shall that man be who shall add to or take from them! There cannot be any alteration in them, for that would be to dishonor Christ's wisdom. Alteration, indeed! That would make it appear that Christ trifled while He was here, or that He said what He must necessarily unsay and that He was, after all, but an experimenter as to truth, getting as near it as He could and afterwards correcting His mistakes, like a physician who does not understand a disease and who gives a medicine which drives his patient too far one way, and then gives him another drug which brings him back again, but never completely cures him! Christ never has to act in that fashion. He knew what He meant and He said what He meant—and that which He said, and that which He meant shall stand even when, like withered figs that drop from the tree the stars shall fall from their places, the sun shall be turned into blood and the moon shall become black as a sackcloth of hair! It must be so and, therefore, all you who believe in Jesus, believe firmly in this double declaration that He has made, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Words shall not pass away."

II. Now, secondly, THIS DECLARATION APPLIES TO ALL CHRIST'S WORDS—not merely to some of them, but to all, for it is left with an intentional indefiniteness which makes it refer to all that He said—"My Words shall not pass away."

This declaration applies, then, to *the Doctrinal teaching of Christ.* Whatever Doctrine Christ taught, either Himself, personally, or by His Apostles guided by the Spirit of God, is definite, distinct, immovable Truth of God. There are many ministers, nowadays, who think that they must shift their doctrinal landmarks and there are others who have no landmarks at all. They believe something, or everything, or nothing—it is difficult to tell which—and their common cry is, "We must be charitable!" I have known many people who were willing to be charitable with other people's money, and I have known others who are charitable with Doctrines that are not theirs to give away, for they are Christ's Doctrines—but these supposed custodians of them care so little for them that they offer to give them away in any quantity! But a faithful steward of Christ's Gospel will not do so. He who loves Christ and wishes to honor Him, keeps Christ's Words, and treasures them up!

I have heard of this body of divinity and that, but the body of divinity that I believe in is the body of Jesus Christ! And the true divinity, the real theology, is that wondrous Logos, the Incarnate Word of God, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! If we will take Jesus, and Him, only, to be our Leader, there are a great many ways that we shall never go—and there are a great many things which are done by different sects of professing Christians which we shall not do, as we cannot see that Christ ever did anything of the sort! And if He did not, neither will we. That is a

good rule for all Christians which I saw in one of our Orphanage schoolrooms—"What would Jesus do?" There cannot be a better guide than that for Believers, for our text is true with regard to Doctrine, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Words shall not pass away." I am often said to be a very old-fashioned, narrow-minded sort of person and I have not the slightest objection to the accusation. I certainly am not new-fashioned and do not intend to be, for "the old is better" and, in theology, there is nothing new that is true, and nothing true that is new! The Truth of God is as old as the everlasting hills and to that I desire to keep even to the end, and I trust that you, also, will be of the same mind.

Next, we have the Words of Jesus, not only about Doctrine, but *He has given us plain practical commands*. The Master taught a wonderful system of ethics and to that system we are to cling with the same tenacity that should characterize our hold on the Doctrines that Christ taught. Brothers and Sisters, let us never get away from such a Divine teaching as this—"I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." Let us not only love one another, but let us seek to do good unto all men as we have opportunity, especially to such as are of the household of faith. Be it our daily delight to cast out all malice and unkindness from our hearts, that the Law of Love may be fulfilled in us, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." You may depend upon it that there will never be any improvement upon the teaching of Christ! There have been some persons who have tried to improve upon it, but they have made a signal failure of all their attempts. His ethical teaching—His teaching of morals—has impressed even some of those who have not accepted His Doctrines, or even believed in His Divinity! They have been astonished at the purity, the holiness, the love which Jesus Christ inculcated in the Laws which He laid down for the guidance of His disciples.

But I must press on and remind you that the *promises of Christ shall stand forever*. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but His promises shall not pass away. Is not that a blessed Truth of God? He said, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Come along with you, then, poor laboring and heavy laden Souls, for He will give you rest! Heaven and earth shall pass away, but He will give you rest if you come to Him. And He has said, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Come along with you, then! Obey both His commands—first, believe, and then be baptized, for, though Heaven and earth shall pass away—you shall be saved! There are many things which may be but actions. Like the phantom visions of a night, they may dissolve, but you shall be saved, that is a sure thing, that is certain beyond all question! The Lord Jesus has promised such great things to His people that I could keep you here all night if I were to try to repeat those gracious Words of promise which streamed out of His lips! Here is one of the sweetest of them—"All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and he that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." If you come to Him, He will not in any wise cast you out! He must, He will receive you! Heaven

and earth may pass away, and they shall pass away in due time, but never shall a soul that comes to Jesus be rejected by Him! Oh, that many of you would avail yourselves of that promise this very hour!

Dear aged Friend, you are getting very feeble and you have passed through a great many changes, but that promise has not been altered all the while! Do you recollect when your mother told you about Christ when you were a curly-headed boy? "Ah," you say, "it is too late, now!" No, my dear Friend, no! Heaven and earth have not passed away yet, and that promise has not passed away—you may still come to Christ, so come and welcome, for it is still written, "He that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." "He is able, also, to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." Trust His promise even now! Bow your head in the pew and silently seek the Ever-Blessed One and He will be found of you, for His Word is as sure to you as it was to me—as sure to you as it has been to tens of thousands who, in different times, have tried it and found that promise true!

But remember, also, that as every Word of promise from Christ shall stand, so shall *every Word of prophecy*. There is a whole Book of Revelation which I do not understand, but which I fully believe. I am very glad to find something in the Bible which I cannot comprehend, but which I may believe, for I do not call that faith which limits its belief to what it can understand. If you have any little children, you delight to see the way in which they trust you when they cannot make out what you are doing, though they are sure that you are doing right. I want you, dear Friends, to have just that kind of faith in the Book of Revelation—it is all true, although you cannot interpret all its mysteries. And it will all come true—every word of it—in God's good time! The Lord shall come, the Lord shall reign, the Lord shall judge, the Lord shall justify and glorify His people—and the Lord shall bid the ungodly depart from Him under the curse. I pray that we may all be helped to believe every Word of it.

When I read the Bible, I like to read it in the spirit of the little boy whose mother told him something, but his schoolmates laughed at him for believing it. They asked him how he knew that it was true and he said that his mother told him so, and his mother never told a lie. They tried to prove that it could not be so, but he said, "Look here, my mother said so, and it is so if it isn't so." And if I find anything in the Word of God—and somebody with wonderful wisdom tells me that it cannot be so, he is quite sure of it—I laugh his "cannots" into oblivion and reply—"It is so if it isn't so! Your supposed proof is nothing to me! If God has said it, and all the tongues that ever wagged should deny it, I would still say, 'Let God be true and every man a liar.'" Hold then, dear Friends, to the Words of Christ even though you do not always understand them.

I must also remind you that *every Word of threats that Jesus Christ has spoken is true*. Oh, that we could have seen His face and heard the very tones of His voice! There must have been an inexpressible sweetness and an ineffable tenderness about the speech of Jesus Christ. All those who heard Him speak knew that He loved them. And the publicans and sinners, the poor pariahs, the off-casts, those who were scorned by eve-

rybody else, drew near to hear Him because they felt that there was sympathy towards them in that great heart of His. Yet, did you ever notice—you must have noticed it, that never man spoke such terrible words of threatening to the ungodly as this Man spoke? It was Jesus who spoke of the worm that never dies and of the fire that never shall be quenched! It was Jesus who spoke of destroying both body and soul in Hell! It was He who said many of the most terrible things about future punishment that were ever uttered, such as that parable of the rich man who "died and was buried; and in Hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame."

When you hear men trying to soften down the threats of the Scriptures, do not believe that love to souls suggests such a course of action—it often is the proof of true love that it can speak harsh things! If a man comes and tells you very pleasant things about yourself, beware of him—he is not your friend! But the man who can warn you, who can point out your fault and your folly—who can run the risk of losing your esteem by indicating your danger—that is the one who has a sincere affection for you! And a wise man will choose such a friend as that. Whatever anyone may think or say, there is not a terrible Word that ever fell from the Savior's lips which will not stand! Though you do not like it, you cannot alter it—it will not be selected by your likes or dislikes. "He that believes not shall be damned." You call that a hard saying? Regardless, it is true, or Christ would not have said it. It must have cost Him much inward anguish to utter such a sentence as that! It must have been a sort of mental crucifixion to Him to speak as He did about the terrors of the world to come. And you can be you sure that they are not less awful than He described, not less horrible than He depicted them! So, whatever any may say by way of toning down His threats, reject their lies, for Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the Words of Christ shall not pass away.

III. Thirdly, and lastly, I want to show you that THIS TRUTH HAS A BEARING UPON US ALL.

First, I am sure that *it has a relation to the preacher*. My text innately concerns me and all who are called to be ministers of the Gospel. Dear Brothers, we have to preach the same Gospel that our Lord Jesus Christ preached, and no other. I am thankful that I do not know any other Gospel. Long ago I came to Paul's resolve and, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." I stick to that, and that is what all of us must do if we would please our Master! There is no progression in the Truth of God, itself. We progress in our knowledge of what Christ said, and in our understanding of it, but the Truths that He uttered remain just the same as they were in His days. You know that when your little children go down to the seaside, they build tiny castles and houses, and make gardens in the sand—but they are all washed away when the tide rolls over them. I should not like to

preach a theology of the kind that is being constantly washed away, leaving me to start afresh with some more sand.

The Eddystone Lighthouse has stood gloriously, and the reason why another has to be built is because the rock has given way under it—the lighthouse, itself, is all right. We thank God that when we build upon what Christ says, we build on a Rock that will not give way under us! And if we are as steadfast as the old lighthouse, and not a stone of us will stir, we shall be perfectly justified by the equal steadfastness of that Truth of God upon which we build! There is no stirring that rock which is formed of what Christ said. The earth may not only quake, but melt. And the unpillared vault of Heaven that has stood so firm these many ages—even it shall come down with a crash! But no Word of Jesus Christ shall ever be dissolved or pass away! We must stick to the old Gospel, then. It sufficed for our fathers and our grandfathers, and it will suffice for our grandchildren if the world stands so long as to see them also grow up to preach it!

This text also *has a bearing upon Church members*, especially upon you very timid souls who, now and then, get afraid that everything good is coming to an end. I meet with some dear old souls, of both sexes, who are very nervous about what is coming to pass. They are afraid that dreadful times are coming. Yes, no doubt they are, but there is a sinful timidity which does dishonor to the power and Truth of God. There have always been, in all ages, some Latimers and Luthers who had no fear for God's Truth. People complained that they were very dogmatic but they did not care what was said about them—they were probably just as happy whatever the world said!

Luther had one very special friend among the German princes and someone asked the Reformer, "Suppose that he should withdraw his protection from you, where would you hide?" "Beneath the broad shield of Heaven," he answered. And Luther spoke wisely. He would not feel that he was dependent upon any man, but upon God alone. I wish, my poor trembling Friend, that you had something of his holy courage. Do not get into that doubting state of mind again! Heaven and earth shall pass away, so wait till you see them all going! And when they do go, just sit still and sing—

"Then should the earth's old pillars shake,
And all the wheels of nature break,
Our steady souls should fear no more,
Than solid rocks when billows roar."

But, next, our text *has a bearing on all Believers*. Dear Friends, if Christ's Words shall never pass away, let us believe them to be true to ourselves. Are any of you persecuted? Do not give way for a single moment! Stand to your colors! Never be ashamed to acknowledge your Lord. Remember how He said, "Who are you, that you should be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forget the Lord your Maker, who has stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and has feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy?" Hold you to Christ, whose Words shall never pass away.

Are you very sick and weak, or are you getting very poor? Well, your health and your property, too, will pass away, but Christ's Words will never pass away. Are you dying? Christ's Words will never die or pass away—die with them in your heart! When I went, last week, to see one of the members of this Church who is very ill, I had a little of my own teaching given back to me. This dear Brother said to me, "Do you remember saying to us, years ago, 'What time I am afraid, I will trust in You,' is a third-class carriage, but it is in the Gospel train, and it will take you to Heaven"? And you added, "Why do you not go in the first-class carriage—'I will trust, and not be afraid'?" I commend that first-class carriage to all of you! "I will trust, and not be afraid." Let faith expel fear and so travel to Heaven first-class! You well may do so, for there is no cause to be afraid.

If any of the Words of Christ could pass away with this wind, and that wind, and the other wind, oh, dear, what a card-house we would live in! But if they all stand firmly forever—as they do—then why and, therefore, should we indulge the slightest fear? One reason why some of you do not rest in Christ as you should is because you do not get right down flat on to His Words and trust wholly to them. You know what the slave said when his master asked him why he was so confident about salvation. He answered, "Massa, you try to stand, but Sam fall flat down on de promise, and when he is flat down on de promise, he can't fall any lower." Just so! Then fall flat on the promise and if you lie there, clinging and resting there, alone, then Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not the Words on which you are trusting!

Now, last of all, *this is a word to sinners*. What a message my text has for those of you who do not love Christ, those of you who are undecided! Christ's Words shall not pass away—what then? This is the only Gospel that you will ever hear—the last train is about to start. If you do not go by that, there is no other that will carry you to Heaven, "for there is no other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." The Gospel will never change its character. Are any of you waiting till it does, like the countryman who said he would cross the river when all the water had run by? There will never be any easier way to Heaven than there is at this moment! I verily believe that some people, by delay, make the road to Heaven harder for themselves than it would otherwise be. If they are ultimately saved, it is more difficult for them to trust to Christ when they have been long delaying. Even mercy seems, sometimes, to act like Benjamin Franklin did when a man came into his shop to buy a book, but wasted the bookseller's time by his foolish delay. The man asked, "What is the price of this book, Sir?" "Four shillings," said Franklin. "It is rather high," said the man, "I will not take it." He waited about ten minutes and then he asked, "What now, really, will you take for that book?" "Five shillings," said Franklin. "No," said the customer, "you asked only four shillings just now." Franklin replied, "Sir, you have taken up ten minutes of my time attending to you, so that makes the price of the book one shilling more. It is five shillings, now, but if you do not buy it quickly, it will be more." There was some com-

mon sense in that mode of dealing! And you will truly find, in spiritual matters, that there is nothing gained by delay. But there *is* increased sin, increased hardness of heart and even an increased difficulty in yielding the soul to Christ!

The best time for any of you to come to Jesus is just now! You can never have a fairer opportunity than that which lies before you at the present moment. I am sure of it, because God's wisdom always picks the best opportunity—and what does God's wisdom say? "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." And yet again, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." If Christ's Words are to stand, there will be no other Gospel ever presented to you. If Christ's Words are to stand, why should you delay? Sometimes, when I have been returning from preaching away from here, I have seen people outside the theater as I have gone by, quite a crowd of them, and I have asked a friend why they were waiting. "Oh," he has answered, "they are expecting to get in at half price." Well, now, you cannot expect anything of that kind in the matter of salvation, for the original charge is "without money and without price," and it never can be any lower than it is now! Then why not come at once?

I came to Jesus Christ when I was 15 years of age and I wish I had come to Him 15 years before if it had been possible. Oh, that I should ever have lived a single minute without the sweet knowledge of salvation by Jesus Christ! It is not a thing to be put off! God grant that you may no longer put it off! You have done too much of that already, so make haste and come to Christ this very moment!

Let me earnestly entreat you not to be looking out for some larger possible hope that may reach you after death. That is a terrible delusion! I pray you, risk not your soul upon it! Heaven and earth shall pass away, but Christ's Words shall not pass away and, as I have already reminded you, He has said, "He that believes not shall be damned." And so he will be and there is nothing but that awful doom for him. You have your choice. If you trust in Christ, you shall have eternal glory. If you will not have Christ as your Savior, you shall have everlasting punishment. There is no other hope for you. I pray God to lead you to come to Christ at once. Oh, that you would not hesitate, since He invites you! Oh, that you would not tarry, since that were to insult Him! May His blessed Spirit now compel you to come in, that the house of His mercy may be filled! All you have to do is to trust Him! You have not to be doers until *first* you have trusted to what *He has done*. Then *He* will make you doers! Come empty! Come sinful! Come hard-hearted! Come just as you are! Tarry not to cleanse or mend, but, just as you find yourself, rest on Jesus! Fall flat on His promise! Depend upon the merit of His blood and the power of His ever-living plea! God help you, now, to do this, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

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

The 20th Psalm is a prayer for the King—not only for David or Solomon, but for "great David's greater Son"—the true King of the Church. As if the Church saw Jesus going forth to His work, she offers up a prayer for Him.

Psalm 20:1. *The LORD hear you in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend you.* And so it came to pass, in that dread night in Gethsemane, Jesus "was heard in that He feared." The God of wrestling Jacob heard the cries of His dear Son and defended Him, or supported Him, as it is in the marginal reading.

2. *Send you help from the sanctuary, and strengthen you out of Zion.* And you know how there came, from yonder heavenly Jerusalem, an angel strengthening Him. The celestial messenger stood at His side amid the gloom of the olive garden and brought Him comfort and succor from God's right hand—

"His earnest prayers, His deepening groans
Were heard before angelic thrones.
Amazement wrapped the sky!
'Go, strengthen Christ!' the Father said!
The astonished seraph bowed his head
And left the realms on high."

3. *Remember all your offerings, and accept your burnt sacrifice. Selah.* And so He did. There was never such acceptance given to any burnt sacrifice as was given to our Divine Lord when He offered up Himself!

4. *Grant you according to your own heart, and fulfill all your counsel.* Is it not written, "Prayer also shall be made for Him continually; and daily shall He be praised"? Here, then, is a suitable prayer for you to present on behalf of the Lord Jesus—that God would grant Him according to His own heart and fulfill all His counsel!

5. *We will rejoice in your salvation.* Come, Brothers and Sisters, let us make this verse true! And even if we have anything to sigh over, let us lay it aside while we now devote ourselves to the happy work of rejoicing in the glorious salvation of our Lord and King!

5-9. *And in the name of our God we will set up our banners: the LORD fulfill all your petitions. Now know I 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: let the king hear us when we call.* What a blessing it is that our King hears us when we call upon Him! He is full of sympathy with all His people, for, in the time of His sojourn on earth, He often knew what it was to plead with His Father. And as God heard Him, then, so does He, Himself, hear us. All glory be to His blessed name! The 21st Psalm views the King as having ended his battle and achieved his victory.

Psalm 21:1, 2. *The king shall joy in Your strength, O LORD; and in Your salvation how greatly shall he rejoice! You have given him his heart's desire, and have not withheld the request of his lips. Selah.* God gave to Jesus the strength needed to accomplish the work which He came to do

and He is daily giving Him to see of the travail of His soul that He may be satisfied.

3. *For you meet him with the blessings of goodness.* They go before Him like scouts or forerunners! Wherever Jesus comes, the blessings of goodness fly before Him to the sons of men.

3. *You set a crown of pure gold on his head.* Let us crown Him afresh, tonight, with our poor garlands of praise, while God sets a crown of pure gold upon His head!

4. *He asked life of You, and You gave it to him, even length of days forever and ever.* And because He lives, we shall also live! The Father has given Him to have life in Himself and hence He communicates that life to us who believe in Him.

5. *His glory is great in Your salvation: honor and majesty have You laid upon him.* Heaped it on Him. There is no one so worthy of honor as our Lord Jesus is! None are so majestic as the Man of Sorrows who once bowed His head to death on His people's behalf.

6. *For You have made him most blessed forever: You have made Him exceedingly glad with Your Countenance.* The Father rewards Him for all His service—"You have made Him most blessed forever." We cannot imagine how great is the joy of Christ as His Father smiles upon Him—"You have made Him exceedingly glad with Your Countenance."

7, 8. *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.* Oh, what a wonderful prophecy that is! Christ's hand shall find out all His enemies. If they hide themselves, He shall discover them. If they cover themselves with chain armor, yet still His hand will find out their vulnerable parts and touch their very souls until they melt with fear! "Your hand shall find out all Your enemies." Are there any of these enemies of Christ here, tonight? If so, not only will His eyes find them out, but His hands will find them out, too.

8-13. *Your right hand shall find out those that hate You. You shall make them as a fiery oven in the time of Your anger: 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. Therefore shall You make them turn their back, when You shall make ready Your arrows upon Your strings against the face of them. Be you exalted, LORD, in Your own strength: so will we sing and praise Your power.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—166, 346, 527.

—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 PLACE OF PRAYER AND PARDON
NO. 2637

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 27, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 1, 1882.

"Whatever burden or whatever sickness there is: then what prayer or what supplication shall be made of any man, or of all Your people Israel, when everyone shall know his own burden and his own grief, and shall spread forth his hands in this house: then hear You from Heaven, Your dwelling place, and forgive, and render unto every man according unto all his ways, whose heart You know (for You, only, know the hearts of the children of men)."
2 Chronicles 6:28-30.

THE Temple was intended to be the center of prayer for all the children of Israel. Those who could do so went up to it a certain number of times every year. Others, who were too far away to go, prayed with their window open towards Jerusalem, for there was the Mercy Seat and beneath the wings of the overshadowing cherubim there dwelt that bright light of the Shekinah which was the index of the Presence of God in the midst of His people. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that when Solomon dedicated to the Lord the Temple which he had built, his great petition was that God would hear every prayer that should be offered in that place or toward that place! He wished the Temple to always be to Israel the token that God's memorial is that He hears prayer. Solomon therefore presented a wonderfully comprehensive series of supplications in which he appears to have included all the sorrowful conditions of the nation and all the troubles that were likely to fall upon the chosen people.

But this part of his prayer, which we are now to consider, seems as though it were intended to gather up anything that the suppliant might possibly have left out. We always think that we are among the great things—that we are out upon the deep seas—when we can get among the "whatevers." "Whatever burden or whatever sickness there is: then what prayer or what supplication shall be made of any man, or of all Your people Israel…then hear You from Heaven, Your dwelling place, and forgive." It is a sort of miscellaneous sentence, taking up all the stragglers—the lots that are out of the catalog—those that could not be placed under any distinct head. And they are here put under the general description of the "whatevers," that every man whatever, who should know his own burden and his own grief, and the plague of his own heart, should turn

his eye and his prayer toward Jerusalem—and that God should then hear him and forgive him.

We have no sacred spot now, Beloved Friends, towards which we turn when we pray. The Ritualists talk a great deal about the importance of "the eastward position," but I believe that any other position in the world—westward, southward, or northward—is just as good and that we may pray to God with equal acceptance whichever way we turn. Cowper truly sings—

"Jesus, wherever Your people meet,
There they behold Your Mercy Seat!
Wherever they seek You, You are found,
And every place is hallowed ground."

Yet we have a Temple into which they cannot enter who think the mere materialistic building is the all-important matter, just as we have an Altar to which they have no right to approach so long as they are content with the visible and the external. Our Temple is the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ—"In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." When we pray, we turn our faces toward Him. He said to the Pharisees, "In this place is One greater than the Temple," and so He is. Though He is to us of the same use as the Temple was to Israel, yet is He infinitely more precious and far greater than the Temple and whoever, whatever his trouble shall be, shall pray unto God with his face toward Jesus, looking to the matchless wounds by which He has redeemed us, or the glorified Person in which He represents us, and invokes intercession for us before the Throne of God on high, he shall be helped, he shall be forgiven, whatever his trouble or whatever his sin!

I. So, coming to the text, I shall, first of all, deal with the fact that EACH MAN HAS, OR WILL HAVE, SOME KIND OF GRIEF AND SORROW.

I may have some in this congregation, who can say, "We have no grief. We have no trouble." Well, if that is the case, I am not sure that I can congratulate you, though I am very glad when all God's children are happy in the Lord, and can joy and rejoice in His name. I pray that they may always do so, for I remember how Paul said, "Rejoice in the Lord always." Surely that was enough, yet he added, "and again I say, Rejoice." You cannot be too happy in the Lord! And whenever you meet others who are of a doubtful or troubled spirit, do not imitate them, though, I pray you, do not despise them! They may be, on the whole, in a better spiritual state than you are, although they are not better than you are as to their present difficulty. "The joy of the Lord is your strength," and it is an excellent thing for a child of God to be happy and joyful in his Savior. Yet I should not wonder, dear Friend, that the day may come when you, whose eyes are brightest and whose steps are most elastic, will yet find that you shall have trouble in the flesh and, perhaps, trouble in the spirit, too, even as it was with those to whom the Apostle Peter wrote, "Though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations," or trials. Not only do we have manifold trials, but we get into heaviness through them. It does happen to many of the best of God's servants that they have their sorrow and grief. Just lately I have seen several persons who, I am persuaded, love the Lord and the Lord

loves them—they are very precious to Him—humble, gentle, gracious people, but they have come into deep trouble, or some heavy cloud rests upon them. It is to them, especially, that I am now speaking.

Dear troubled Friend, you may have *a grief or sorrow that is not known to anybody but yourself*. You would not like to reveal it to anyone, you would not whisper it in the ear of the dearest confidant that you have on earth. You keep it to yourself and, perhaps, that is the very reason why it becomes so bitter to you. The communicating of it to some Christian friend might be a real help to you. You know what a relief it is to be able to shed tears when you are in great anguish. If you can have a good cry, you can get over the trouble more easily, but, sometimes, you cannot find expression for the grief and so the pent-up flame becomes more fierce than otherwise it would have been.

Well, there are children of God of that sort, just like Hannah, the woman of a sorrowful spirit, whose adversary sorely vexed her to make her fret. And even when she went up to the House of the Lord, it was in bitterness of soul that she stood there and prayed unto the Most High. I do not think that she could have told anybody, except possibly her husband, what the great grief of her heart was and, dear Friend, if you have a grief that you cannot tell to any human being, let my text affectionately invite you to look toward Jesus, the Temple of this dispensation, and tell the Lord all about your sorrow and ask Him to give you help, in this, your time of need.

It may be that *your trouble, though it is known to others, is misunderstood*. It is a very grievous thing when the affliction of God's people is misread, misinterpreted and others say, "Oh, nonsense! There is nothing to it!" Or else they say, "You are only making a rod for your own back. You might help yourself, if you liked, and get out of that sad state of mind." You know how the exhortation to "make an effort" is often given when all possibility of effort from within has long since passed away! And it is a very grievous thing when those whom we love utterly misunderstand us. They seem to read our words backwards. So far from having any sympathy with us, they are not able to enter into our secret sorrow. Alas for the child of God who is in that sad condition! But if you are thus troubled—if you know the plague of your own heart, but nobody else knows why you are so plagued—if you feel your own burden, but nobody else can see it, go to Jesus and tell *Him* of your inward grief. Open the door of your heart and let Him inspect all your being and ask Him for the gracious forgiveness which is the sweetest balm for your wounds. And then pray for a visitation of His blessed Spirit as the Comforter, that your heart may rejoice and be glad in Him.

Possibly, dear Friend, I may be speaking to you who have a grief which is not only unknown, or if known, is misunderstood, but to you who are *lonesome in your sorrow*. As far as you can tell, nobody ever before went the way which you are now treading. When I have preached, sometimes, to the despondent and the despairing, I have been thankful when, afterwards, persons have come to me and said that my sermon was the first ray of comfort they had ever received. I therefore try to practice Mr. Wesley's plan of firing low. He meant by it, speaking plainly, so as to hit the

groundlings, but while I endorse that view of the expression, I mean also another—not to shoot high where only some soaring professors may be, but to fire low, where the poor and needy are lying on their faces before God! I want to preach so that those who are ready to perish may come to Christ and that those who never before had a hope may begin to hope in Him. My dear Friend, if you are the only one who ever traveled along that rough road, and if you even think that you have no equal in your misery, but sit alone in your sorrow, yet are you bid to turn your face towards Christ, your Temple, and whatever may be your case, to tell it all to Him. And as Jesus lives, He will hear and answer you, and you shall yet go your way in peace!

I do not know what may be the peculiarities of your case. "The heart knows his own bitterness and a stranger does not intermeddle with his joy." There are depths and there are heights where we must be alone. There are some griefs that we must keep to ourselves, as there are some raptures and experiences of which, if we were to tell them, men would say that we were fanatical and suspect that we were out of our mind! Do not be surprised, therefore, if you have sometimes to sail alone, so far as any human beings are concerned. If Christ is in the vessel with you, you cannot need any better company.

This grief of yours, my dear Friend, *may be connected with some sin*, or if not actually so, you may think it is. You may have lost the Light of God's Countenance by some omission, or by walking at a distance from Him. It may be that you have been negligent in prayer. Or, possibly, there may have been some sin of commission—perhaps you have yielded to temptation and, therefore, it is that you are made to walk in the dark. Well, if it is so, do not let even that sad state prevent your coming to Jesus with your burden, for He has not only come to help us in our troubles, but to save us from our sins! "If any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins." Do not, therefore, think that when you have sinned, you are shut out from the Savior. No, but there is "a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness"—open on purpose to cleanse them from sin and impurity!

Paul wrote to the Galatians that our Lord Jesus Christ "gave Himself for our sins," upon which passage, Martin Luther observes that Christ never gave Himself for our righteousness! There was never enough of that to be worth His doing so, but He gave Himself for our sins, that He might put them away from us forever. Come, then, though a sense of guilt should put a sting into your sorrow which otherwise it would not possess. And though you may truly say, "I brought all this misery upon myself, I know I did. I played the fool, exceedingly, and now the mischief is done and cannot be undone," yet remember that there is One who can lift the load off your spirit and say to you, "Go in peace! Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you." Look toward the Temple, even to Christ in whom God dwells, and from whom God shines! Tell Him your grief and you shall yet rejoice in the peace which He delights to bestow.

"Ah," says one, "I am glad to hear this good news, for the sake of others, but *my* case is a peculiarly trying one, for I have been in this sad

state of mind for many years." Yes, and how long was that daughter of Abraham bowed down so that she could by no means lift up herself? Was it not 18 years? Yet how long did it take Christ to make her upright? Why, not a moment! He spoke and she became straight at once, and able to walk like other women! You remember, also, that the impotent man had been waiting at the pool of Bethesda 38 years and the "high Doctrine" folk of that day told him to keep on waiting at the pool. But when Jesus Christ came round that way, *He* did not tell him to wait a minute, but He said, "Rise, take up your bed, and walk." And he did so in an instant!

You, poor troubled Soul, need not continue to lie at the pool! You need not wait there a single moment more! Trust in Christ, who comes to you in all your inability, in all your sinfulness, in all your depression of spirit, in all your despair and who says to you, "Live. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you." "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." "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." These are glorious Words of Grace! May the Lord speak them home to your heart even now! The devil himself cannot hold a man in captivity when once Christ gives him liberty! Though his feet are made fast in the stocks, and it is the dead hour of midnight, yet shall he begin to sing praises unto God! And his fellow prisoners shall hear him when Jesus of Nazareth passes by and gives him the gracious Word which makes him free! Christ crucified is your only hope! Therefore, turn your eyes to Him. By faith, look to those dear wounds of His. From your inmost soul, breathe your penitent prayer to Him and He will grant you the desire of your heart, even life forevermore!

II. Secondly, IF WE HAVE A GRIEF OR SORROW, IT IS WELL TO KNOW IT, for Solomon here speaks "of any man, or of all Your people Israel, when everyone shall know his own burden and his own grief."

In visiting the sick, lately, I have been struck with the different ways in which the children of men are afflicted. There is one of our Beloved Brothers who is covered with blisters from head to foot. Another is lying in a critical condition through congestion of the lungs. There is another gradually melting away with consumption, while cancer is eating out the very life of yet another friend. Now, just as it is with the pangs of the body, so is it with the diseases of the mind and the soul. They are of various kinds and though they may be arranged under different heads, there is no one spiritual burden or sorrow exactly like another and, therefore, it is well for every man to know his own burden and his own grief. My faults are not exactly the same as yours and yours, probably, are not quite like mine. That which greatly grieves me might never trouble you if you had it, while that which worries and troubles you might be a thing which I could laugh at if it came to me. We must never judge one another, nor may we wish to have other people's sorrows and griefs, but we must try, as far as we can, to know, every man, his own burden and his own grief.

For, first, *sometimes to know your grief, is to get rid of it.* It is the unknown that is often the most terrible. Belshazzar, when his knees knocked together, was frightened because he saw the part of the hand that wrote upon the wall, but he did not see the form of the writer, nor could he tell what was written. It was the mystery of the thing that troubled him and, sometimes, when you do not know what your trouble is, it is more of a trial to you than when you can get it into a definite shape. It is a grand thing to be able to look at it, to measure it, to take stock of it, to write down, in black and white, what it is that is worrying you. If you do that, you will probably say to yourself, "How foolish I am to let this be a trouble to me at all!" And sometimes, on the other hand, you will find yourself foolish in another sense. After Christian and Hopeful had been shut up in the dungeon in Giant Despair's Castle for several days and nights, Christian said to his companion, "What a fool I am, 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." We may find ourselves saying just the same thing! We shall look at our trouble till we shall exclaim, "Why, blessed be God, there is a promise in His Word which exactly meets this difficulty! God the Holy Spirit has left on record the message that is just adapted to this very trial! Therefore, why do I lie moaning and groaning in this dungeon, when I might at once walk out into Gospel liberty?" So I say to you, Beloved, seek to know what your burden or your grief really is, for it is the unknown that is usually filled with terrors.

It is, too, *the undiscovered, often, that is the most dangerous.* As I have already said, our sorrows are oftentimes connected with our sins. It is a terrible thing to have a sin festering in your soul and to not know it. If a man tells me that he has no sin, I ask him to look within, or even to look without upon his own life. But if he thinks that he is perfect there, let him keep on looking within. And if he does not discover something evil there, it must be because an awful blindness has fallen upon him! Often there is sin connected with our trouble—and it is most important for us to see it and to know it. I think that it was St. Francis de Sales who said that, among all those who came to him confessing their sins, not one ever confessed to being covetous. And it is a curious thing that, as a rule, no covetous man ever believes that he is covetous. Covetousness is a most deceitful thing! Pray God to point it out to you if it is within your heart, lest it should destroy you! A man may be in such a state of soul that the scarlet fever of pride may be killing him and yet, all the while, he may be thinking, "What a humble person I am!" For pride is another of the most deceptive sins. Every man should try to know what his own weakness is. Perhaps the very point in which you think you are the strongest is that in which you are really weakest. And the thing which does not trouble you in the least may, after all, be that which ought to cause the greatest searching of heart. Do pray the Lord, each one of you, to cause you to know your own burden and your own grief.

Remember that if there is sin mixed with our sorrow, *it ought not only to be known, but to be so known as to be confessed.* Oh, what an easement to the soul it is when you can confess your sin to the Lord! I would

have you do it distinctly in the most plain words possible. Do not attempt to cloak the matter before God, for you cannot hide anything from Him. Remember how David, at last, prayed God to deliver him from blood-guiltiness. He was on the right road to getting rest in his soul when he could confess his great crime like that! I have heard of one who was a child of God, but he was grievously overtaken when, in company, he drank too much. He could not get any peace of mind for months until he said, "Lord, I was drunk." And after he had put it in that way, he found forgiveness, peace and rest. No doubt, before that, he had said, "I am afraid I was a little imprudent," or used some of those pretty phrases which people employ as a cloak for their wrong-doing when they will not confess the evil in all its nakedness and deformity. Away with the fig leaves! God abhors them! It is *He* who must clothe you! And He will do so with the righteousness of His Son. But, if He is to accept you, there must be no attempt to lighten your guilt. Let sin be called sin and, in the Presence of Christ—

"Sin does like itself appear,"

and the sinner sees its heinousness and learns to hate it. So, then, each man must know his own burden, his own grief and especially his own sin—that he may confess it unto God.

What does all this come to, then, dear Brother, dear Sister? You have, perhaps, been coming to see me, or to see one of the elders, about your trouble. We cannot help you much, though we will gladly do what we can for you. But, now, try to make it clear to your own mind what all the trouble is about—get it down in black and white if you can—and then come with it to the Lord. Often there is far too much indistinctness in our prayers. We really do not know what we are aiming at and, consequently, we miss the mark. We have not a clear idea what it is that we are seeking of the Lord and, therefore, we do not get it. But if we really know our grief and know our burden, and know our sin, and know the plague of our own heart—and then go before the Lord with it all, and say, "That is my trouble, Lord. I confess it before You with a broken heart and a contrite spirit," it will not be long before the Lord, in mercy, shall give us peace.

III. Now, thirdly, and briefly, while it is well to know our grief, IT IS BETTER, STILL, TO PRAY ABOUT IT. I have been hammering away at this Truth of God, but now I want to give a few blows right upon the head of the nail.

Dear troubled Friend, *there is no relief for you like prayer.* And if you are almost in despair, permit me to put the matter to you very gently. I will try to push in the thin end of the wedge first. Perhaps, if you go to God, and pray about your trouble, you will get deliverance from it. I say, perhaps. Put it so, to begin with. You cannot lose anything, can you, by praying to God? Suppose you go to the Lord with your grief—you cannot be any worse off than you already are, can you? You are now in such a sad condition, so much bowed down that if you confess your sin and your sorrow at His dear feet, and leave them there, you cannot be in a sadder plight than you are now, can you? Well, then, say, with the poet—

"I'll to the gracious King approach,

Whose scepter pardon gives.
Perhaps He may command my touch
And then the suppliant lives!
Perhaps He will admit my plea,
Perhaps will hear my prayer—
But if I perish, I will pray,
And perish only there.
I can but perish if I go.
I am resolved to try,
For if I stay away, I know
I must forever die."

It may be that the Lord will deliver you. There is many a man who has gone to God on the strength of a, "may be," and yet that, "may be," has been enough to land him in Heaven at last! You remember how the whole of the people of Nineveh had nothing to rely upon except that question of their king, "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?" That was a very tiny thread, "Who can tell?" But, relying on it, they went and humbled themselves before God—and we know what followed—"And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil ways. And God repented of the evil that He had said that He would do unto them, and He did it not." Sister, I would like to whisper that question in your ear, "Who can tell?" Brother, I would like to take your hand and say to you, "Come now, do not despair. Who can tell? It may be that the Lord will be also gracious to you. Go and cast yourself at His feet and determine to lie there, and to perish there, if you must perish. But you shall not perish if you go to Him."

Remember, again, that *there is One who is quite ready to give you a full hearing, whatever your trouble and your sin may be*, for the Lord Jesus Christ already knows all about your trouble—

"Our fellow Sufferer yet retains
A fellow feeling of our pains
And still remembers in the skies
His tears, and agonies, and cries.
In every pang that rends the heart,
The Man of Sorrows had a part.
He sympathizes in our grief,
And to the sufferer sends relief."

If you come to me, I shall try to sympathize with you as fully as I can. But, perhaps, I shall fail, for you may be so deep in the bog that I may never have gone quite as low down as that. But if you go to the Lord Jesus Christ, you can never be as deep in sorrow as He was when His agony forced from Him great drops of blood and His soul was "exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." And, as for your sin, black as it is, it is not too black for Him to remove! Bring out the sin that is more than a match for Christ, if you can. Remember His great declaration, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Oh, it is you, poor woman, is it? Are you like the one of whom we were reading just now? Do you feel yourself as great a sinner as she was, or are you actually a woman of the very vilest class? And are your accusers near, who, if you were to deny your guilt, would stand up and witness against you? Jesus says to you, "Go, and sin no more." O poor sinful Soul, go to Jesus even if you have all the sins that are unmentionable piled upon you! And if you are a man

who has committed as much sin as all the rest of the world put together, yet come along! My Lord, who bore upon His shoulders the sin of the world, is fully able to put your sin away—

"If all the sins that men have done
In thought, or word, or deed
Since worlds were made, or time began,
Were heaped on one poor sinner's head,"

yet could the blood of Jesus Christ blot them all out in a single moment, so that though they were sought for, they should never be found again! Oh, that you would but come and trust the Lord Jesus Christ!

"Ah," says one, "that is just my difficulty—I cannot trust Him." If you talk like that, you and I will fall out directly! If you tell me that you cannot trust my father, I shall say, "My father is a man of truth and honor. He pays his debts and he never lies! And I will not have you say, 'I cannot trust him.'" But whatever you call my father, I shall not be half so indignant as when you tell me that you cannot trust my Savior! When did He lie, pray tell? When was He ever false? When did He ever fail? You say you cannot trust Him? Why, I feel that if I had all your souls in one, I could trust Him with the whole of them! Yes, if I could get into this body of mine all the souls that God ever made, I would trust Him with the whole bulk, for I am persuaded that He was never trusted too much! You could never believe of Christ a thing so good that it was not true! Suppose that you believe that He can forgive you—He will do it! He will never let your belief go beyond what He will do. If you believe that He will wash you so that you shall be whiter than snow, He will do it! Faith and Christ often run a race, but Christ always wins, for, if faith flies like the wind, Christ flashes like the lightning and He outstrips it. You cannot possibly believe too good a thing of Him. Just try, now, whether you can do so! Should not that Truth of God tend to cheer you, poor downcast one?

The best thing that you can do is to remember that there is an open door to every soul who lives. Then, draw near to God. There is no barrier in the way and there is a blessed text, at the end of this Book, which says, "Whoever will, let him take the Water of Life freely." I saw a man once, in a court of justice, who was called up to the witness box, but he could not press through the crowd. So the judge spoke to the usher, and the usher said to the people, "Let him come! Let him come! Let him come!" And after he had said that, there began to be a little narrow lane made for him, and so he squeezed his way up. Now there is a poor sinner over there, and there are a thousand devils between him and Christ! But when Christ says to them, "Let him come! Let him come! Let him come!" They must make a lane for him. When our Lord Jesus Christ was upon the earth, on the great day of the feast, He stood and cried, "If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me, and drink." Who will say to Him, "Lord, I am that man! I am thirsty and You say, 'Let him come'"? If you say that, who is there to stop you from going to Him? Why, if the arch-fiend should set himself right in your way, yet if Jesus Christ says, "Let him come," you shall come!

Did not He say, long ago, "Let there be light"? and the primeval darkness, which had lasted throughout many an age, was gone in an instant! So, if the Lord says, "Let him come," then all that oppose you and try to

keep you back must be overthrown, for you shall come! Trust Jesus, dear Friend! Trust in the name of the Lord of love and mercy, who is looking upon you, a poor, bruised, broken, manacled mass of misery. I beseech you, turn your eyes towards Christ. O you poor smoking flax, if you have not anything about you but smoke, and that smoke is not very sweet, yet Jesus Christ says that He will not quench you! O you poor bruised reed, out of which there can come no music as you are, I tell you that He will yet get music out of you! Only look to Him, poor troubled one, for He knows how to bind up the broken in heart, and to heal their wounds and, thereby, to glorify Himself. Oh, for another prayer, even though it were your last! Do breathe it. I know that Satan will try hard to stop you. He will say, "It is no use! You have been praying for months! You have been praying for years!" Yes, but, this time pray as you never prayed before! Perhaps you have been lifting up your eyes to a priest, or to a man, or to a Doctrine, or to a creed—now just look right away to Jesus Christ! That is the way that prayer was heard in the olden days, when they looked toward the Temple! And your prayer shall be heard when you look to the Savior! "Oh, but just look at me!" you say. No, I do not want to look at you! I want you to look to Christ. "Oh, but, Sir, I am dreadfully wicked! I confess it with shame." Yes, and you are probably a hundred times worse than you think you are! You are a good-for-nothing sort of person. You are an out-of-the-way sinner, but that is the very reason why I want you to believe in Him "who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way."

I want you to look to Him who came to earth on purpose that He might wash these Blackamoors white, and take the spots out of these leopards, and make them to become like lambs! My Lord did not come into the world to be a doctor who only cures finger-aches and small complaints! He came to cleanse the lepers, to cast out demons, to raise the dead—even Lazarus, who had begun to putrefy! Oh, He is such a glorious Savior that I cannot speak His praises loudly enough, though speaking of Him warms my own heart! My voice was hoarse when I began my sermon and I thought I could hardly get through the discourse, but, with such a theme as this, I forget all weakness and pain! Yes, raise me even when I am dying, that I may sit up in bed and begin to praise Him! There never was a sinner half as big as Christ is a Savior! Come and measure the sinner, if you like, from head to foot, and all round. Make him out to be an elephantine sinner, yet there is room for him in the Ark, Christ Jesus! There is room in the heart of Jesus for the vilest of the vile! Oh, that you would turn your eyes to Him and pray to Him from your very heart and trust in Him with your whole soul!

I finish up by saying that *those who do this shall find rest unto their souls*. Solomon's petition was that they should be forgiven. "Then hear You from Heaven, Your dwelling place, and forgive." Yes, and everything else that a sinner needs is ready for him when he comes to Christ. I do not know—I cannot tell—all that you need, but I do know that all you ever can need between here and Heaven is laid up for you in Christ Jesus! I have used this illustration before. Here is a poor little babe that we have picked up in the streets. What shall we do with it? What does this child

need? Well, it needs washing—look how filthy it is, for it has been lying in the gutter. It needs food, poor little creature—look how emaciated it is. It needs proper clothes—look at its rags. I would have to keep on a long time and you mothers who are listening to me might say, "He does not know much about what the babe needs." But I will show you that I do, because in one single sentence I will tell you what that child needs! *It needs its* MOTHER! And when it gets its mother, it has got everything. When its mother finds it, then it is provided for! And what you need, dear Soul, is pardon, cleansing, clothing, training, sanctifying—but I will not go over it all. *What you need is your* SAVIOR! You need Jesus and if you get Jesus, you never shall have a need that is outside of Christ! You shall never have a necessity that is not comprised within the matchless circle of His unspeakable all-sufficiency! Oh, take Christ to your heart and your fortune is made! You have all you need for time and for eternity, when once the Lord Jesus Christ is yours! Oh, that you would make a dash for this great blessing!

"I am afraid to come," says one. Well come all trembling and fearing—only come. "But I am afraid I shall be cast out if I come." Oh, but you must not indulge that fear, for He has said, "He that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." "But suppose I should not happen to be one of the right sort?" Come all the same, whether you are or not, for Christ will not cast you out if you do but come to Him! When a man is very hungry, if he takes bread that is not his own and eats it, no one will ever take it away from him, for he has it too securely. So, if you come and take the Lord Jesus Christ into your very soul, there is no one who can take Him away from you! "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!" And he that really feeds upon Him has so received Him that he shall never lose Him. Oh, that all who are strangers to Him might do so even now. The Lord bless you all, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 7:53; 8:1-11.

John 7:53; John 8:1:*And every man went unto his own house. Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives.* That is, as every man went to his own house to rest, so Jesus found rest in secret prayer on the Mount of Olives. There is a very striking contrast here. It is a pity to have brought the dividing saw right through the middle of such charming consecutive sentences.

2. *And early in the morning He came again into the Temple, and all the people came unto Him; and He sat down, and taught them.* That is always the posture in the East—the teachers sit, and the hearers stand. We may have to try that plan one of these days—it might be better for me and, also, for you! There might be less drowsiness, perhaps, if the congregation had to stand to listen to the preacher's message.

3, 4. *And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto Him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, they said unto Him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.* They did this only to entangle the Savior—not because they wanted to learn anything

of Him, or to do this woman any good, or even to vindicate morality. It was simply an effort to entrap Him.

5, 6. *Now Moses in the Law commanded us that such should be stoned: but what say You? This they said, tempting Him, that they might have to accuse Him.* They could accuse Him either way. If He sanctioned their stoning the woman, they would charge Him with violating the Roman law. But if He said that she should not be stoned, then they would say that He differed from Moses and set aside the Law of God.

6, 7. *But Jesus stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground, as though He heard them not. So when they continued asking Him, He lifted up Himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.* That sentence must have flashed like a drawn sword, keen as a razor, through the very midst of them! Here were men who had probably been living in abominable sin, yet they had brought this poor sinful woman to Jesus and laid this accusation against her.

8. *And again He stooped down, and wrote on the ground.* After He had fired that one red-hot shot, He waited until it had produced its due effect.

9. *And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out, one by one, beginning with the eldest, even unto the last; and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.* They left her alone with Jesus in the midst of the place that the guilty crowd had forsaken in silent shame.

10, 11. *When Jesus had lifted up Himself, and saw none but the woman, He said unto her, Woman, where are those, your accusers? Has no man condemned you? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn you: go, and sin no more.* He condemned the sin—His own pure and holy life was the best condemnation of that. But, as for the sinner, He had not come to condemn, but to forgive. His own declaration was, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—30, 978, 981.

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THE RIGHT OBSERVANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER
NO. 2638

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 4, 1882.

"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you. 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 often 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."
1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

WE have no respect whatever for the ordinances of men in religion. Anything that is only invented by churches, or councils, is nothing whatever to us. We know of two ordinances instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ—the Baptism of Believers and the Lord's Supper. And we utterly abhor and reject all pretended "sacraments" of every kind. And because we observe these two ordinances, and these two, only, we are the more concerned that they should be properly used and duly understood, and that they should minister to the edification of those who participate in them. We would have those who are baptized understand what is meant by that expressive rite—that they, being dead with Christ, should also be buried with Him and rise with Him into newness of life. And when we observe the Lord's Supper, we feel a deep and earnest desire that none should come to the Table in ignorance of the significance of the observance—or that, at least, ignorance may not be an occasion of eating unworthily—but that we may comprehend what we are doing and understand the spiritual meaning of this pictorial instruction by which the Lord Jesus Christ would, even until the end of the age, remind His Church of His great Sacrifice upon the Cross.

I. So, first, I will speak briefly concerning THE FORM OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

We do not think that it is at all material where that supper is held. It is just as valid and helpful in your own private apartments, in your bedroom, or in your parlor, as it is in any place where Christians usually congregate. We do not attach so much importance as some people do to the *time* when it is observed, but we are astonished that High Churchmen should be opposed to evening communion, for, if any definite time for partaking of it can be quoted from Scripture, it certainly is the evening! I should like to ask the Ritualists whether they can find any instance, either in holy or profane things, of a supper being eaten before breakfast—until they invented that absurd practice! There is no time that is more like the first occasion when the Master celebrated the ordinance with His disciples than is the evening of the day. Then it was that He gathered the 12 Apostles together and instituted this blessed memorial feast! At Emmaus, too, it was at the close of the day that He was made known to His two disciples in the breaking of bread. It must be sheer superstition, utterly unwarranted by Holy Scripture, which tells us that the Lord's Supper can only be properly received *in the morning* and that we ought not to eat anything before we partake of the sacred emblems! We reject all such nonsense, for we find no authority for it in the only standard which we recognize, that is, the Inspired Word of God! Let us see what it teaches us concerning this ordinance.

We learn, first, that *the Lord's Supper should begin with thanksgiving*. So the Master Himself evidently commenced it—"He took bread and gave thanks." All through the Supper, the emotion of gratitude should be in active exercise. It is intended that we should give thanks for the bread—at the same time giving still more emphatic thanks for the sacred body which it *represents*. Then we should also give thanks for the cup and for that most precious blood which is therein *represented* to us. We cannot rightly observe the Lord's Supper unless we come to the table, blessing, praising, magnifying and adoring our Savior—praising Him even for instituting such a festival of remembrance—such a memorial ordinance to help our frail memories! And praising Him yet more for giving us so blessed a thing to remember as His own great Sacrifice for our sin.

After the thanksgiving, it is very clear that our Divine Lord *broke the bread*. We scarcely know what kind of bread was used on that occasion. It was probably the thin passover cake of the Jews, but there is nothing said in Scripture about the use of leavened or unleavened bread and, therefore, it matters not which we use! Where there is no ordinance, there is no obligation and we are, therefore, left free to use the bread which it is our custom to eat. When the Master had broken the bread, *He*

gave it to His disciples, and said, "Take, eat." And they all participated in eating it. And this, mark you, is essential to the right observance of the Lord's Supper, so that, when the priest, in celebrating "mass," takes the wafer, which is not bread and which he does not break, but which he, himself, eats whole, there is no Lord's Supper there! Whatever it may be called, it is not the Lord's Supper. In the eating of the bread, there must be the participation of such a number of faithful, godly disciples of Christ as may be present, or else it is not the ordinance which the Lord instituted.

That being done, the next thing was that, "*After the same manner also He took the cup*." That is to say, after the same manner of thanksgiving, blessing God for the fruit of the vine, which was henceforth to be the emblem of His poured-out blood. Even so should we. It is no vain thing to praise the Lord, though we do it twice, thrice—yes, and ten thousand times! Well did the Psalmist say, "Praise you the Lord: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely." Especially comely is it for us to praise our God when we are calling to remembrance the unspeakable gift of His only-begotten and well-beloved Son!

Then came the partaking of the cup—the fruit of the vine—of which the Master expressly said, "Drink you all of it." Hence, when the Church of Rome takes away the cup from the people and denies it to them, there is no observance of the Lord's Supper, for another essential part of the ordinance is left out. It may be the "mass," or it may be anything else, but it is not the Supper of the Lord! There must be a participation by all the faithful in the cup, as well as in the bread, otherwise the Lord's death is not shown, or proclaimed according to Christ's most holy and blessed command.

Further, in order that this may be the Lord's Supper in very truth, *it must be observed in remembrance of Christ*, who said to His disciples, "This do in remembrance of Me." From which we learn that only those who *know Him* must come to His Table, for how shall we remember what we never knew? And how shall we remember Him with whom we have never spoken and in whom we have never believed? You are not to come to the Lord's Supper to *get* faith—you must have faith, first—or else you have no right to draw near to this sacred spot. What do you do here? If you suppose that this is a *saving* ordinance, I must say to you what Christ said to the Sadducees, "You do err, not knowing the Scriptures." Salvation comes to us through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and it is *the result of the effectual working of the Spirit of God within us*! This Supper is a most instructive ordinance for those who are saved, but those who are not born again and are not, by Divine Grace, members of the Lord's family, have no right here. They who ate the Passover were such as were

born in the priest's house, or bought with the priest's money—and if you have been born in Christ's house, or bought with Christ's blood—if you know, by blessed experience, the meaning of regeneration and redemption, then you may come to the Communion Table. But, if not, as the Passover was only intended for Israel, so is this supper a family feast for those who belong to Jesus Christ—no others may come to it! If they do come, it will be at the peril of eating and drinking unworthily since they are unable to discern the Lord's body.

I have thus given you a very brief account of the form of observing the Lord's Supper, as we find it in the New Testament. You notice that I have not said anything about a chalice, or a paten, or about consecrating the elements, or uplifting the host and all that Romish rubbish of which some people think so much. The reason for my silence is that there is nothing about these things in the Bible. "To the Law, and to the Testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them." Clear away all the additions of superstition—they are but the dust and the rust which have accumulated during the ages and they spoil and mar the purity of Christ's own ordinance! Our great concern must be to observe it *exactly* as He has delivered it to us, in accordance with His own injunction, "This do in remembrance of Me"—not something else in its place.

II. Now, secondly, from our text I gather THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

First, *because it was revealed by the Lord Himself*. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you." Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were all accessible to Paul and, though they had not then written their Gospels, yet he could have learned from *them* how the Savior instituted the Supper. But, as if Christ would not let it be secondhand, He was pleased to declare to Paul, personally—to Paul, himself—directly and distinctly, how the Supper should be celebrated. The Apostle says, "I have received of the Lord"—not, "*we*"—not, "I and the rest of the Apostles and disciples," but—"I have received of the Lord," indicating a definite *personal* Revelation from Christ as to this matter. After the Lord Jesus had gone up into Glory, His Revelations were but few, yet this was one of them. He would have His disciples, therefore, pay due attention to this important matter which He thus especially revealed to Paul. O Beloved, I often tremble for those who tamper with the ordinances of Christ—they alter them, or shift them out of their proper places—and then say that their alterations are unimportant! Mary said to the servants at Cana of Galilee, "Whatever He says unto you, do it." And we have need of the same command today! We must not alter anything that Christ has ordained, for, "where the word of a king is,

there is power" and, in the Word of the King of Kings, there is power to condemn those who alter His Word. Whatever Christ has commanded is to be obeyed by us—and as He took special pains concerning this ordinance, to make a distinct Revelation over and above the guidance of the Holy Spirit to the four Evangelists, we may be certain that He intended to surround this Supper with the utmost solemnity and authority.

I have already referred to the next point, but it is so important that I remind you, again, that *this Supper was commanded by the Lord*. He said, "This do in remembrance of Me." And again, "This do you, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." If I love Christ, I am bound to keep His commandments—and among the rest of His commandments, this one in which He, here, says, "This do." I might have thought, from the conduct of some professing Christians, that Jesus must have said, "This *do not,*" but as He said, "This do you," where shall I find an apology for those who either never have done it at all, or, being His people, do it so seldom that He could not say to them, "This do you, as *often* as you drink it," but He might rather say, "This do you as *seldom* as you drink it," since the idea of frequency does not enter into their observance of it? But, dear Friends, what Christ revealed and commanded, it is incumbent upon His own beloved ones to obey!

Notice, again, that *this supper was instituted by Christ, Himself, and He, Himself, first set the example for its observance*. As to Baptism, you remember how He said, "Thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness," and so He set us the example in that matter. And, in the Supper, it was He who first blessed and broke the bread. It was He who first passed the cup and said, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood." If He had given the command and the Apostles had been the first to attend to it, it would have been binding upon us, but, inasmuch as, in *addition* to giving the command concerning it, He, Himself, set the example of observing it—sitting at the center of the table, with the 12 all around Him—I think He has put a special halo about this ordinance and we must, by no means forget, or neglect, or despise it.

Remember, too, that *He established it on a very special occasion*. To my mind, it is very touching to read, "The Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread." I cannot help noticing that the Apostle is very particular to say here, "The Lord Jesus." Very often He uses the name, "Christ," in speaking of the Savior. But here it is, "the Lord Jesus," to show the awe and reverence which the Apostle felt as, by faith, he saw the Master at the first Communion Table. Paul could not forget that, though Jesus was then Lord of All, He was that same night betrayed. He that ate bread with Him lifted up his heel against Him and sold Him for 30 pieces of silver! Yet, even while the anticipation of that

betrayal and all which it involved was tearing His heart asunder, He remembered us and established this ordinance that, by refreshing our memories concerning His blessed Self, we might not be left to play the traitor, too, but might be kept steadfast in every time of trial. O Brothers and Sisters, it seems to me that we must be especially careful to observe such an ordinance as this, instituted when our Savior's heart was breaking with anguish on our behalf!

And remember, too, the importance of the ordinance, because of *the peculiar personal motive with which it was instituted*—"This do in remembrance"—of what? Of Christianity and its doctrines and practices? No. But, "in remembrance of *Me*." You know how tenderly a thing comes home to you if a dying husband says, "This do, my beloved one, in remembrance of me, when I am dead and gone." You never fail to do that, I am sure, if it is in your power. You know how it is with a friend who has gone from you and who has left you some forget-me-not. You treasure it with the utmost care. The memento is very precious for your friend's sake and our dear Lord and Master has put about this Supper all the loveliness of His personality, all the graciousness of His affection for us and all the tenderness that ought to be in our love to Him. If there is anything that He bids you do, you ought to do it—but when it is something to be done *in remembrance of Him*, you must do it—your love impels you to do it! Are you not ashamed if you are not doing it in the most loving, humble, grateful and earnest manner possible, as becomes the memory of Him who loved you and gave Himself for you? I would not like to have to urge any Christian to come to the Communion Table—I feel as if I would do nothing to spoil the perfect spontaneity of it. If you do not love Him, do not come to His Table! But if you love Him, come because you love Him. Come because you remember Him and because you wish to be helped to remember Him yet more. If there is nothing about Him that you wish to remember, do not dare come! But, if He is precious to your soul, your transport and your trust. If His very name is music to your ears, honey to your mouth and joy to your heart, then you do not need me to press you to come to His Table, but you will come because He says, "This do you in remembrance of Me."

There is one more thing which adds to the importance of this Supper and that is, *it is to be observed "till He comes*." It is not an ordinance, then, for the first Christian centuries, alone, to be, as it were, the bridge between the ceremonialism of the Old Testament and the spirituality of the New Testament. No, it is intended to be celebrated "till He comes." We must keep on gathering at His Table, giving thanks, breaking bread and proclaiming His death till the trumpet of the archangel shall startle us—and then we shall feel it to be truly blessed to be found obediently re-

membering Him when He puts in His appearance at the last! As He comes to us, we shall say, "Blessed Master, we have done as You did bid us. We have kept alive Your memory in the world to ourselves and to those who looked on as we broke the bread and drank of the cup in Your name. And now we rejoice to see You in Your Glory." I do not know that the meeting between Christ and His people could happen at a better time than if He were to come when they were gathered at His Table, obeying His command and showing His death "till He comes."

Thus I have tried, as briefly as I could, to give instruction as to the importance of this Supper. I hope that the Holy Spirit will press home the Truth of God upon the hearts of any who have not observed this ordinance, before, and that He will lead them to ask if they are, indeed, Believers in Jesus, and lovers of the Lord, how they can justify themselves for their disobedience to what Christ has so expressly commanded!

III. But now, thirdly, let us enquire, IN WHAT SPIRIT OUGHT WE TO COME TO THIS TABLE?

I should say, first, that we are bound to come in the spirit of *deep humility*. Brothers and Sisters, to my mind, it is a very humbling thing that we should need anything to help us to remember Christ. I see no better evidence of the fact that we are not yet perfectly sanctified, for, if we were, we would need nothing to help us to remember Him. There is, alas, still an imperfection in our memory—and that strangest and saddest thing of all—in respect to Jesus Himself. It is extraordinary that we should ever require anything to help us to remember Him. Can He, to whom we owe so much, be ever forgotten by us? The fact that this ordinance is to be observed in remembrance of Him, "till He comes," is a humbling proof that till that glorious event, His people's memories will be faulty and they will need this double forget-me-not to remind them of Him who is their All-in-All.

What do I see on that Table? I see bread there. Then I gather this humbling lesson—that I cannot even keep myself in spiritual food. I am such a pauper, such an utter beggar, that my own table cannot furnish me with what I need and I must come to the Lord's Table—and I must receive, through Him, the spiritual nutriment which my soul requires. What do I see in the cup? I see the wine which is the token of His shed blood. What does that say to me but that I still need cleansing? Oh, how I rejoice in that blessed text in John's first Epistle—"If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another." And then what follows? That we do not need to make any more confession of sin because we are quite cleansed from it? Nothing of the sort! "And the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." We still need the cleansing fountain even when we are walking in the light, as God is

in the light—and we need to come to it every day! And what a mercy it is that the emblem sets forth the constant provision of purifying blood whereby we may be continually cleansed! As we partake of this cup, we must do so humbly, for thus it becomes us to come to the Table of our Lord.

But, next, we must come *very thankfully*. Some pull a long face when they think about coming to the Communion Table, like Mrs. Too-Good who is described in Rowland Hill's *Village Dialogues*. She made a mistake about the week that the ordinance was to be observed, so she did not play cards during that week and kept herself wonderfully pure, poor old soul. And then, when she found, on Sunday, that she had made a blunder as to the time, she said she had wasted the whole week in getting ready! Ah, dear Friends, I hope we do not know anything of *that* method of keeping the sacred feast. We are to come in a very different frame of mind than that, for we are not coming to a funeral supper, but to the luxuries and dainties that become a marriage feast! Let us come, therefore, with thankfulness, as we say to one another concerning our Lord, "He is not here, for He is risen, glory be to His holy name!" These tokens of remembrance tell us that He has gone where it was expedient for Him to go, that the Holy Spirit might descend upon us. Therefore, Beloved, rejoice even because of the absence of your Lord, for it is well that He should be gone up into Glory. And, as we come to the Table, each one feeling what a sinner he is—how unworthy he is to come—how unfit he is to sit with saints—should not each heart say, "Bless the Lord, O my Soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name"? Twice during the feast, special thanksgivings are to be presented—but all through the feast let the heart be full of holy gratitude and praise to God!

But, we should certainly come to the Table *with great thoughtfulness*. There are some, we are told, who do not discern the Lord's body—let us think and pray, lest we should be numbered with them. If there is no right thinking, there will be no true spiritual feeling and there will be no Lord's Supper so far as you are concerned. Think of what your Savior suffered for you, what He has done for you and what He has gone to prepare for you! Let us remember that the bread sets forth the suffering of His body, that the wine typifies the blood of the Atonement whereby we are cleansed—that the two, apart—the body separated from the blood, form a most suggestive symbol of the matchless death whereby we are made to live! Think much at the Table, but think of nothing but Christ! Fix your thoughts entirely upon Him and so shall you eat of this bread and drink of this cup to your soul's refreshment and profit!

But come, also, *with great receptiveness*. It is a meal, you know. We receive the bread and the wine. So, come to the Table begging the Lord to

give you the Grace to feed upon Himself spiritually, that you may, by faith, receive Him into your inward parts—that in your inmost soul you may have the virtue of His life and of His death! Come empty, therefore, for so you will be the better qualified to feed upon Him. Come hungering and thirsting—thus you will have the greater appetite for Christ. Receive Him in all His fullness by a wonderful faith that takes Him in to be a joy to the heart forever.

That is the spirit, then, in which to come to the Lord's Table. May the blessed Spirit be with you, dear Brothers and Sisters, that all who do come to the Table may come in that humble, thankful, thoughtful, receptive style!

IV. Now I finish my discourse by dwelling, for a minute or two, upon THE GREAT LESSONS WHICH THIS SUPPER INCIDENTALLY TEACHES.

The first lesson is, that *Jesus is for us*. There has been a great dispute over this verse, "This is My body, which is broken for you." The word, "broken," appears in some of the ancient manuscripts, but it is, undoubtedly, an interpolation. It is absent from several of those manuscripts upon which we are obliged to rely for the correct text of the New Testament and, therefore, very properly, the Revised Version reads, "This is My body, which is for you." And, to my mind, that rendering gives a new thought which is well worth having. "This is My body, which is for you." That is to say, Christ is for you—does not the Supper, itself, say that? The bread represents His body for you—the wine represents His blood for you. We know that it is for you because you are going to eat it. There is nothing that is more certainly a man's than what he eats or drinks. Our proverb says, "Possession is nine points of the law." And I wonder how many points of the law it is when a man has eaten a thing up? There is no legal quibble that can deprive him of that. Whatever suit at law may be brought, there is no possibility of taking away from a man that which he has eaten and, in like manner, when we have really received Christ by faith, there is no possibility of robbing us of Him. "This is My body, which is for you." Oh, what a blessed Doctrine! Lay hold of this great Truth of God, all that there is in Christ is for you! All the fullness of the Godhead is in Him, "and of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace." Glory be to His name for this!

The next lesson is that *His blood has sealed the Covenant*. "This cup is the new covenant in my blood." I wish I had an hour or two in which I might speak to you about the Covenant. It is no use to begin on that great subject in the few minutes we have left. There was a Covenant that cursed us—the Covenant of Works. There is another Covenant that has blessed the elect of God and shall bless them to all eternity—the Covenant of Grace—and this Covenant is signed, sealed and ratified, in all

things ordered well—and for its seal it has the blood of God's own Son! Therefore it shall stand fast forever and ever. So, as you partake of that cup, drink with joy because it reminds you that God has made with you "an everlasting Covenant ordered in all things and sure." Oh, I am certain that if you know the music of that word, "Covenant," you will enjoy coming to the Table, even if nothing but that one word shall be brought to your memory!

The third great Doctrine that is taught by this Supper is that *Believers feed on Christ Himself*. Sometimes they forget this and they try to feed on doctrines. They will make as great a mistake as if the Jew, when he went up to the tabernacle, had tried to feed on the curtains, or the altar, or the golden tongs! What did he have for food? Why, the peace-offering! When he drew near to his God, he fed on the sacrifice—and the true food of a Believer is Christ Jesus, Himself! Feed on Him, then, Beloved. We cannot *literally* eat His body or drink His blood—we would be worse than cannibals to attempt such a thing! But we *can* do it, and we *must* do it *spiritually*, by having our hearts and our minds resting upon what Christ is and what He has done, and so feeding upon our Lord Jesus Christ.

I have finished when I have mentioned one more lesson which is to be learned from this ordinance. It is clear, from this Supper, that *the way to remember Christ is to feed on Him again and again*. Is it not a strange thing that if I have had a great mercy, the way to remember that mercy is to come to God and get another mercy? If Christ was ever sweet to my taste, the way to perpetuate that sweetness is to come and taste Him again! Dear Brothers and Sisters, do not try to live upon your old experiences! Even the best kind of bread will not stay fresh very long—it soon gets musty if you lay it by. You need to have bread constantly coming fresh from the oven. Even the manna, which came down from Heaven, could not be kept, lest it should breed worms—and so it is with the food for your souls. Do not try to live on moldy experiences.

More than 30 years ago I had great joy in the Lord when first I knew Him. I am very glad that I can remember it, but that recollection is of little use to me when I get depressed in spirit. No, then I need the Lord to come to me again as He came then. You came to Jesus Christ, did you not, as a poor, empty sinner, ever so many years ago? Then, come again in the same way! Come to Christ every day as you came to Him the first day! "Oh, but I was only a sinner then!" Well, you are not much more than that now! And you will find it the safest thing to come just as you came at first. "Well, but am I not an experienced saint by this time?" Yes, yes, I daresay you are, but I find that whenever I have on the one robe of my experience, I am like the lady at court with a long train—somebody is

sure to step on it—and then it gets torn. I like to come to Jesus Christ just as I came at first.

Suppose that the devil says to me, "You are no child of God." I have often said to him, "You do not know much about that matter, though you know that you are not one, yourself." "But," he says, "you do not know the Lord." "Ah, then," I ask him, "what am I?" He answers, "You are a great black sinner!" Then, like Luther, I cut off his head with his own sword, just as David did with Goliath, for I say to him, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners and I am going off to the sinners' Savior, just to trust in Him as I did at the first!" And the devil generally departs when I tell him that. There is nothing that is so soul-strengthening as taking another look at the bronze serpent, or having another plunge in the fountain filled with blood, or feeding, once again, on the inexhaustible provision that is stored up for us in the Person of our Lord!

If any of you who have come to the Table of the Lord are not believers in Christ, never dare to come again while you are in that state! You have no right here unless you are resting in Jesus and trusting in Him! This is the proof of your being new creatures in Christ Jesus. But if you have the faintest, feeblest faith in Jesus, come and welcome! If you are trusting in your own merits, go to your own table—if you think there will be some *merit* in your coming to the Communion Table, do not dare to come, for that were to turn the ordinance upside down! You are not to bring something, but to *receive* something. May you who love the Lord find Him to be very precious to you and may those of you who do not know Him, seek Him at once, not at the Table, but at the Mercy Seat and at the Cross! Trust in Jesus, for so you shall be saved, and then you shall have the right of entry to the Lord's House—and you shall have the privilege of sitting at His Table and of enjoying every other blessing which is the portion of the chosen family. The Lord make it to be so, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 CORINTHIANS 11:17-34; LUKE 22:14-24.

The members of the Church at Corinth abounded in gifts and, therefore, they thought it right for each one to speak to edification. They had no pastoral oversight whatever—acting, in this respect, like certain brethren whom we know nowadays. The result, however, was very deplorable. They do not appear to have been able to even conduct the Lord's Supper without the most disorderly proceedings. Church discipline was utterly forgotten or neglected and it seems as if the two Epis-

tles to the Corinthians are given to us as beacons to warn us against that form of worship, seeing that it produces such mischievous and sad results!

1 Corinthians 11:17. *Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that you come together not for the better, but for the worse.* It is a very bad state of things when we meet for worship and separate without any improvement, or, like these Corinthians, "come together, not for the better, but for the worse."

18. *For first of all, when you come together in the Church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and I partly believe it.* It was very gracious and kind on the Apostle's part to put it so mildly—and he sets us the example of not believing anything against our brethren too quickly. "I partly believe it."

19-21. *For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. 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 regarded it as a common feast to which they brought their own provisions and, without waiting for each other, they disgraced the Table of the Lord by their scandalous proceedings.

22. *What? Have you not houses to eat and to drink in? Or despise you the Church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.* No doubt they hoped to be praised and expected that they had done everything in the right way! Perhaps they even believed that they were acting under the Inspiration of the Spirit and, therefore, could not do anything wrong. But the Apostle deals very faithfully with them and tells them how the Supper is to be celebrated. How much we have gained by the mistakes of others! As the Inspired Apostle is guided to inform us as to the right mode of observing this ordinance, we may almost be thankful that the Corinthians fell into error concerning it—as much as we may regret their faults on their own account.

23, 24. *For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, 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.* These are the words of the Lord Jesus, Himself, and therefore they come to us with all the weight of His Infallible authority! Then Paul continues—

25, 26. *After the same manner, also, He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new covenant in My blood: this do you, as often 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. "Show" or, "proclaim." The latter is the better word. "You do proclaim the Lord's death till He comes." That last phrase ought finally to settle the question of the perpetuity of the Lord's Supper, which is to be observed "till He comes."

27. *Therefore whoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.* "Unworthily," that is, in a thoughtless, careless way—or with a view to worldly gain, as some used to take it in order to obtain an office under government and as some, doubtless, do take it, to obtain the alms of the church. Such an unworthy participation is a sin against the very body and blood of the Lord!

28. *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.* Paul does not say, "Let a man examine himself and then *not* eat or drink at the communion." The examination should lead him to repentance, to faith and should then bring him to the Table of fellowship in the right state of mind and heart. The examination is not a door to shut him out from the ordinance, but a door at which he may pause awhile, to see whether he is in a right condition to enter. And if he is not, he should seek to be made so, and *then* enter.

29. *For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.* "Eats and drinks judgment to himself," for "judgment" is the word here used by the Apostle.

30. *For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.* It appears that God visited this Church at Corinth with sickness, and took away many of the members by death because they had profaned the Lord's Table and had walked in a disorderly manner before Him. Paul did not mean to say that these persons were lost—he intended to remind their fellow members and all who might read his Epistle, that God visits Churches after this fashion with discipline and chastening because of the unseemly conduct which is always so offensive to Him.

31, 32. *For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.* So, you see, that chastening process, which is going on in the Church, is all in love—"that we should not be condemned with the world"—just as a father exercises discipline in his household and uses chastisement that his children may never disobey the laws of the realm. They will never come before the police court, for they are kept under proper control at home and are tutored and trained by their father's wise government. So we come not under the judgment of the Law of God, as the world, itself, comes—we come under the disciplinary treatment of the great Head of the Church, even the Lord Jesus Christ!

33, 34. *Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, tarry one for another. And if any man is hungry, let him eat at home; that you come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.* Now let us read Luke's account of the institution of this Supper. As we do so, it will be well for us to remember that Luke was a friend and intimate companion of Paul.

Luke 22:14-16 *And when the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve Apostles with Him. And He said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.* This was to be the last occasion on which our Lord and His disciples would thus meet.

17, 18. *And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God shall come.* That was the *Passover* cup. Now the Passover melts into the Lord's Supper and, henceforth, the Lord's Supper remains and the Passover has passed away.

19-21. *And He took bread, and gave thanks, and broke it, and gave unto them, saying, This is My body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you. But, behold, the hand of him that betrays Me is with Me on the table.* What a sobering, saddening effect this must have had upon those who were at that festival! We have reason to fear that it will be true of our gathering, also. There were only 12 Apostles, yet there was a Judas among them. We shall have many hundreds at our observance of the ordinance—may we not fear that there will be many a Judas, too? Can we expect that we shall have a better selection of professed followers of Christ than the Lord had made for His Apostles?

22-24. *And truly the Son of Man goes, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed! And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing. And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.* That had been their question among themselves, but now they have another enquiry, of quite a different sort, to answer. It was wise of the Master to give them a heart-searching question to drive out that question of ambition which had filled them with pride and contention. Oh, if any of us ever had such a thought as that in our bosom—which of us is greatest?—who can speak the best?—who can serve God the most?—who can take the lead?—let all such questions be set aside while we sorrowfully entertain the other sad enquiry—which of us will betray our Lord? God grant that none of us may ever do so!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—938, 282, 942.

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ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING IN 1857.

"Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." Psalm 103:13.

WHAT a blow this is for our pride! Then God's children are pitiable objects, notwithstanding that He has crowned them with glory and honor, has given them perfection in Christ Jesus, has breathed into them the breath of spiritual life, has set their feet upon a rock and established their goings—yet they are and they always will be, so long as they are here below—pitiable objects! It is like tolling the death-knell of all our pride to talk about God pitying us! Why, my Brothers and Sisters, we shed our pity profusely upon the ungodly—we are often pitying the wicked, the profane, the blasphemer and Sabbath-breaker—but here we find God pitying us! Even David, the mighty Psalmist, is pitied! A Prophet, a priest, a king—each of these shall have pity from God, for, "He pities them that fear Him," and finds good reasons for pitying them, however high their station, however holy their character, or however happy their position! We are pitiable beings! Oh, boast not, Believer! Be not loud in praise of yourself! Put your finger on your lips and be silent when you hear that God pities you! The next time carnal security would creep in, or fleshly conceit would get the upper hand of you, remember that while you are boasting, God is pitying—and while you are triumphing, He is looking down upon you with pitying eyes of compassion, for He finds reason for compassion when you can only see cause for glorying!

Our subject then, Beloved, will be a review—a review of our lives—if we are the Lord's children and fear Him. I hope it will be profitable to us. It will not be profitable through the newness of the thoughts, but rather by "stirring up your pure minds by way of remembrance," to look back upon all the ways whereby the Lord your God has led you. "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." First of all, notice the displays of *this pity.* Then, *the spirit of this pity.* And then, lastly, *note the objects of this pity.*

I. Notice THE DISPLAY OF THIS PITY. "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." When does a father display pity towards his child? I answer—on many and divers occasions.

Sometimes, *the father's pity is bestowed upon the child's ignorance.* He, himself, knows a thing which is, to his child, a profound mystery. He knows a certain truth which is, to him, an axiom and an element of his

knowledge. But to his child it seems like the apex of the pyramid of knowledge—he wonders how he can ever attain to so high a pitch of learning! And, oh, how foolish are the child's surmises! How long he is guessing at truth and how mistaken are the axioms which he founds upon his mistakes of thought! And how the father pities the child if he falls among bad companions who teach him errors, who, instead of filling his mind with truth, fill it with lies! When he comes to his father with all those strange stories, with which wicked men have filled his little ears, the father pities him that he should be so ignorant as to be carried away by every wind of tattling—that he should receive every talker into his confidence and believe everything because man has said it, taking every man's opinion and believing what any man declares to be right!

So, when, in the plentitude of our supposed wisdom, we think ourselves infallible, God looks down on our wisdom as being childish folly! When, in the glory of our wondrous eloquence, we talk great things, God looks down upon us as upon the prattler, who talks fast, but talks foolishly. And, often, when we come before our fellows and spread before them wondrous discoveries that we have made, He that sits in the heavens does not laugh in derision, but He smiles in compassion that we should think ourselves so wise in having discovered nothing, and so supremely learned in having found out untruths!

And how God must pity His dear family when He finds them led astray by false doctrine and error! How many there are of God's people who go up to houses of prayer, so-called, where, instead of hearing the Truths of the Kingdom of Heaven, they are taught all kinds of strange things—where they hear "another gospel, which is not another, but there are some that trouble them." Where all the isms and fancies of man are preached, instead of the Truth of God, in all its discrimination, in all its power, in all its constancy and everlastingness and the power of its application to the soul by the Spirit of God. How God pities some of His children who are thus led astray! One of them, perhaps, says of their minister, "Is he not intellectual? Is he not a wonderful minister? Though he said nothing about Jesus Christ, today, yet it was such a clever discourse! It is true, he did not preach God's Gospel, but, then, see how beautifully he cleared up that point of metaphysics! It is quite certain that he did not lead me to hold more fellowship with my Redeemer, but then how excellent was that distinction which he drew between those two similar terms which he employed!"

Another says, "I never heard a man so clever as my minister! I will not go and hear any of those vulgar preachers who talk to their hearers in a way that servant girls and mechanics can understand. I like to hear my minister, for he is so profoundly wise, that I do not believe there are many people in the chapel beside myself who can appreciate him! I will still go and hear him, dear man, though he does puzzle me, sometimes, so that I do not know what on earth he is talking about, and when he has finished his discourse, it has been such a perplexing one, that I have lost my way, and said, 'Dear me, the time is gone and I wonder what the sermon has been all about!'"

God pities His children when they are in this position. He does not pity them when they hear His Truth—when they have real Gospel fare, however roughly the meat may be carved, and however it may be served up on the coarsest platter that human speech can supply. He pities them not when they get such spiritual food as that—but He does pity them when they are misguided, when they are carried away by "philosophy, falsely so called," being misled by the seeming wisdom of man which, after all, is but folly, having nothing of wisdom in it—the highest wisdom being that of believing what God has said, receiving God's Truth simply as God's Truth and asking no questions about it. God pities His children, however, in all their ignorance. He is not angry with them, nor does He speak sharply to them, but He leads them on by His Spirit until they understand His Truth and receive His Word.

It were well, however, if there were nothing else but ignorance to bear with, but the parent often has something worse than that to suffer from his child—he has to endure *the disobedience and waywardness of human nature*. There is the continual uprising of evil passions, the perpetual proneness to disobedience, the frequent wandering from the path of righteousness and, oftentimes, the father has to pass that by with, perhaps, just a little admonition, but without a frown, without a sharp word, without a blow—he has to say, "My Child, it is all forgiven you"—and though his temper may be sorely tried, yet he has patience with his child, for he pities the child's disobedience. He knows, too, that he was once a child, himself, and then he did the same as his child is now doing and, therefore, does he have patience with his child and he pities him. My Brothers and Sisters, what pity has the Lord had upon you and me, in all our wanderings! How often have we gone astray and yet, compared with our wanderings, how seldom have we been chastised! How frequently have we broken His Commandments and rebelled against His Covenant and yet how light have been the strokes of chastisement, compared with the weight of our guilt, and how seldom has He afflicted us, compared with the frequency of our transgressions! How has He had patience with all our shortcomings and has bid His hand be still, when, if it had been like ours, it would have risen in hot anger to smite us to the dust! Truly, He has pitied us, "like as a father pities his children," only with a far greater patience! Even as He is, Himself, infinitely greater than all earthly fathers, so has His pity been more continuous, more patient and more long-suffering than the pity of any human parent who has ever breathed.

And as a father pities his child, not only in all his disobedience, but *in all his actual transgressions and downright sin*—when he grows from the mere wish to do evil up to the actual commission of the crime—like as a father still pities his child, even when his follies have ripened into the worst of guilt, so has God pitied us, my Brothers and Sisters, when we have gone into gross sin before our conversion. Yes, and some of us even after it! When we have gone astray like lost sheep, have broken the hedges of His commands, and have gone rambling over the dark hills of transgression, still has He had pity upon us. It is amazing how far a father's pity will go towards his child, even when he has transgressed ever

so much. There are some who have shut the door in their children's face and bid them never enter their house again, nor come near them. They have ceased to speak of them, for they have determined that they would never take their names on their lips again, nor consider them their children.

But such fathers are, I trust, very few in number. It is rarely that we meet with them. A father usually endures much, and endures long. After he has had the peace of his home destroyed and his gray hairs almost brought with sorrow to the tomb. After his family has been made a wreck and he has lost almost everything he had, by the profligacy of his son—still his love, tenacious to the last, holds to his boy and will not let him go. And even when others speak harshly of him, the old man palliates his son's guilt—perhaps a little foolishly—but if he can find an excuse for him, he does. He will not have it that his son is worse than others and he will allow no man to make his son's guilt appear greater than it is—in fact he will, as far as he can, try to make it seem less.

Our Heavenly Father is not foolishly pitiful, but He is pitiful. Yes, and He is better than that! He is wisely pitiful over the most erring of His children. Our God is no Arminian god—the Arminian's god is a pitiless god to his children. He is represented as being pitiful enough to all the world, but pitiless to his own children, for, according to the teaching of some, when they sin, he cuts them out of the covenant! And if they transgress, he bundles them out of doors, tells them they are not his children any longer and, because of their transgressions, he will have it that they are none of his and shall be damned at last, despite the fact that Christ has died for them, that the Holy Spirit has regenerated them and that they have been justified! He casts them away from his presence and they are to be lost forever! He is a pitiless god, but the god of these people is no relation to our God!

We do not believe in their god, nor do we fear him, nor bow before him. Our God is constant in His affection and merciful towards His children! When they go astray, He pities all their guilt and sin. It is true, He takes the rod in His hand and, sometimes, causes us to weep bitterly by reason of the soreness of His chastisement. He applies the rod to our very soul and brings the iron into our inmost spirit. He makes us smart, and cry, and groan, and sigh, but all He does is in pity because He is determined to save us. He will not let us go unpunished because He pities us for our folly and sin. Just as the physician will not let the man go without his medicine because he pities him in his disease, so God will not let His children go without His chastisement because He pities them in their sin. And mark, too, even that chastisement is one of pity—there is not one twig too many in the rod, nor one stroke over the right number, nor one drop of gall too much—and that drop is none too bitter. The affliction is all measured out and weighed in balances and scales, all given as it should be—no more than what is necessary. God pities His children in all their chastisement and pities them in all their guilt and wanderings—and He will not let them go away from Him altogether, nor will He suffer them to perish, for He pities them still.

God also pities His children *in sickness.* That is a time when a father pities his children very much. It does not say, "Like as a mother pities her children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." And I think the reason is not because a mother's pity is less intense, or less affectionate—for it is more so, by far—but because it is sometimes less effectual than the father's. A mother may pity her child, yet she may not be able to preserve it from an enemy. The mother may pity her child when it is sick, but she may be alone in the house and she may not be able to travel far enough to find a physician and, therefore, God has put in, not merely the affection, but the *strength of pity.* "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." On the bed of sickness, the strength of pity is proved by Christ upon God's people. He does not stand, as the mother would, to weep over the child, but He does more than that. He does give true compassion, He does sympathize, but, more than that, He heals! He makes the wounded spirit whole. He removes the aching pain from the conscience, binds up the broken heart, makes the weak to be strong and the faint one to rejoice! He gives us the *strength* of pity and some of us can remember that strength of pity when, in our sickness, we lay tossing in our beds, without hardly power to pray—when we said our heart and our flesh had failed us, and we must die. When our brain was racked with discordant thoughts and reason seemed to have left its throne, and blank despair held carnival within our brain, which, for a while, was under the dominion of the Lord of Misrule and revelry was perpetually kept up there. It was then, when we could do nothing, that Jesus came to us, not merely with the faint whispers of compassion, but with the strong voice of healing, bade our fears be still, comforted our aching heart and then made our flesh leap for joy because our spirit, its twin sister which had been broken on the wheel, was delivered from the tormentor and made perfectly whole! Thus the Lord pities His children! He specially pities us in all our sicknesses.

And, my Brothers and Sisters, your Heavenly Father pities you who are His children under all your *manifold trials*, of whatever kind they are, and from whatever quarter they proceed. Thus, when persecuted, you have had His pity—when the jeer and taunt of the ungodly have been cast upon you—and when worse than that has been attempted against you. When you have had to bear the brunt of poverty, you have had God's pity shed upon you. And you have had a pity, too, that was not barely that of words—you have had the pity of help. He has given you your bread in your extremity and made your water sure when the brook was dry. You who have lost your friends and have had to weep over numerous bereavements. You who have mourned over your family who have been swept away, one after another, not once have you been bereaved without the pity of your God! Never once has the clay fallen on the coffin lid, with the sad message, "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust," without the pity of your God falling on your heart, like gentle dew from Heaven! He has always pitied you in your low estate. He has always been with you in all your varied troubles and has never left you—

"'Mid scenes of confusion and creature complaints"—

He has kept by your side and led you all through your journey. And here you can raise your Ebenezer and write the words of our text upon it, "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him, and He has pitied me up to this hour!"

Yet once more, sometimes God's people have wrongs and a father pities His children, *if they have wrongs that are unrevenged*. I know a father who sometimes says, "If you strike me, you may strike me again. I will turn the other cheek to you and you may smite me as long as you please. But," says that good man, and he is a man of peace, too—like myself, a thorough man of peace, though a little inconsistent—"strike my children and I will knock you down if I can! I will not have you meddle with them. If you hit me, I will not resist you. You may do what you please with me. But if you smite my children, that I can never endure! I love them so, that I should break through every principle to resent it! So strong is my natural affection for them that though I might conceive myself to be wrong in what I did, I should do it, most certainly!"

Depend upon it, there is nothing that brings a man's wrath up like touching his children! And the same thing is true of God. You may curse Him and He will not be so angry with you as if you touch His children. The prophet Zechariah declared to His ancient people, "He that touches you, touches the apple of His eye." If any of you want to know the shortest road to damnation, I will tell you—despise God's little ones! Treat God's people ill and you will damn yourself by express! Remember our Lord's words, "But whoever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

There never was a wrong done to one of God's people that God did not avenge! There has never been an ill deed done towards them yet but He has punished the doer of it. Though He suffered Assyria to break Israel in pieces, yet let Assyria speak, when she rises from her tomb, and tell how terribly God has shivered her with a rod of iron because she vaunted herself against the people of the Most High. Let old Rome testify that on her still rests the blood of the martyrs. Behold, our God has broken her empire in pieces! The Roman emperor has ceased to exist and his gaudy pomp is gone. Yes, and modern Rome, too, has an awful doom yet to come—she, above all other cities—has a fearful future before her. She, that is wrapped in scarlet and sits on the seven hills, the Whore of Babylon, drunk with the blood of the saints, shall yet meet the doom foretold in the Revelation. Lo! God has said it! She shall be torn in pieces! She shall be burnt with fire and utterly consumed! God might have forgiven her if it had not been for the blood of the martyrs—but the blood of His children cries out against her and the curse of God rests upon her! The Church of Rome can never again be put in the ranks of Christian churches! God has forgiven other Churches their sins and, despite errors in their doctrine and their practice, He has kept them among the living Churches. But of the Romish Babylon He has said, "She has made her garments red with the gore of My children; she has stained her hands with the blood of the saints; she shall be cut off, once and for all, and be

forever cast away! Come out of her, My people, lest you be partakers of her plagues and share in her fearful doom!" God pities His children! No martyr has died unpitied, nor shall any martyr die unavenged! Springing from their graves, they cry, "Revenge, revenge, upon the apostate church of Rome!" And it shall be had. Lo! The souls of the saints beneath the altar cry, "How long, O Lord, how long?" Not long shall it be! The sword is being made ready in Heaven. It is furbished and the God that pities them that fear Him shall not let His hands spare, nor His eyes pity, when He comes to avenge Himself upon the church that has dyed its garments with the blood of His elect!

II. And now, dear Friends, leaving that part of the subject, I want you briefly to notice THE SPIRIT OF GOD'S PITY.

There are different sorts of pity. Some I would not have at any price whatever. Did you ever see *the pity of contempt?* Have you not often seen a gentleman watching a poor man doing something or other, and then saying to him, "Poor fellow, I do pity you"? Have you ever seen a very respectable aristocrat who has never heard anything but the most "proper" kind of preaching, turn on his heels and go out of a Chapel door, saying, "Well, I do pity people who can listen to such stuff as that"? We have often seen that pity of contempt. But that is not God's kind of pity! He never pities His people in the way of contempt and a father never so pities his children. Sometimes, when a boy is writing a copy, a stranger goes through the school and says, "Well, he is an ignoramus," and he pities him, perhaps—but there is a sneer with his pity. But the lad's father comes into the room. The boy has just got into pot-hooks and hangers and the father thinks he makes them very well for such a little boy. He pities him, perhaps, that he is not able to write better, but there is no contempt with his pity. Nor is there any contempt with God's pity—He sees what we are and pities us—but there is not a solitary grain of contempt for any of His people in His pity.

Other people's pity is *the pity of inaction*. "Oh, I do pity you very much!" says a person to a sick woman, "your husband is dead, your children have to be supported and you have to work hard. Well, my good Woman, I pity you very much, but I cannot afford to give you anything. I have so many who call upon me." How much pity there is of that kind in the world! You can get pity of that sort in abundance. If you lift the knocker of the first door you come to, you will get plenty of pity of that kind. Pity is the cheapest thing in the world if that is all. But God's pity is not pity of that sort—it is not the pity which is mere pity, it is not the pity of inaction—but, when His heart moves, His hands move, too, and He relieves all the needs of those He pities.

And let me say, again, God's pity is not *a pity of mere sensitiveness*. The other day a gentleman, talking of accidents, said in my hearing, "I saw a boy running down a lane where a cab was coming at a very rapid rate. I saw that the boy must be crushed under the horse's feet, or under the wheels. I stood for a moment thunderstruck and then I saw him crushed to pieces under the wheels! I ran down the next street in a moment. I was so sensitive, I could not bear the sight." Instead of seeing

what help he could give, he ran away. "Yet," he said, "I did not do that from any lack of sympathy, or any lack of pity, and when I stopped myself, I thought it useless to go back, for I am so sensitive that I naturally avoid every sight of misery." That is not God's way of showing pity! His pity is not the pity of the stranger who ran away! God's pity is the pity of the father—it is not the pity of the mere sensation of the moment, but the pity which desires to do something to relieve his children in distress—

"The pity of the Lord,
To those that fear His name,
Is such as tender parents feel—
He knows our feeble frame."

Then, tried Believer, take your case before your God tonight in prayer. He is a God of pity and not a God of man's pity. Go to Him, now, if you are poor. Tell Him all your care and see if He will not help you. Go and tell Him that your spirit is depressed and see if He will not cheer you. Tell Him that your way is hedged up and that you cannot find your path, and see if He will not direct you. Tell Him you are ignorant and know nothing, and see if He will not teach you. Tell Him you have fallen and see if He will not set you on your feet, take you by the arm and teach you to go tell Him you are black by reason of your falls—and see if He will not wash and cleanse you. Tell Him that you cut yourself against a stone when you fell and see if He will not bathe your sores. Tell Him you are distressed because you have sinned and see if He will not kiss you with the kisses of His love and tell you He has forgiven you. Go and try Him, for His pity is a heavenly pity! It is the very ointment of Paradise that heals sores effectually!

III. I close, by noticing THE PEOPLE WHOM GOD PITIES. Who are the objects of God's pity? "The Lord pities *them that fear Him*."

Some of you He does not pity at all—you that do not fear Him, but trifle with Him. You that hate Him. You that despise Him. You that are careless about Him. You that never think of Him—you have none of His pity. When you are sick, He looks upon your sickness as something that you deserve. When you go astray, He looks upon your wandering as a mere matter of course of your guilty nature—and He is angry with you—wrathful with you! Your afflictions are not strokes of His rod, they are cuts of His sword! Your sins are not things that He overlooks, but if you die as you now are, guilty and unsaved, remember that even when you are cast away by God, justice shall look upon you with tearless eyes and say to you, "You knew your duty, but you did it not." And the stern voice of God shall, because you have been desperately guilty, drive you away from His Presence forever! Think not that this text will afford you any consolation in this life, or in that which is to come! You shall not have even a drop of water to cool your tongue in Hell—no pity shall be shed upon you there. If you could have pity bestowed upon you in the regions of your punishment, it might fall like a shower of gentle rain upon your tongues. But God bestows no pity upon you that love Him not, fear Him not and turn not from the error of your ways.

Oh, that you would but fear Him! Would to God that He would make you fear Him now! Oh, that you would tremble at His Presence and then,

oh, that you could know yourselves to be His children and fear Him as children do their parents! Oh, that you did reverence His name and keep His Sabbaths! Oh, that you did obey His Commandments and have His fear always before your eyes! Then should your peace be like a river and your righteousness like the waves of the sea. Oh, that you were wise to bow yourselves before Him and to confess your guiltiness! Oh, that you would come, "just as you are, without one plea," to Jesus Christ! Oh, that you were stripped of every rag of self-righteousness and clothed in the righteousness of Christ! Then you would have Christ as your Savior and you might rejoice that, henceforth, He would pity you in all your sicknesses and in all your wanderings! He would pity you here, and at last lead you up to be where pity shall be unneeded—in the land of the blessed, in the home of the hereafter where the weary rest and the wicked cease from troubling.

But they do not cease from trouble in Hell. They are troubled without pity, pained without compassion, scourged without any leniency and damned without an iota of mercy, being left to stern justice and inflexible severity! Seeing that they would not turn at God's reproof and would not heed His warnings, but cast His Truth behind their backs—seeing that, being often reproved, they hardened their necks—they were, therefore, "suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy." Seeing that they have destroyed themselves. Seeing that they have rejected the invitations of the Gospel. Seeing that they have despised the Son of God. Seeing that they have loved their own righteousness better than Christ's and preferred Hell to Heaven, the penalties of iniquity to the reward of the righteous—therefore, without pity they shall be shut away, forever, from the regions of happiness and banished from the Presence of Him who pities them that fear Him, but punishes them that fear Him not! The Lord save us all from such a terrible doom as that, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 25.

Verse 1. *Unto You, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.* It is down and I would gladly lift it up, yet I am powerless to do so if I am left to myself. When the soul cleaves to the earth, who but God can lift it up? Yet it must be our desire and objective to seek to lift up our soul unto God.

2. *O my God, I trust in You: let me not be ashamed, let not my enemies triumph over me.* Whatever happens to me, I trust in You. Down goes the anchor—that ship will never drift far out to sea. "O my God, I trust in You." Can you say that, dear Friends? Then if you are in the dark, you are as safe as if you were in the light, for still this anchor holds! "O my God, I trust in You." "Let not my enemies triumph over me." They will do so if they can get me back into the world. If they can seduce me from the paths of holiness, what shouts of joy there will be in the camp of the enemy! "Hold me up, and I shall be safe."

3. *Yes, let none that wait on You be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause.* When good men are in earnest on their

own account, they soon begin to pray for others and the evil which they dread for themselves, they are sure to dread for their Brothers and Sisters. David first prayed, "Let me not be ashamed." And then he added, "Let none that wait on You be ashamed." The only shame that is worth having is a blessed shame—the shame of true repentance which sorrows over past sin, of which it is ashamed. Alas, there will be an eternal shame which shall cover those who choose the ways of sin!

4. *Show me Your ways, O LORD; teach me Your paths.* That is the prayer of one who is taught of the Spirit, for, by nature, our desire is to have our own way and if we can have our own way, we are satisfied. But when the Lord has taught us better, our prayer is, "Show me Your ways, O Lord; teach me Your paths."

5. *Lead me in Your truth, and teach me: for You are the God of my salvation; on You do I wait all the day.* We need not only to have the path shown to us, but to be led into it, for we are like babes just learning to walk—we must have a finger that we may hold, or a hand that we may lean upon. "Lead me in Your truth, and teach me." That is the second time that David has prayed for the Lord to teach Him—and as long as we are here, we also shall need to pray, Teach me. What is a disciple but a learner? His daily cry must be, "Teach me: for You are the God of my salvation." There is another grip of the hand of faith. I have taken You to be my salvation, O my God! I trust nowhere else, "On You do I wait all the day," expecting everything from You—tarrying Your leisure, but tarrying hopefully, expecting to be blessed.

6. *Remember, O LORD, Your tender mercies and Your loving kindnesses; for they have been ever of old.* Your saints knew them before I was born, and I have known them since I have been born again. By the constancy of Your kindness to me to now, continue to bless me, for are You not an unchanging God?

7. *Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to Your mercy remember me for Your goodness' sake, O LORD.* In this verse and the preceding one, there are three, "remembers"—first, that God would remember His tender mercies and His loving kindnesses. Next, that He would *not* remember our sins and our transgressions and, then, that He would remember us according to His mercy and goodness. This last request may remind us of the prayer of the dying thief, "Lord, remember me." And it may serve for us as a repenting prayer. "According to Your mercy remember me for Your goodness' sake, O Lord."

8. *Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will He teach sinners in the way.* If good men endeavor to make others good, much more will the good God do so. A good man will seek to lead sinners in the right way and much more will our good Savior, and God, and Helper do so. Only let us be willing to be taught and come to Him confessing our ignorance, and asking to be led and instructed. This Psalm, you see, dear Friends, is all about *teaching*—and as David needed instruction, so do we! The next verse deals with the same subject.

9. *The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way.* Not the proud man, but the meek—the learners—the teachable

ones! Those who, like little children, are willing to believe what they are told upon true authority. Oh, that we all may be among the meek! The tender-mouthed horse is easy to drive, but some people are so stubborn and obstinate that they are "as the horse, or as the mule which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle." Oh, that we were sensitive to the slightest touch of the Divine hand and always ready and anxious to be instructed by the Lord!

10. *All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep His Covenant and His Testimonies.* Do you believe that, you who have been sorely tried? If you are resting in Covenant love, and find your hope in Covenant blood and Covenant promises, you must believe that everything God does to you is done in mercy and truth. Yes, though He strikes till every blow of the rod leaves a blue wound, yet we rejoice in these tokens of His fatherly love and desire for our highest good, for He has said, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." The word, "love," in that passage conveys the idea of a very tender and ardent affection.

11. *For Your name's sake, O LORD, pardon my iniquity; for it is great.* Those who are not taught of God pray very differently from that, for their prayer is, "O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is little." But he who is graciously instructed confesses the greatness of his guilt and out of that he draws a plea for mercy, for is not God a great God, and is it not greatly to His Glory to pardon great sinners? And when they are pardoned, are they not filled with a great love and a great zeal, so that they are greatly serviceable to their Lord and Master?

12. *What man is he that fears the LORD? Him shall He teach in the way that He shall choose.* True reverence for God, a holy fear of Him, is a quality that God delights to see. And wherever He finds it, there He gives further instruction.

13, 14. *His soul shall dwell at ease and his seed shall inherit the earth. The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His Covenant.* Are you one of those trembling ones who fear to offend God? Well, I daresay that you sometimes envy those who are very boisterous in their joy. Do not envy them—you have something better in having that holy, filial fear that trembles at God's Word—and you shall have the secret of the Lord with you and He will show you His Covenant.

15. *My eyes are eyes toward the LORD; for He shall pluck my feet out of the net.* When they get into it, He will pluck them out of it. When Satan seems to cast a net over me, God will come and pull me out. There is force in that word, "pluck"—denoting swiftness and energy. And, perhaps, there is a little idea of roughness, but God's roughness is true tenderness.

16. *Turn You unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted.* If you pass that dish round, there are some who will not help themselves from it, for they are not "desolate and afflicted." But I know that there are some, even here, who are both "desolate and afflicted." Be sure, dear Friends, that you make this prayer your own—"Turn You unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted."

17, 18. *The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring You me out of any distresses. Look upon my affliction and my pain.* And what follows? "Take the affliction and the pain away"? No!

18. *And forgive all my sins.* David will be quite content if God will but look with pitying eyes upon his sufferings, but, as for his sins, he must be clean rid of them—he cannot be happy until he has the answer to this petition—"Forgive all my sins."

19. *Consider my enemies; for they are many; and they hate me with cruel hatred.* The better the man, the more bitterly is he hated by the ungodly. It is not by holiness that you will escape the hatred of the world—it is by that very thing that you will awaken its malice! Do not wish to have it otherwise, but remember your Lord's own words, "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! For so did their fathers to the false prophets." But, "Blessed are you when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in Heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the Prophets." If we live near to God and are truly the seed of the woman, the seed of the serpent will constantly be nibbling at our heels—some little viper or other will be sure to be there! As the great serpent seeks to do us injury, so will his seed.

20. *O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in You.* Do you notice how David gets back to his keynote? Almost at the beginning of the Psalm, he said, "O my God, I trust in You." Now he says "I put my trust in You." Let faith in God be the keynote of your life Psalm! At another time, David wrote, "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed." That is the motto for all Christians—"Trust, trust, TRUST!" When there is nothing to be seen, when you are in thick Egyptian darkness, let Job's confident declaration be the resolve of your spirit, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

21. *Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on You.* The child of God cannot hope to pass through the world safely unless he is careful to keep his integrity and his uprightness. There are some who profess to be Christians who try to get on in trade by various tricks—and they hope to win the favor of men by just bending a little to their ways. Never do so, Beloved! If you give way an inch, you will have to give way a yard or a mile before long!

22. *Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.* God did so Himself to Israel. Jacob, whose name was also, Israel, said, "All these things are against me." Yet God redeemed him out of his troubles! And so will the Lord do for all His people in due time, glory be unto His name, world without end! Amen.

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

COMFORTED AND COMFORTING
NO. 2640

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 1899,

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 15, 1882.

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."
2 Corinthians 1:3, 4.

THE Apostle was a much-tried man and he lived in an age when all Believers were peculiarly tried. The persecutions of that time were excessively severe and every man who called himself a Christian had to carry his life in his hands. In this tribulation, the Apostle had the largest share, because he was the most prominent and indefatigable teacher that the Church of Christ then possessed. We have, here, a little insight into his inner life. He needed comfort and he received it. And be had it in such abundance that he became a comforter of others. Although, without Christ, he would have been, "of all men most miserable," I think I may say that *with Christ* and the blessed hope of the Resurrection, he was among all men, one of the most happy.

In our text there are four things of which I would speak to you, dear Friends, hoping that they may bring good cheer to any who are cast down. The first is the comforting occupation in which Paul was employing himself—he was blessing God. "Blessed be God." Then, secondly, we have the comforting titles which he gives to God—"The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Father of mercies and the God of all comfort." Truly, they who know the Lord's name do put their trust in Him. Paul knew the name of God right well and he used the most appropriate name for the time of sorrow. Then, thirdly, we shall have to consider for a little while the comforting fact which the Apostle here states, "Who comforts us in all our tribulation." And, lastly, we shall try to see the comforting design of it all—"That we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

I. First, then, you who mourn and are troubled and cast down, are invited to consider THE COMFORTING OCCUPATION of the Apostle.

Most of Paul's 14 Epistles begin with praise to God and he often breaks out into a doxology when you are hardly expecting it. He lays down his pen, bows his knees to the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ and pours out a flood of thanksgiving to the Most High. Here was a man who never knew but what he might be dead the next day, for his

enemies were many, and cruel, and mighty. And yet he spent a great part of his time in praising and blessing God!

This comforting occupation *argues that his heart was not crushed and vanquished by his troubles*. Paul was sore beset in many ways, yet he could say, and he did say, "Blessed be God." Job was greatly tried and sorely bereaved, but he still said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." And as long as we can keep the blessing of God to the front, it is a sure sign that whatever the adversary may have been able to take away from us, he has not taken away our confidence, which has great recompense of reward and, whatever he may have crushed, he has not crushed our heart! He may have surrounded it with bitterness, but the heart itself is not made bitter—it is a fountain that sends out a stream of sweet waters, such as this utterance of the Apostle, "Blessed be God."

It is glorious to see how the Grace of God will enable a man to endure all the assaults of the world, the flesh and the devil—how he will be laid aside by sickness and his pains will be multiplied. How reproach may go far to break his heart, how he may be depressed in spirit and lose all temporal benefits—and yet he will still be able to say, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." "Let Him do what He pleases with me, I have made no stipulation with Him that I will only praise Him when He does according to my will. I will praise Him when He has His own way with me, even though it runs exactly contrary to mine." It is a brave heart that still, under all pressures, gives forth only this cry, "Blessed be God." O dear Friends, if you want to keep up your hearts—if you desire to be established and sustained, if you wish to prevent the enemy from overcoming you—let this be your comfortable occupation and say with the poet—

"I will praise You every day,
Now Your anger's turned away."

Nothing can keep your head above the waters of trouble better than crying, "Bless the Lord, O my Soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name."

This occupation shows that the Apostle had not gratified Satan, for the devil's purpose, so far as he has had to do with our trouble, is to make us "curse God and die." After all the sorrow that Satan was permitted to bring to Job, the Patriarch's heart still blessed the name of the Lord! So the devil was defeated—he could not carry out his own evil purpose and he had to slink away like a whipped cur—for Job glorified God instead of bringing dishonor upon His holy name. The tried and troubled ones who can still cry, "Blessed be the name of the Lord," are not driven to despair, for despair shuts the mouth and makes a man sit in sullen silence, or else it opens his lips in bitter complaints and in multiplied murmurings. But, when a man can truly say, "Blessed be God," then despair has not mastered him. He still holds his own and he has on his side a far greater force than the devil—and the most trying circumstances—can bring to bear upon him to vanquish him! O Friends, if you are afraid of being overcome, take to praising God! If you are in trouble and do not know

how to bear it, divert your thoughts by praising God! Get away from the present trial by blessing and magnifying His holy name!

Next, this state of mind which made the Apostle say, "Blessed be God," *prophesied that God would speedily send him something to call forth new praises*. When a man blesses God for the bitter, the Lord often sends him the sweet. If he can praise God in the night, the daylight is not far off. There never was a heart that waited and wanted to praise God but the Lord soon gave it opportunities of lifting up Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to Him. It shall never be said that we were ready to praise God, but that God was not ready to bless us! So, dear Friends, praise God and He will bless you! Praise God and exalt Him, and He will soon lift you up out of your troubles. I look upon a murmuring spirit as the forewarning of stormy weather in a *rebellious soul*—and I regard a praiseful spirit as the forecast of a happy time to come to the *loyal joyous soul*. God has prepared the heart to receive the joy which, otherwise, it might not have been fit to accept at His hands. Be comforted, then, dear Friends, if you find in your hearts the desire to praise God—and belief that the Lord will find in His heart the willingness to speedily bless you!

This comforting occupation *profits the Believer in many ways*. One advantage of blessing God is that it takes a man's thoughts off his own trials and sorrows. We make our troubles much greater than they need be by turning them over, considering them from all points of view, weighing them and thinking and meditating upon them. You know very well that if you swallow a pill, you do not taste it—but if you get it between your teeth and bite and chew it, you will get all the bitter flavor of the drug. So, it is often a good thing to let our afflictions go right down into our soul, to swallow them at once, and say no more about them. God has sent them and, therefore, they are for your good—but when you keep brooding over your grief, you will probably hatch something out of it which you did not expect—it may be that you will find a young scorpion come from it to annoy you! They that will always be thinking upon their trials will soon find a sorrow within the sorrow which, haply, they might never have perceived if they had let it go! While we are blessing God, we are, at least for the time, taking our thoughts off our troubles and, so far, so good.

Moreover, we shall, by God's gracious help, while we are praising Him, be lifting our soul out of our sorrow. In America, for many years they kept a day of fasting, but somebody suggested that they had better keep an annual day of thanksgiving—and they have done so ever since! The change was a good one and you and I, though sometimes we must fast, especially if the Bridegroom shall hide His face, will also find that it is a great improvement when we can turn our day of fasting into a day of thanksgiving! Do you not think, dear Friends, that sometimes, when you are very heavy of heart, it would be the best possible thing if you were to say, with Martin Luther, "Come, let us sing a Psalm and startle the devil"? If you sit down and groan and complain against God, your groans will be music to Satan's malevolent heart! But you will vex and grieve him, if, instead of doing so, you say, "No, foul fiend, you shall never persuade me to rob God of His Glory—He shall have His full revenue of

praise from me, whether I am on my bed, sick, or able to be up and actively engaged in the duties of my calling. Whether I stand well with my fellow men, or my name has an ill savor to them, God's name has not an ill savor and, therefore, I will praise and bless Him even though nobody will praise me."

O Beloved, if your heart is sad within you, praising God will so lift it up that you will even be able to forget the trouble of the present hour! What does the eagle do when the fowler is about with his net and gun? Why, the noble bird takes to his wings and flies upwards towards the sun! And, though his bright eyes can see the foe, he knows that no bullet can reach him at that great height. So, if you Christians have close communion with your God and praise and magnify His holy name, the shots of the enemy shall not reach you—you will have risen far beyond their range. Therefore, you see the excellence of blessing and praising the Most High.

Besides, this occupation may well tend to take away the sorrows of our mortality, since, by praising God, we get a taste of the joys of *immortality*. What are the angels doing now? I cannot tell you what men all over the world are doing, but I can tell you what the angels are doing! The holy spirits before the Throne of God find it is their very Heaven to be always blessing their God! So, if you want a sip of Heaven's bliss. If on your leaf you would have a sparkling dew-drop which would tell you what the River of Life that flows at the right hand of God is like, commence at once to praise and bless the Lord your God—

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

And there is no better way of anticipating the joys of being there than by beginning the praises of God while here!

You may also destroy your distresses by singing praises to God. By blessing the Lord, you may set your foot upon the neck of your adversaries—you can sing yourself right up from the deeps by God's gracious help. Out of the very depths you may cry unto the Lord till He shall lift you up and you shall praise Him *in excelsis*—in the very highest—and magnify His name! I give you this as one of the shortest and surest recipes for comfort—begin to praise God. The next time that a friend comes in to see you, do not tell him how long the wind has been blowing from the North, how cold the weather is for this season of the year, how your poor bones ache, how little you have coming in and all your troubles—he has probably heard the sad story many times before! Instead of that, tell him what the Lord has done for you and make him feel that the Lord is good. Your griefs and your troubles speak for themselves, but your mercies are often dumb—so try, therefore, to give them a tongue and praise the Lord with all your heart!

II. Time would fail me if I dwelt, as I would like to dwell, upon the first point, so we must advance to the second, which is, THE COMFORTING TITLES which the Apostle gives to God in our text.

The first title we may call *a name of affinity*—"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Oh, how near that brings God to

us—that He is the Father of Jesus, the Father of Christ, "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"—because Jesus has espoused our nature and become a Man. Though He is, "Light of light" and, "very God of very God," yet is He also our Brother! "Father of Jesus"—what a delightful title that is for the good and glorious God! The great Jehovah has become very near of kin to you, my sorrowing Brother, for His Son is your Brother, your Husband, your Head and, now, the Father of Jesus is the Father of every Believer, so He is your Father if you are one of those who trust His Son! A child may not have a penny in his pocket, yet he feels quite rich enough if he has a wealthy father. You may be very, very poor, but, oh, what a rich Father you have! Jesus Christ's Father is your Father! And as He has exalted His own dear Son, He will do the same for you in due time. Our Lord Jesus is the first-born among many brethren and the Father means to treat the other brethren even as He treats Him. Your Father has made you one of His heirs—yes, a joint heir with Jesus Christ—what more would you have? Therefore, comfort yourself with this blessed Truth of God! If you are distressed and troubled, this fact—that God is Christ's Father and your Father—ought to be quite sufficient, by the blessing of the Holy Spirit, to fill you with intense joy!

In addition to this name of affinity, Paul gives to God a title which is *a name of gratitude*—"The Father of mercies." Then every mercy I have ever had has been begotten of God, who is "the Father of mercies"! All temporal mercies come to God's people from their Father. It is He who gives us bread to eat and clothes to put on. We are happy to be able to see in these common mercies a peculiar touch of the benign hand. But as for the high and heavenly mercies, the everlasting mercies, the satisfying mercies—the soul-filling mercies—these all come from God! As every beam of light comes from the father of lights [the sun], so do all mercies come from God. As all the rivers would be dried up if the sea were dry—for that is the ultimate source of the earth's moisture—so would all our mercies be dried-up mercies, barren mercies, no mercies at all if they did not come from that great ocean of mercies, the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Well, now, Beloved, as your Father is "the Father of mercies," can you not go to Him for all the mercy you need? If your mercies seem, just now, to be very few, can you not go to the All-Merciful and ask Him to deal out to you from His abundant store, for, "His mercy endures forever"?

The third title which Paul applies to God ought to afford the deepest possible consolation to your soul. I venture to call it *a name of hope.* "The God of all comfort." All sorts of comforts are stored up in God. No matter what you may require to bear you up under your affliction, God has just the kind of comfort which you need—and He is ready to bestow it upon you! Rest assured of that and also believe that He will bestow it upon you if you ask it at His hands. Oh, I think this is a name full of good cheer to everyone who has grown weary because of the trials of the way through this great and terrible wilderness! God is the God of all comfort—not merely of some comfort, but of *all* comfort. If you need every kind of comfort that was ever given to men, God has it in reserve and He will give it to you! If there are any comforts to be found by God's people in sickness,

in prison, in need, in depression—the God of all comfort will deal them out to you according as you have need of them!

This title is also *a name of discrimination*. It applies both to the persons and to the comfort—"who comforts us…by the comfort wherewith we are comforted of God." There are some things which are called comforts of which God is not the dispenser. Alas, alas, how many persons there are who fly to the bottle when they are in distress! That is *their* comfort—they drink and, for a while, forget their misery—but the process only leads to still greater misery and degradation. We cannot say that God is the God of such comfort as that! Indeed, we do not reckon it to be comfort! Some there are who turn to dissipation that they may forget their grief. God is not the God of dissipation and, therefore, that is not a comfort to a child of God—it would only increase his misery. If he were to be dragged to it, it would not relieve his pains in the least. Whatever there is in the world—and there are many such things which men call comforts—if you cannot be sure that they are such as God sends, let them be no source of consolation to you, but rather regard them with horror! May every child of God be able to make this discrimination and say, "If God does not give me what I look upon as a comfort, it will not prove to be a comfort."

It is not a creature who supplies the comfort, it is only the Creator. The comfort may be brought to us by a creature, and brought in God's name, but it must come from Him! The reason why bread feeds us is because God chooses to make it do so. When medicine heals us, it is because Jehovah makes it the means of healing. But if God does not work with the means, no cure will be worked. You who have the Creator, Himself, as your Comforter, are like the man who has a well in his garden—he may not have a tap to turn it off and on when he needs a supply of water to run through the pipe, but he has the well, itself, from which he may draw as much as he needs. Remember what we sang just now—

"Why should the soul a drop bemoan,
Who has a fountain near?
A fountain which will always run
With waters sweet and clear?"

So much, then, upon the comforting titles which Paul uses in relation to God. I pray you to act like the bees when they dive into the petals of the flowers and suck out their honey—dive into these titles and extract the delicious honey which the Holy Spirit has stored there for you.

III. Now, thirdly, I am to speak of THE COMFORTING FACT which Paul here mentions. "The God of all comfort …comforts us in all our tribulation."

This was Paul's declaration and I, also, may speak in the name of many here present and say, "That is not only true of Paul, and the Christians in his day, but it is also true of us." *The God of all comfort has comforted us in our tribulation*. Look back, now, on the pages of your diary that bear the record of your sorrow—do they not also bear the record of the Lord's help in the sorrow and His deliverance from the sorrow? If I cannot speak for all of you, I will speak for myself. I must do so, or else surely the very timber on which I stand might cry out against me! The Lord has been very gracious to me in many an hour of affliction. Blessed

be His name, He has never failed to bring the solace when He has made the smart—and if there has been the stroke with the rod, there has very soon been the caress of His love to follow the blow of His hand. It has been so with many of us.

But Paul speaks in the present tense—"Who comforts us in all our tribulation"—and we can also declare that *God is now comforting us who believe in Jesus*. Did you, Beloved, come into this building somewhat heavy in spirit? You are not half so heavy, now, as you were—and if you will take the good advice I am trying to give, you will go away quite relieved. Rutherford used to say that the Cross of Christ was no more a burden to the man who knew how to carry it than wings are to a bird or sails are to a ship! An affliction is a help to us, not a hindrance, when Grace comes with it to sanctify it! Remember what David said, long ago—"Cast your burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain you: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." But if you cast your burden upon the Lord, do not go looking for it when I have pronounced the benediction—leave it altogether! The fault with many of us is that when we have cast our burden upon the Lord, we beg Him to let us have it back! And if He grants our foolish request, it comes back twice as heavy as it was before. Oh, that we were wise enough to leave our troubles with our Father who is in Heaven as little children leave things with their father! Then we shall find that He comforts us in all our tribulation.

Yes, but our text is true of the future as well as the present. Here, if we cannot speak by experience, we can speak by faith. A little child who loves his father has no doubt about his father's comforting him next year as well as this. And you must have no doubt about what God will do for you, dear Friends, especially you aged ones. When the veterans begin to waver and doubt, I do not know what excuse to make for them. I remember the story of one who said she was afraid she would be starved. Someone asked her, "How old are you?" "Seventy-five," she replied. "How long have you been a Christian?" "Fifty years." "Your Heavenly Father has fed you these 50 years and yet you fear that He will let you starve during the last few years you are likely to be here?" It was very wrong of the poor old soul—mind that you do not imitate her! It is due to every honest man that we should speak of him as we have found him—but much more is it due to our faithful God! He *has* comforted, He *is* comforting and He *will* comfort. And Paul puts it in such a way as to make us feel that *He will never leave off comforting us even for a single moment.* "Who comforts us in all our tribulation"—not in some of it, but in *all* of it! Our tribulations sometimes change and a new cross is generally a very heavy one. The old crosses get, at last, to fit the back and we can carry them better than we could at the first—but a new cross galls the shoulders that have not yet grown used to it. But the Lord your God will help you in your new tribulations as well as in your old ones! And if they come thick and threefold—tribulation upon tribulation, trouble upon trouble—still, as your days, so shall your strength be, and He who has comforted and is comforting, will continue to comfort you even to the last!

IV. Now I must close with just a few remarks upon THE COMFORTING DESIGN of which our text speaks.

Why does God lay trouble upon His people and comfort them in it? *It is that He may make them comforters of others*—"that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble." A man who has never had any trouble is very awkward when he tries to comfort troubled hearts. Hence, the minister of Christ, if he is to be of much use in God's service, must have great trouble. "Prayer, meditation, and affliction," says Melanchthon, "are the three things that make the minister of God." There must be prayer. There must be meditation and there must be affliction. You cannot pronounce the promise correctly in the ears of the afflicted unless you, yourself, have known its preciousness in your own hour of trial. It is God's will that the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, should often work by men according to that ancient word of His, "Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God. Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem." These comforting men are to be made—they are not born so—and they have to be made by passing through the furnace, themselves. They cannot comfort others unless they have had trouble and have been comforted in it.

More than this, *the intent of God is to make us able comforters*—"that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble." Some have the will to comfort the troubled, but they have not the power to do it. "Miserable comforters are you all," said Job to his friends! And the same has been said to many of those who have really tried to comfort the sorrowing, but who, in the process, have put their fingers into the open wounds and so made them worse instead of better. Brethren, the able comforter must be a man who knows both the trial and the promise that is suited to meet it.

Beside that, *we are to be ready comforters*, for we are "to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." Experimental knowledge helps a man to speak with power to the afflicted soul. He who has taken a certain medicine and proved the benefit of it, is the man to recommend it to another. Hence, the Lord often passes His ministers through trials which they would never have to endure if it were not for their people. Even as upon the Chief Shepherd, all the wanderings of the flock had to be laid, so, in a very minor sense, the wanderings of the flock must be borne by the under-shepherd, or else he cannot be a comforter to them. Dear Friends, the next time you get into any trouble, I would recommend you to take notes of it and to ask yourself, when it is over, "How did God comfort me?" Lay that cordial up in store, because, one of these days, you will need that comfort, again, or, if not, you will meet with somebody who is in just the same fix as you were in—and you will be able to say, "I know what will help you, for I have it down in black and white at home, how God helped me in a trouble exactly like yours."

As I was reading a book, this afternoon, this sentence struck me—"whenever you come into the mouth of the furnace, say to yourself, 'God has some great work for me to do and He is preparing me for it.'" I thought to myself, "I have not often said that in the time of trial. My thoughts have been too much taken up with the furnace to think of the good which was to result from the fire." But I am sure that what that writer said is true—God means to do something more by us, which,

speaking after the manner of men, He cannot yet do by us. We are not qualified for it. But He is going to put us through a still hotter furnace—the heat is to be more intense than any we have yet borne—and when we come out, we shall be more fit for the Master's use!

Welcome your trials, then, Beloved! Open wide your doors and say to tribulations, "Come in, come in! This is the place where you are to lodge, for my Master said, 'In the world you shall have tribulation.'" Welcome even that black trouble that has a mask on its face—it is no adversary coming to kill you—when the mask is taken off, you will see that, underneath it there is a bright smiling face! Some of us can say to affliction, "Come in and welcome, for the costliest jewels we ever possessed were brought by you! You have done us more good than all our joys put together." We would have had no harvest if God had left us like the hard road outside the field. But the soil has been cut up by the sharp plow and often our very soul has been grievously tried as the harrow and the cultivator have gone over us, again and again! But all these processes have caused us to bring forth fruit to the praise and glory of God! Therefore, I say again, welcome your troubles! Do not be sorry if they travel with you for a while, for they are good guests. Many a time, by entertaining trouble, we have "entertained angels unawares." God bless you, Brothers and Sisters, by making you a comfort to others! And probably it will be through the very trials which greatly vex you!

Now to close, there may be some poor soul here broken down under a sense of sin, some seeker who cannot find the Savior. He may speak to some of you who were brought to Christ without any strong emotion. He will begin telling you about his despair and you will look at him and say, "Dear me, where has this man come from?" Then do not try to help him, for you cannot—you have not had the experience through which he is passing. Go find the Brother who had a hard time of it in getting to the Wicket Gate, that poor fellow who tumbled into the Slough of Despond with his big burden on his back and nearly got choked in the mire. Say to him, "Brother Christian, here is another soul floundering about just as you were." Hand him over to such a person because he will be the most likely to help him. Any of you who had great difficulty in laying hold of Christ at the first ought to be on the watch to find others who are as you were—stretch out the helping hand to them and say, "We would not have you suffer as we did if we can help it. We wish to show you the way to Jesus Christ and to get you to see it more quickly that we did. We even hope that you will, this very night, find joy and peace in believing."

Do look after the broken-hearted ones, dear Friends! Watch for Mr. Feeble-Mind. Be on the look-out for poor Mr. Fearing, do not let them lie outside long. Help them over the wall and, as you have found mercy, administer it, in the name of God, to all who are longing to find it! May God bless you all, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 CORINTHIANS 1:1-20.

Verse 1. *Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.* Paul is very careful to remind the Corinthians of that fact, since some of them had gone the length of denying his Apostleship altogether.

1. *And Timothy our brother.* Whom, in all humility, he associates with himself, although he was a younger man, of far less consequence. But Paul loved him very much and, therefore, he put his name at the beginning of this Epistle side by side with his own—"and Timothy our brother."

1, 2. *Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia: Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.* Christianity is a religion of benedictions! Whereas worldly people often use the language of courtesy towards one another without meaning what they say, the saints of God put a fullness of meaning into their expressions and really wish every good thing to those to whom they write. "Grace be to you." That comes first, and then peace follows. Peace without Grace is a very dangerous possession. But a peace that grows out of the possession of Grace is a gracious peace and will lead to the peace of Heaven before long. This Grace and peace are to come "from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." There is no Grace for us apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. And though the Father is full of love and will give Grace and peace to His people, yet the Lord Jesus Christ must always be the channel through which these incomparable favors must flow to them!

3, 4. *Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.* Nothing less, then, shall be given to the tried people of God than that same comfort which was enjoyed by the Apostle Paul! It shall be shared by all who are resting where Paul rested.

5. *For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds by Christ.* The Apostles were the most tried, but they were the most comforted. They had to stand the brunt of the battle, but the Lord was their strength in a very special sense. Observe the balance in this verse—"as the sufferings," "so our consolation." And "as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds by Christ." With little trial, we may expect little comfort. It is better to leave the whole matter entirely with God, or else we might almost desire to be dug about by the spade of affliction, that we might receive more of the living waters of consolation!

6. *And whether we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.* That is the grand objective of Christians, to live for others! When God has helped us to receive both our comforts and our sorrows as matters of trust that we are to take care of for the benefit of our fellow Christians, then have we learned the lesson which Christ would teach us by them!

7. *And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you also be of the consolation.* How these things are put together! God does not call His people to the one without the other—no consolation without affliction and, blessed be His name, no affliction without consolation!

8. *For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life.* Why would Paul have them know this but that they might understand that he had to suffer as they did, and even more? Sometimes God's people are apt to think that their ministers are not cast down as they are. They look upon them as a sort of superior order of beings who have no doubts and fears, no lack of strength, no despair. But that is an idle fiction and the sooner it is gone from our minds, the better! For those who lead the people of God will rather have *more* afflictions than less. Seeing that they need more instruction than others need, and that instruction usually comes with the rod—in all probability they will have more of the rod than others will. Paul, therefore, is anxious that the Corinthians should know in what seas of trouble he had to swim.

9, 10. *But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raises the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us.* It is supposed by some that the Apostle was in danger of being put to death in same extraordinary way—perhaps by wild beasts in the amphitheatre. We know that he speaks of having fought with beasts at Ephesus. We cannot tell whether there is any allusion, here, to that trial, or what it was. But it was evidently some death which, to the Apostle, seemed to be exceedingly terrible. And when he was delivered from it, it was to him like a resurrection! He speaks of it as having been worked by God that raises the dead. And he puts down this deliverance, together with some other of which he was at that very time the subject—"and does deliver"—and upon these experiences he builds his expectation that God "will yet deliver."

11. *You also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.* When many pray, after the blessings is received, many will give thanks. Paul rejoices to have been the object of interest to a large number of Christians everywhere in the time of his great peril. And when he escaped, he believed be would still be the object of their interest and that there would be more prayer in the world, and more praise, too, because of the dangers from which God had delivered him. It is worth while for any of us to be in sore sickness, or in great straits, if, thereby, the quantity of prayer and praise in the world shall be increased to God's Glory!

12. *For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the Grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you.* For to them he had been specially particular, that in no point they should speak of him as having used the wisdom of words. Among them

he determined not to know anything except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. To them he was like the nurse who administers milk to babes.

13, 14. *For we write none other things unto you, than what you read or acknowledge; and I trust you shall acknowledge even to the end; as also you have acknowledged us in part.* Some of them disputed his Apostleship, but most of them did not—

14. *That we are your rejoicing, even as you, also, are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.* What a happy condition of things it is when the teacher and the taught mutually rejoice in each other! When the teacher is the joy of the flock and when he can rejoice in his people! This is profitable to all, but when there are discards, and fault-finding and the like, this is neither glorifying to God nor profitable to the people.

15-17. *And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that you might have a second benefit; and to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judea. When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? Or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yes, yes, and no, no?* There were some in the Church at Corinth who said, "He promised to come and see us, but he did not keep his word." They declared that his promise could not be depended upon and that he very easily changed his mind. Now the Apostle had done nothing of the kind! He had solid reasons for his change of purpose and reasons full of love to them—but they misrepresented him. Do not, my dear Friends, count the fiery trial of misrepresentation to be any strange thing! Even some of those whom you have loved and for whom you have been willing to lay down your lives will turn against you! It is no new thing that they should do so. They may take anything which you have done in the simplicity of your heart and turn it against you. Whenever they do so, I say again, do not think that any strange thing has happened to you—it happened to Paul—then why should not you have a similar experience?

18-20. *But as God is true, our word toward you was not yes and no. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timothy, was not yes and no, but in Him was yes. For all the promises of God in Him are yes, and in Him, Amen, unto the glory of God by us.* Paul loved to turn from some lower subject to his Lord. When he wrote the words, "yes and no," they suggested to him the perfect constancy of the love of Christ and thankfulness for His faithful promises. So, as the thought came into his mind, he could do no other than put it into the Epistle he was writing, for he never missed an opportunity of praising the Lord Jesus Christ! I wish we could all imitate him, in this respect, far more than we have ever done, for, our Savior is worthy of all the praise we can ever give Him—and more, too!

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

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

GOD'S HEART THE SOURCE OF ALL BLESSING
NO. 2641

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 18, 1882.

"According to Your own heart, have You done all these great things."
2 Samuel 7:21.

A FRIEND observed to me, just before the service, that after the earnest endeavor this morning to magnify the Grace of God, he did not want to hear any more for a week. He was perfectly satisfied with what he had heard and was only afraid lest the sermon of the evening should drive that of the morning out of his head. Well, dear Friends, that is my own fear, too! I never like driving one nail out by hammering another in and, really, what more can I say than I said this morning? I then poured out my inmost heart in endeavoring to extol the exceeding riches of God's Grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus. [See Sermon #1665, Volume 28—*The Exceeding Riches of Grace*—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org] This evening's discourse, therefore, is intended to be like a little supplement to the big book of the morning sermon—just a few additional words upon the theme that we considered then.

As we read the chapter from which my text is taken, we noticed that David had a holy purpose in his grateful heart. He said to Nathan the Prophet, "I dwell in a house of cedar, but the Ark of God dwells within curtains." And he seemed to think that it was neglectful on his part to have suffered the Ark to remain so long unhoused, so he resolved to build for it, and for the worship associated with it, a Temple that would be "exceedingly magnificent." He had for years gathered together gold and silver and he meant to continue to do so, that he might erect a shrine for the Lord, his God, more glorious than any that had ever been built by the greatest heathen prince for his false deity! This was the thought which was in David's mind and he mused upon it, for it was very sweet to him. It was, in fact, the great ambition of his life that he might be permitted to build this house for the worship of Jehovah. Yet the Lord was not willing to accept the Temple at his hands, for David had been a man of war from his youth up—and God would not have His sanctuary built with blood-stained hands. However necessary those wars might have been for the liberation and defense of the chosen nation—and they certainly were so—yet, nevertheless, a man of peace must build the house for the God of Peace. And Solomon, the son of David, in whose

reign there was no war, must have the honor of raising the great House of Prayer in the name of the Lord.

Yet, dear Brothers and Sisters, observe that though the Lord refused to David the realization of his wish, he did it in a most gracious manner. He did not put the idea away from him in anger or disdain, as though David had cherished an unworthy desire. He honored His servant even in the non-acceptance of his offer and multiplied as many blessings upon the head of the king as could have descended upon it if he had been permitted to carry out his intention!

Now, in imitation of David, let us think of some grand thing that we can do for the Lord our God. Let us, with consecrated spirit and with liberal hand, seek to honor and glorify the Lord our Redeemer! But if we should not be permitted to do that particular work upon which we have set our heart, let us not be surprised or disappointed. A servant's true obedience can sometimes be as well seen in what he does *not* do, as in what he does. It is not for us to choose our place, or our work and, though the zealous servant may prefer to do something which shall show his loyalty to his master in the clearest light, yet is that loyalty even more fully seen when his master says, "No, I wish you not to do that." And he, without a murmur, sits down, or goes to work somewhere else where he may have been bid to go. It is right for you to have in your heart a project for God's Glory—it is well that it is in your heart—but if your pet project may not be carried out, it is your duty and privilege to then say to your Lord, "I am Your servant in the doing or in the not doing. I am absolutely at Your disposal in this matter and, by Your Grace, in all other things, too—and so I wish it always to be."

Nathan was sent to David to reveal to him God's great purposes of Grace towards him and his son Solomon, and the whole of his dynasty, and to give the promise that one descended from him should sit upon the throne forever—as He does and will—for the King of kings and Lord of lords, whom we greet with cries of, "Hosanna!" is the Son of David. And He still reigns and He shall reign till all His foes shall be trodden beneath His feet. And then He shall reign forever and ever, hallelujah! As this Revelation was given to David, he seems to have been oppressed with the weight of mercy which God had put upon him, so he went in and sat before the Lord to meditate upon what Nathan had said. I think there were two questions that arose in his mind—and to these questions he tried to find an answer. The first was—Why should God speak such "exceedingly great and precious promises" concerning such weighty matters, such everlasting blessings? That was his first question. And the other was—Why should these great promises be spoken to *him*? Why to him rather than to anyone else? "Who am I, O Lord God! And what is my house, that You have brought me this far?" "Is this the manner of man, O Lord God?" He then proceeded to give an answer to his two questions in the words of our text, "According to Your own heart, have You done all these great things."

So, from his answer we learn, first, that *the measure of God's goodness is the heart of God* and, secondly, *the reason of this goodness lies in the heart of God.*

I. First, THE MEASURE OF DIVINE GOODNESS IS THE HEART OF GOD.

God did great things for David, but not because of David's own greatness. "I took you," said the Lord to him, "from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel." He was at first nothing but a shepherd boy, so God did not choose him because of his greatness. And when the Lord gave these great promises to David, it was not because of the greatness of David's design of building the Temple, for God seemed to think but little of that and said, "In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel, spoke I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed My people Israel, saying, Why have you not built Me an house of cedar?" No, the one reason for the great blessings and promises which God gave to David was found in the *heart of God*! If a king gives presents to his courtiers, why does he make them so precious and costly! Not because of the extraordinary deserts of the person upon whom he bestows them, but because he is, himself, a king and, therefore, his gifts must correspond with his high position. A man of liberal spirit gives generously, where a churl would scarcely spare the smallest bronze coin. But why does the generous one give so freely! Why, simply because he is generous! Men do not always measure their gifts by the worth of those to whom they give them, but if they are, themselves, large-hearted, they reckon according to the largeness of their own hearts and give accordingly. That is what David said—he could not imagine why God should do such great things for him till this thought entered his mind, "He is a great God. Greatly gracious and full of loving kindness and therefore it is that He has promised all these things to me."

If you look carefully, you will see that this general principle runs through all the gifts of God to us. But, dear Hearers, God gave us one such costly gift that He could never give us another equal to it! I mean, *the great gift of the Lord Jesus Christ*. God had but one only-begotten and well-beloved Son, yet He gave Him to us! Now, if all Heaven and earth were put together, and all that God has anywhere in the universe were added thereto, it could not equal in value that first majestic and unspeakable Gift! How came the great Jehovah ever to think of making such a wondrous Present as this to poor worms such as men are? No one could have suggested the thought to Him! I can well believe that when the holy angels heard that the Son of God was to be Incarnate, and when it oozed out that in human flesh He was to die, even they could scarcely believe that such a thing was possible! The thought of Calvary's Sacrifice could never by *any* possibility have originated in their mind! O God, You did give Your Son to us, and for us, because Your heart was Your heart and there is nothing like it even in Your Heaven of Glory! His infinite heart, in inconceivable compassion, suggested to itself the giving up of its greatest Treasure and it gave up for us, poor sinful men, the very heart of Christ to bleed and die on our behalf! It must be because of the love of the heart of God that this unique Gift was given—there could be no other reason for its bestowal.

Then, dear Friends, following the course of the chapter as well as we can, the next promise was concerning the *great adoption*. God said to David, concerning Solomon, "I will be his Father, and he shall be My son"—and the great honor which was promised to Solomon has been also conferred upon every Believer in Jesus, 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." Have not many of us received within our hearts "the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father"? Now, what could have induced God to adopt *us* as His sons and daughters? What could have made Him say to *us*, "I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you," except this reason which David gives in the words of our text, "According to Your own heart, have You done all these great things"? The fatherly heart of God longed to take within itself vast multitudes of the human race, so He said, "My Son shall be the first-born among many brethren. He is my only-begotten Son, but there shall be given to Him a numerous seed who shall be joint-heirs with Him, for they shall be adopted into My family." And it is even so. God did not adopt us because of any merit in us which entitled us to be His children—but because He has such a great heart, so full of love—when He made a feast for His Son, He could not endure that there should be any empty seats at that royal banquet, so He said to His servants, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that My house may be filled!" Thus you and I, Beloved, were brought in and *made* to sit there with Christ Jesus, as we do sit even now, for He is not ashamed to call us brethren. This greatness of the heart of God must have been the cause and the *only* cause of our adoption, as well as of our redemption!

The Lord also promised to David that when He had adopted Solomon as His son, He would be constant to him, and never forsake him—"If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: but My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul." Brothers and Sisters, that *great constancy of love* finds a parallel in your case and mine! God does not adopt us as His children, today, and then cast us off tomorrow. I speak with all reverence when I say that it is not possible for Him who, "according to His abundant mercy, has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," to unchild us and permit us to lose that hope! My sons, whatever they may be, must always be my sons. And they who are born of God shall forever be the children of God. I venture to repeat the lines that have often been spoken against, but which are true every whit—

"Once in Him, in Him forever!
Nothing from His love can sever!"

He gives us eternal life and we shall never perish, neither shall any pluck us out of His hands.

And why is this? Because of some good thing in us that will make us constant and keep us holding fast to Him? No! Here is the answer, let me read the text again—"According to Your own heart, have You done all these great things." God's heart is constant in its affection. He does not cast away His children. He will not divorce the soul that has been es-

poused unto Him. Christ has made us members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones—we can *never* be cut off from Him—no, not even a little finger of Christ shall ever be taken away, else would He be a mutilated Savior and that He can never be! His own declaration is, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." He will securely and forever keep all the sheep that were given to Him by His Father! Not one of them will be lost.

This has always seemed to me to be one of the supreme blessings of the Covenant of Grace. I confess that I would hardly give a penny for any salvation that I could lose. I would not go across the street to pick up a sort of quarterly or yearly salvation! Everlasting life is the thing we need—the life of God which can never change or be taken from us—and that is what is given to all of you who believe in Christ Jesus! But why is it given? The only answer is—According to the heart—the faithful, immutable, gracious, loving heart—of the ever-blessed Father. Even under the old dispensation, God said, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed." "The Lord, the God of Israel, says that He hates putting away." He cannot endure it and, therefore, He will not put away those who are espoused to Him!

Let me mention another great favor which we get from God, and that is, *the promise of blessing for the future*. The Lord spoke concerning Solomon and David's house, "for a great while to come," and He has spoken after the same fashion concerning us who believe in Jesus. Paul asked, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" And then answered his own question, "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." Unless Christ shall come first, we shall all die—but death will not divide us from the living Savior! It will only knock off the fetters from this decaying body and give us liberty to soar away to the bosom of our Lord! You and I, if we are believers in Him, shall be there with Him. If we are among the called, and chosen, and faithful, we shall, by-and-by, stand at His right hand and we shall reign with Him, in His Glory, forever and ever, in yonder land of blessedness—in the Kingdom of the Father! "You have spoken also of Your servant's house for a great while to come," said David. But, in our case, it is far more than a great time to come, for it is a great *eternity* to come! God has appointed bliss for us forever and forever—"pleasures forevermore." "A crown of glory that fades not away." "A city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." "A kingdom which cannot be moved."

That last passage suggests one thing more which I find in this chapter. That is, *the promise of the kingdom*. The Lord said, concerning David's son, "I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." And here is the parallel in our case, for we are made kings and priests unto our God and we shall reign forever and ever! To us, also, belong our Lord's words to His disciples, "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father has appointed unto Me." "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good

pleasure to give you the kingdom." You shall even judge angels and sit as co-assessors with the great Judge in that Last Tremendous Day! And concerning the mighty fallen angel, himself, to you shall be fulfilled the promise, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Oh, the glory of which He has spoken concerning us and the kingdom that is yet to be revealed!

Now, why does the Lord lavish such marvelous mercy upon such insignificant and undeserving creatures as we are? Why does He seem to use His utmost powers in inventing new blessings for us, such as must astonish the angels that stand before His face? Oh, why does He thus lift the beggars from the dunghill and set them among princes, even the princes of His people! Our text contains the only answer—"According to Your own heart, have You done all these great things." What an immeasurable measure of goodness and Grace there is in the heart of God!

Before I leave this part of my subject, I want you to turn it to practical account. Try, dear Friends, to use this thought whenever you are exercising faith. The devil will say to you about many a promise which God has given, "Oh, that is too good to be true!" Tell him that it is not so—it might *seem* too good if God gave only according to the measure of *our* merit, or the limit of *our* understanding, or the extent of *our* faith. But He does much better than that—"exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." *God's* heart, not mine, is the measure of His giving! Not my capacity to receive, but His capacity to give! Get that thought thoroughly fixed in your mind. I can only receive like a man, but God can give like a God! He does everything Divinely and He certainly makes no exception to His rule when He is dealing with His people. If it is God who is to give, then I can believe in the greatness of the gift, be it what it may, for nothing can be too great for Him!

You know the old and somewhat hackneyed story about Alexander promising to a man in his army that he would give him whatever he chose to ask. He was to send his request to the imperial treasurer, but, when it was written out, it was for so huge a sum that the treasurer refused to pay it. It was too much, he said, for a common soldier to receive. But when Alexander heard of it, he said, "I like that man's faith—he has honored me by such a large demand, for he asks something that it is worthy of Alexander to give." Now, if that man had been foolish enough to measure his request by his own poor rank, he would have asked for a few pounds in ready cash, or a pension of a few pence a day might have contented him. But, instead of doing so, he reckoned according to the vastness of Alexander's empire and asked great things, and so he did Alexander honor! Whenever you are exercising faith, Beloved, remember that it is according to the heart of God to give with exceeding generosity.

So, when you are praying, if unbelief would stop you, and say, "Do not ask for this or that, for it is too much for you to have," I advise you to say to yourself, "I will not be stinted in my desire and I will not commit the sin of limiting the Holy One of Israel. But, as He gives according to His own heart, I will ask great things of Him, for He has said, 'Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.'" You know, I suppose what some people say is the meaning of that passage. I am not quite sure that it is so, but it is

said that, sometimes, the kings of Persia have been known to bid a prince open his mouth and they have put in diamonds, pearls, rubies, emeralds, and all manner of precious things, as many as it would hold. If that kind of thing should happen to any of you, I expect that you would open your mouths very wide—I have no doubt that your capacity to receive would be greater, on that occasion, than you have ever yet known it to be! But when you are coming before the God of the whole earth, oh, for a big mouth to ask great things of Him! Oh, for a wide mouth, then, to take in every conceivable blessing from Him! In our prayers, let us not ask according to the measure of our poor little heart that is so shriveled, cold and weak, but according to God's great heart that is infinite and full of Grace and love!

Just once more, use this thought of the greatness of God's heart in the exercise of your delight in the Lord. Sometimes we are afraid of being too happy, but that is scarcely possible. Oh, how happy Christians have a right to be, with Heaven for their home, God for their Father, Christ for their Savior, the Holy Spirit for their Comforter and the Sacred Trinity pledged to defend and bless them! Oh, sit down and delight yourselves in the Lord! Let me not hear anything about cares and troubles for a while—I need to get into my secret place of communion with my God, shut the door and just turn over and over in my mind such a passage as this, "They shall be My people, and I will be their God." Or this, "Fear you not; for I am with you: be not dismayed; for I am your God: I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness." David wrote, "Delight yourself also in the Lord," not merely be thankful, or peaceful, or happy, but, "*delight yourself in the Lord.*" Do not go paddling about in the shallows—take a header and dive into the depths of Divine joy! Plunge yourself into the Godhead's deepest sea and be lost in His immensity! You shall never so fully and so truly find yourself as when you have lost yourself in God! "Oh, that is saying too much!" says someone. No, it is not—it may be too much for you if you are measuring with your poor little bushel—but now take God's great measure as it is revealed to us in our text—"According to Your own heart, have You done all these great things, to make Your servant know them." The next time I find a little mercy, I will say, "Thank God for that," but I shall not be quite sure whether it is not one of the common, ordinary mercies that He gives, alike, to His friends and His foes. But when I get hold of a great mercy that is so enormous that I cannot comprehend it, I shall say of it, "That came from God! I am sure it did. Great mercies come from the great God, the great Giver of all good things." The greatness of the mercy is the proof that it is Divine—and my soul will appropriate it, and rejoice in it, for God has given it to me according to His own heart!

I have only a few minutes left for the second part of my subject, which happens to be a Truth of God which I have so often preached to you, that I may the less regret that I have but a short time to speak upon it now.

II. Secondly, THE REASON OF GOD'S GOODNESS TO US LIES IN HIS OWN HEART.

Why does God bless His people? What is the cause of it? Here it is in the text—"According to Your own heart, have You done all these great things." Why did God have mercy at all on any sinner? Because mercy was in His heart and "He delights in mercy." When God was willing to pardon sin, why did He not save the fallen angels? Why did He pass by them and look in pity on men? For no reason that I know of, but that it was according to His own heart. And when He did turn to men to save them, why did He take pity on *you*, and why did He look with love on *me*? I cannot tell you, except for the reason which our Lord Jesus, Himself, gave, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight." When God elected His people, why did He elect *them*? Here is the reply—"According to Your own heart, have You done all these great things." Sovereignty ruled the hour! God chose whom He had a right to choose, for this is one of the attributes which He strictly guards—"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Some people bite their tongues whenever they hear me quote that text. Well, they will have to bite them very often, for it is one of the most grand Truths of God revealed in the Scriptures and I shall delight to repeat it as long as I live! And to any objector, I have simply to say what Paul wrote, "No but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why have you made me thus? Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" It is God's will that chooses His people unto eternal life. We know no other reason.

Will you, who are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, tell me why you were thus favored? Why were you given to Christ and put into His Church? Yes, why, but that it was according to the heart of God? And when you were called effectually by His Grace and made willing in the day of His power, while so many others refused to come, and willfully perished, what was the reason for the distinction in your case? Some good thing in you? Far from it! Our text explains the mystery—"According to Your own heart, have You done all these great things." And when you were pardoned, Brother, why were you forgiven? For the sake of your repentance, or in hope of your doing better in the future? By no means, for, if you did better, it would be the *result* of the pardon, not the *cause* of it! The only satisfactory explanation is that it was according to God's own heart! Is not that a grand passage, in the 43rd of Isaiah, (oh, how often I have admired God's Grace as revealed in it), where God speaks of His people having wearied Him with their iniquities? He says that He never wearied them, nor caused them to serve with an offering, yet they had not bought Him any sweet cane with money, nor filled Him with the fat of their sacrifices. But they made Him to serve with their sins, and wearied Him with their iniquities. Yet, even then, He goes on to say, "I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions"—for what reason? "For My own sake"—not, "for your sakes," but, "for My own sake"—"and will not remember your sins."

The reason for God's mercy lies not in man, but in God's own heart! He looked and He could see no good of any kind in man, nor the slightest hope of there ever being any good. But within His own bosom He found

the motive for the display of His Grace—and then His own arm brought salvation! Oh, how blessed it is to see this great Truth of God—that the cause of the salvation of any man lies in God's own heart, not in the man's own goodness or worthiness, or in any works foreseen in him—or in anything at all that comes of the creature!

Now, I want you who are coming to God for mercy to see how you can make use of this Truth. I know what you have been doing. You have been looking inside *your* heart to find a reason why God should forgive you and, as you cannot find any reason *there*, you think that there is none. Now just turn your eyes the other way and look up to the great heart of God, and say, with David, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness according to the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions." Try to spy out the reason for mercy in God—*there is not any reason for it in yourself*. You deserve His fiercest wrath and hottest Hell! And if that is your portion, you will never be able to complain of any injustice having been done to you, for you will have no more punishment than your sins have brought upon you! But look away to God's heart and you will see that He loves to forgive—that it is His Glory to forgive! So plead with Him to pardon you for His own name's sake, for that is the best of all arguments.

I want you not only to do that, when you first come to Him, but to do the same as you continue to cling to Him. I can assure you that I am clinging to Christ, at this moment, in exactly the same way as I did when I first found Him. I got rid of everything that I could confide in. In fact, I would have had to laugh at myself if I had set up any righteousness of my own, for I had not a stick or stone out of which I could have made a righteousness fit to present to God! Then I came to Christ, not because I had any right of my own to cling to, but because He seemed a dear, kind Savior who loved me to cling to Him! And that is just why I am still clinging to Him. I say to Him, "Lord, I will not go away from You, for as I look up to You, I perceive that You are all goodness, and all mercy, and all love. And therefore, by Your Grace, I intend to cling to You as long as I live. Sink or swim, I will always hold to You." In like manner, dear Friend, your reason for continuing to cling to Christ must be found only in the heart of Christ and not in yourself. Cling on, then, because it is according to His heart never to cast away a single soul that puts its trust in Him!

And this is the reason, dear Brothers and Sisters, why we must cast all our care upon Him. I invite you, and I urge you to do so. If you ask yourself, "Why should I cast my care on Him?" The reply is, because it is His heart's wish that you should do so. Christ loves you to leave your cares with Him. The more you trust Him, the better He loves you, if that can be. At least, the more you shall *realize* His love. You know the pretty story of the poor girl in India whose teacher was very sick and weak, so the girl begged her teacher to lean upon her. But the English lady did not like to lean too heavily, so the girl pleaded, "O dear Teacher, if you love me, lean hard! I shall be happy to feel your weight upon me." And it is just so with the Lord Jesus! He loves you to lean hard upon Him, to cast yourself wholly upon Him and give up trying to help yourself! You will

never be so blessed and never realize so much of the preciousness of Christ as when you do that! Perhaps you ask, "May I?" May you?! He wants you to do so and that is the very *reason* why you may! According to His own heart, He bids you come and cast yourself entirely upon Him!

Now, dear Hearers, what do you say to this subject? Does it not glorify God? Have I preached up *man*? No, I have preached him *down* and I have tried to preach God up to the very highest—and so I will while this tongue can move! Let my right hand forget her cunning before I shall begin to preach about the dignity of human nature and the grandeur of the miserable wretch called man! No, God is glorious over all and if man is plucked from the burning, it must be the hand of God that delivers him—and the reason why he is rescued is because the heart of God has moved His hand to save the poor sinner from going down to destruction! I am quite content with the poet's reason—

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

But, O Beloved, what a wide door this Truth of God sets open for poor lost men! You self-righteous people will not come in by it, for you do not like this God-made entrance. You want to try to save yourselves—but you will only the more effectually *ruin* yourselves—that is all that will come of it! But every poor sinner who is worried by the devil and brought to the lowest extremity, will say, "If there is a reason in the heart of God why I should be saved, I will come and trust myself on Christ's finished work and, trusting in Him, I will see whether I shall not be saved." O you lost and ruined! O you helpless and hopeless! O you far-off ones! O you who lie at death's door and Hell's door—look to Jesus on the Cross! Your hope lies there! Turn your eyes away from yourself, for there is nothing in yourself but that which you will have to weep over and groan over! Man's extremity is God's opportunity—if you have come to the end of self, I invite you to begin with Christ! Yes, if you have done with self, Christ has already begun with you! And when He begins, He never ceases till He perfects His work! The Lord bless and save you! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 SAMUEL 7:1-22.

Verses 1, 2. *And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the LORD had given him rest round about from all his enemies; that the king said unto Nathan the Prophet, See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the Ark of God dwells within curtains.* He said no more, but his intention was very plain, namely, to build a house that should be a more suitable abode for the Ark of the Lord.

3. *And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in your heart; for the LORD is with you.* He spoke too fast. Even Prophets, who are Inspired of God, must wait upon their Master for their message! And when they utter words which only come out of their own mouths, they say what they will have to unsay before long. It did look very clear that this was the

proper thing for Nathan to say to David, but he had not a, "Thus says the Lord," for it.

4, 5. *And it came to pass that night, that the Word of the LORD came unto Nathan, saying, Go and tell My servant David, Thus says the LORD.* "You have already let him know what *Nathan* had to say about the matter. Now go and tell him what Jehovah says."

5. *Shall you build Me an house for Me to dwell in?* The conception was altogether too low. He has made all space—time is His creation and the arch of Heaven stands by His almighty power—shall God, Himself, have a *house* in which He can dwell?

6. *Whereas I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle.* A structure to be set up, and taken down, and to be moved about wherever the people journeyed. That was sufficient to be a central shrine of worship, and God cared for nothing else.

7. *In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel, spoke I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed My people Israel, saying, Why build you not Me an house of cedar?* Did God ever put to the children of Israel such a question as this? No, and it is very remarkable that, from the time that the Temple was built, you may date the decay of true religion in Israel! And the same thing has happened many times since—whenever religion is surrounded by elaborate ceremonies and gorgeous architecture, it is almost certain to suffer loss of power and efficacy. The simplicity of worship may not be the life of it, but it has a very intimate connection with that life.

8-11. *Now therefore so shall you say unto My servant David, Thus says the LORD of Hosts, I took you from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel: and I was with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies, out of your sight, and have made you a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth. Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime, and as since the time that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel, and have caused you to rest from all your enemies. Also the LORD tells you that He will make you an house.* God has a way of returning men's generosity in kind. Since David wished to build God's house, God would build David's house!

12-15. *And when your days are fulfilled, and you shall sleep with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, which shall proceed out of your bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: but My mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before you.* Here is our warrant for believing in the *final salvation* of Solomon! Perhaps that Book of Ecclesiastes, the work of his old age, shows us by what rough and thorny ways God brought the wanderer back. He had tried to satisfy himself with the things of time and sense,

but he was constrained, at last, to utter this verdict, "Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; all is vanity." And He had to go back to His God, and find his comfort there.

16-18. *And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you: your throne shall be established forever. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David. Than went king David in and sat before the LORD.* Like one weighted down with a great load of mercy, too heavy for him to stand up under it and, therefore, he must sit down and consider and meditate upon the wonderful words of God to him!

18, 19. *And he said, Who am I, O Lord God? And what is my house, that You have brought me to this point? And this was yet a small thing in Your sight, O Lord GOD; but You have spoken also of Your servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O LORD GOD?* "All that You have done for me, therefore, in overcoming my enemies, and making me king over this people, has seemed to be but a small thing to You, for, 'You have spoken also of Your servant's house for a great while to come.'" That astonished David and, therefore, he asked, "Is this the manner of man, O Lord God?" "Man gives after his own grudging fashion, but You give in a lordly, kingly, Divine way." David's question may be rendered, "Is this the law of the Man? Am I to be the parent of that Man who shall be my Lord as well as my son, who shall reign forever and ever, and of whose Kingdom there shall be no end?" David was spelling out the inner mystery hidden in the words of the Lord, reading between the lines and discovering that the Covenant which God had made with him was, at least in some respects, a repetition of that greater Covenant made with Christ on his behalf.

20. *And what can David say more unto You?* He had not said much, but he could not say much under such circumstances. He was utterly overwhelmed, just as when some wondrous kindness has been shown to us, we wish rather to sit still, in grateful silence, than to stand up and speak acknowledgments, for our heart is too full for utterance!

20-22. *For You, LORD GOD, know Your servant. For Your word's sake, and according to Your own heart, have You done all these great things, to make Your servant know them. Therefore You are great, O LORD GOD: for there is none like You, neither is there any God beside You, according to all that we have heard with our ears.* God had said to David, in the message He sent by Nathan, "I have made you a great name, like unto the name of the great that are in the earth." And now David brings back the words to God, and says, "You are great, O LORD GOD: for there is none like You, neither is there any God beside You."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" —8, 36 (SONG I), 136 (SONG II).

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

THE FLIGHT TO ZOAR
NO. 2642

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 1, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, IN THE AUTUMN OF 1857.

"The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar."
Genesis 19:23.

THE destruction of Sodom was, undoubtedly, a literal fact. And the record of it in Genesis is as true a piece of history as any event that is recorded by Tacitus or Josephus. But it was also intended to be a great parabolic lesson to us—a lesson in the shape of a parable—by which we might receive both instruction and blessing. The Old Testament is a great Book of texts and the New Testament contains the sermons upon them. Lot's wife was in the Old Testament as a text and in the New Testament we have the sermon upon it, "Remember Lot's wife." And wherever, my Brothers and Sisters, I find our Lord Jesus Christ, or any of His Apostles referring to an incident in the Old Testament, I always think it is our business to look at that event to which they refer. In the writings of the old Puritans, which I delight to read, I often find in the margin a hand pointing to some special words which it is requisite that the reader should particularly note and read with care. And when I see the hand put opposite the passage, by some old lover of the Truth of God, who, in days of yore, read the book, I generally turn to it with eagerness, to see what is the gem pointed at by the finger.

Now, I think, when our Savior said, "Remember Lot's wife," He did, as it were, put a hand on the margin of the Bible, pointing to the whole incident describing the destruction of Sodom. He did, in effect, say, "Mark that event. Look at it closely, for there is more in it than there seems to be." And as there is something instructive in Lot's wife becoming a pillar of salt, there is something to be learned from every step of Lot's journey—and from every incident connected with it. If it is so, I shall not be regarded as being whimsical and fanciful if I assert that, in this text, I believe there is much instruction in the simple incident recorded here—"The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar."

I will soon map out my sermon. *Lot was nearly in the dark till he reached Zoar*—that is the first head. Secondly, *the sun was risen upon the earth as soon as Lot was in Zoar.* Thirdly, *the same moment which saw the sun rise on Lot saw the fiery hail fall on Sodom.* We have here three facts which I think are three pictures illustrating three great Truths of God with regard to the sinner's experience.

I. First, then, LOT WAS NEARLY IN THE DARK ON THE ROAD HE RAN TILL HE REACHED ZOAR.

Mark, when he first started, the Scripture tells us, in the 15th verse, that the morning rose—there was the first gray dawn when the angels hurried him out of Sodom! it was just the breaking of the day and it is said that as soon as Lot entered into Zoar, the sun was thoroughly risen, but not till then. He had to find his way through shadows and run, to a great degree, in the dark.

Ah, my Friends, that was a solemn moment when those notable guests turned their host out of doors and did it all out of love and kindness, too! When the two angels took Lot, his wife and his daughters by the hand and dragged them forth, and bade them run, it was a solemn moment. The heavens were heavy with God's wrath and only waited until Lot was safely housed to burst in impetuous torrents upon the devoted cities. Do you not see them, or, rather, do you not fancy you can see their black figures in the gloom of the twilight? You scarcely understand what it can be—there are two men pushing forth a family into the street. You see them next grasping their hands and with loving haste driving them forward. You now hear a voice, something more than earthly, speaking in the celestial language, crying, "Escape for your life!" And now mark the man, his wife and his daughters fleeing—fleeing from their own house—fleeing from their own kinsmen and acquaintances! A woman leaving her own sons-in-law and wives leaving their own husbands to perish in the city! Watch their flight! See them as they flee across the plain—they often stumble, for the way is not clear before them—and they little know where they are going. They only see the dark shadow of the mountain looming in the distance and they run there, in the darkness, with all their might.

Now, Lot running in the dark is *the picture of a poor sinner when he comes out of Sodom*. You who have just been awakened and convinced of sin, must not expect that you will have the sunlight of God's favor all at once. There must first come into your house the angel of conviction to thrust you out of your abode of ruin. After you have run a while, you will then have sunlight, joy and peace. But in your running, while you are seeking the Savior, you must expect to run in the darkness—and if you do expect it, you will not be disappointed. Oh how dark it is to a poor sinner when he is first brought to know his state by nature, before the blessed remedy of Grace has been applied to him by the Holy Spirit! Look at him—tears follow each other down his cheeks in one perpetual race! He weeps almost all day and all night. And if he rests for a while for very sorrow, his dreams disturb him—he is always miserable—men call him mad, for he is as one demented. He talks to himself in doleful language and, as he goes about his business, he moans and sighs, "Oh, that!" And, "Ah!" And, "Would that!" Monosyllables that no man understands, but which are well known in their inward meaning both to God and to his own heart! He has no ray of hope. He believes he is shut out from God forever and he thinks that God is just in having hidden the light of His Countenance from him.

He does not murmur against the Most High, but never was man so *near* to complaining as he is. He is ready to lay violent hands on himself, for he says he cannot bear his existence. He cries with David, "I am weary with my groaning! All night I make my bed swim; I water my couch with my tears!" "Day and night Your hand is heavy upon me." He turns

to the Book of Job and he reads the Patriarch's doleful cries and declares that he could say the same. And all the mournful words of David or Jeremiah, he applies to himself. "I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the housetop," he says. "I am like a pelican of the wilderness. I am like an owl of the desert. I have no comfort, no peace, no joy. God's mercy is clean gone from me forever! He will no longer be mindful of me!"

Now, dear Friends, please remember that, to a greater or lesser degree, this always is and always must be the condition of a sinner when he is seeking the Savior. O you who are in the dark, remember that you are only where thousands of others have been! Think it not a strange thing that you are subject to this eclipse—others have been eclipsed, too—and all those who have found the Sun of Righteousness have had to run through the dark to get to Him! There must be a dark tunnel before we can get at Christ and we must grope through worse than an Egyptian night before we behold the face of God with joy!

Perhaps I may be asked what it is that makes it so dark to a poor sinner while he is seeking Christ. I think I may tell you, very briefly, it is *partly his own ignorance*. Poor Soul, he does not know enough about the Savior, nor enough about the plan of salvation to cheer him. Very likely he has never heard the way of salvation preached in all his life. That may be true and yet he may have attended a chapel—as chapels go in these times—for many a year! He does not understand the simple A B C of the Gospel, the sinner's sinnership the only argument to prove that he has an interest in Christ's salvation. He does not understand the Atonement—he cannot make it out how God can be just and yet pardon such a wretch as he is. "All this ignorance necessarily causes darkness." And, mark you, that mistakes concerning the Gospel are never little things—they are always dangerous, they are always painful. Sinners have more griefs than they need have because they have less knowledge than they should have.

Sometimes, too, *this darkness arises from mistakes concerning the Gospel*. There is not so much ignorance as there is error with regard to it—by which word, I mean, not a mistake willfully committed, but a mistake ignorantly committed. I know some people who understand the theory of salvation quite well, but they have a mistaken idea as to its application, or else, perhaps, they read it the wrong way upwards. I know many who do not neglect the Scriptures, but they begin reading about election and predestination before they know anything of conviction. So, often, the darkness of the sinner arises from misapprehension concerning the Gospel.

Many a time, too, the poor soul is running after Christ in the dark because *he has got legal ideas in his head*. That Mr. Legality is the ruin of many and, after all we do and say to him, he still lives on! You know how Martin Luther said that he preached Justification by Faith every day because he found that the people forgot it every day. In one of his quaint sermons, he says, "I feel as if I could take my book and beat this doctrine into your heads because you will never remember that you are not saved by your own good works, but by the righteousness of Christ." A sinner may be told, as plainly as possible, that all he can do is less than nothing—that salvation is all of Grace from first to last—but that crafty old

devil will not let him believe it. He will always lead him to think that he must *do* something, or *be* something, or *feel* something before he can take Jesus Christ to be his All-in-All! And so legality, like a black dragon, spreads its wings between the soul and God's Light and shuts out every ray of comfort from the poor desponding spirit.

Moreover, *this darkness is caused principally by conscience and by Satan.* It is a strange thing, but, sometimes, a sinner's conscience and the devil will strike hands. When Mr. Conscience is blowing his dreadful trumpet and startling the sleepy sinner, he is doing good service. But, sometimes, after the sinner is thoroughly awakened, the devil comes and whispers to Mr. Conscience—and in such a voice that it seems as if an angel said it—"Blow on, Mr. Conscience! Blow a still more dreadful blast and I will help you." And the devil comes in and, with his awful yells, he makes a thousand times worse noise than even conscience does—and the poor soul is bewildered, terror-stricken and well-nigh driven mad! "Oh," cries Satan, "you have been a sinner beyond the reach of Christ's mercy!" "Yes," says conscience, "that you have!" "Oh," says the devil, "you have committed every crime that flesh can commit." "Yes," says conscience, "that's true!" And he echoes every word that Satan says.

In comes the devil, and says, "You have committed the unpardonable sin." "No doubt," says conscience, "I always told you so." "And now," says Satan, "there is no hope for you—you must be cast away forever." "Yes," says conscience, "you must be cast away forever! There is no way of escape for such a wretch as you are." And when conscience and the devil get to blowing the same trumpet, it is a dreadful noise, indeed! And there is not a soul in the world that can endure its life when both Satan and conscience are making such a furious noise! No wonder, my dear Friends, it should be dark with the sinner when he is running on the road to Heaven! No wonder that before he finds the Savior, there should be a doleful cry in his ears, if Satan and conscience are both assailing him! I know that I do not like my conscience to be against me, even without the devil. Conscience, when he is noisy, is not a very comfortable housemate—certainly, we would rather have him still and quiet than always thundering in our ears. But when Hell and conscience go together, I say again, there is no soul that can long bear its existence, except God, in sovereign mercy, shall either support the soul or put a speedy stop to the noise!

Perhaps you ask me, "Why does not the poor sinner look to Jesus?" Ah, that is the very point of his difficulty! He does not look to Jesus because he does not think that Jesus Christ died for such a wretch as he! You know, it is one thing for you to talk about a sinner looking to Jesus when he is in the dark, and quite another thing to do it when you are in the dark, yourself. It is a blessed thing when the Lord enables a poor sinner to turn his eyes to Calvary and see the brightness of Jesus. But there are, often, long days and dreary nights before the sinner learns his own sinfulness and is enabled to look to the Savior. "But," says one, "why does he not go hear a good minister preach? Surely that would help him out of his trouble." My dear Friends, we try to preach the Gospel as plainly as we can, but it seems that we only rivet the chains on some people.

There is a poor soul in this place now—I have talked with her many times. I know her sad condition and I have often shaped my discourse so as to meet her case. Many times I have thought that the Lord has given me some sweet word that would break the gates of brass and set the imprisoned one at liberty. It has taken a little of the pride out of me and shown me how impossible it is for man, when he labors the hardest, to bring a soul out of bondage before the Lord's promised hour of redemption comes. "But," says one, "why do they not turn to the Bible and lay hold on some precious Truth of God! I do so and find comfort from it." Yes, my dear Friends, and they do turn to the Bible just as you do, yet they find no comfort, for they cannot lay hold on the promises. I know when I was, for many a month, in bondage, I used to read the Bible through—and the threats were all printed in capitals, but the promises were in such small type that, for a long time, I could not make them out! And when I did make them out, I did not believe they were mine. But the threats were all my own—I was sure of it!

"There," I said, "when it says, 'He that believes not shall be damned,' that means me." When I read, concerning Christ, "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him," then I thought I was shut out. When I read, "He found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears," "Ah," I thought, "that is myself again." And when I read, "That which bears thorns and briers is rejected and is near to cursing," "Ah," I said, "that describes me to the last iota!" And when I heard the Master say, "Cut it down; why cumbers it the ground?" "Ah," I thought, "that is *my* text—He will have me down before very long and not let me cumber the ground any more." But when I read, "Ho, every one that thirsts, come you to the waters," I said, "That does not belong to me, I am sure." And when I read, "Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden," "No," I said, "that belongs to my brother, to my sister," or those I knew round about me, for they were laboring and heavy laden, I thought, but I was not. And though, God knows, I would weep and cry and lament till my heart was breaking within me, if any man had asked me whether I sorrowed for sin, I would have told him "No, I never had any true sorrow for sin" "Well, do you not feel the burden of sin?" "No." "But you really are a convinced sinner?" "No," I would have said, "I am not."

Is it not strange that poor sinners, when they are coming to Christ, are so much in the dark that they cannot see their own hands? They are so much in the dark that they cannot see themselves! And though God has been pleased to work the good work in them and give them godly fear and a tender conscience, they will stand up and declare that they have neither of those blessings, that in them there is not any good thing and that God has not looked on them nor loved them! But, strange as this is, that is how souls go to Christ. They are like Lot going to Zoar—they are all in the dark and can see nothing until they come to the Savior.

II. Now think of the second fact. NO SOONER WAS LOT IN ZOAR THAN THE SUN WAS UP.

Once he was inside the gate of that little city, the sun shone forth in all its brightness! I daresay Lot thought, "Well, I wish it had risen a little earlier. Oh, how pleased I would have been if I had had a little of that

light while running across the plain!" So, when we are brought to the Lord Jesus, we often say, "I wish I had had a little of this peace when I was in bondage. Oh, if I could have had one cupful of this river of joy I am now drinking! When I was so thirsty, what a blessing it would have been!" But God knows best. Depend upon it, my Brothers and Sisters—if one ray of sunlight more had been good for Lot, he would have had it! And if, poor tried Sinner, one gleam of comfort more than you now have, would be good for you, God would not deny it to you. But He keeps you in the dark for your good, as He shall ultimately bring you into the light for your good!

Lot, when he reached Zoar, had the sunlight. And *when the sinner gets to Christ, then he gets sunlight, too.* When the poor soul is widowed of all its hopes and bereaved of all its trust. When it is reduced to beggary and in a penniless condition. When it has its feet cut from under it and its hands shot away. When it has nothing left to call its own, but is reduced to death's door. In the hour of its extremity, then is God's gracious opportunity! Then, when the spirit casts itself wholly, without reserve, upon the blood and righteousness of Jesus and puts implicit trust in Him who lived and died to work, and weave, and spin, and dye a righteousness for poor sinners—I say, then, for the first moment, the sinner gets joy in his heart! Do not expect, my dear Hearers, that you will ever get any comfort while you are running anywhere except to Christ. Expect the comfort only when you get to Him. You may have just a gleam or two of light beforehand, as Lot did, but you will not have much more.

And remember, *it is no use your running anywhere except to Christ,* for, though you run ever so fast, you will only run into deeper darkness unless you run to Him—

"The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified God,
His pardon at once he receives,
Redemption in full through His blood."

That very moment his burden rolls off his shoulders, his chains fall to the earth and he is free! That moment his sores are all healed, his wounds are all bound up and his flowing blood is stanched forever. Have you, dear Friend, ever felt that instantaneous change which works such joy as this? If you have, then I am not uttering a strange thing when I say that the sun has risen upon you! Oh, that moment, when the sinner first starts up, clean rid of guilt on his conscience! I thought I could have leaped from earth to Heaven, at one spring, when I first saw my sins drowned in the Redeemer's blood! You know what John Bunyan says—to repeat an often-quoted tale—"I wanted," said he, "to even tell the crows on the plowed land what God had done for my soul!"

Did you ever follow a poor simple convert as soon as he knows the Lord? He runs home and calls his neighbors together and says, "I have found the Lord Jesus." Probably they will begin laughing at him, but he cannot understand what there is to laugh at, for he says, "My Master is a precious and blessed Master—He has taken all my sins away!" And he will go on telling the simple story till, perhaps, some of them are melted by it, though the rest may scoff. The joy, the gladness, the rhapsody, the exultation, the young Heaven begun in the heart of the newborn convert

is the nearest thing to Paradise that the earth ever saw! On the day that our sins are pardoned, God sets all the bells of Heaven ringing—and then the bells of our heart chime in melody! On the day when God is pleased to blot out our sins, He hangs every lane and every alley of Mansoul with splendid flags and colors, gilded lamps and bright jewels! Then He bids sweet music play in every part of the city and He makes the fountains run with wine—and He gives hogsheads of the precious liquid for poor souls to drink—souls that have been faint and dying and thirsty! Oh, that marriage day, when the soul is advanced to Christ! That day, when, for the first time, it rides in the chariot of Mercy and sits in the same seat with its Well-Beloved! Oh, that first hour, when Jesus puts the ring of His eternal love on the finger of our experience and whispers, "You are Mine," and our heart says to Jesus, "I am Yours."

Oh, that moment! Surely, Heaven itself is not happier! All the difference between that moment and Heaven is that Heaven is a great piece of tapestry and this is one of the threads. "The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar," so the Light of God's Countenance rises upon poor sinners when they come to Jesus!

III. Now, thirdly, we have to consider a sadder fact. GOD CAN DO TWO THINGS AT A TIME.

With His right hand, He wheeled the sun up the steeps of Heaven and bade it shine upon Lot. And with the other He opened the batteries of Heaven that they might rain their fire and brimstone upon Sodom. Let us remember that *God's two hands are always at work in that way*—from the very beginning, that is always what He has done. With one hand, He shut Noah in the ark and with the other He sent forth the floods of the everlasting cisterns and let the fountains of the great deep burst upon the earth. With one hand he smote the Red Sea and bade Israel walk through it dry-shod and with the other He cast the waters down into their place and drowned Pharaoh and all his hosts. And now look at Him—with one hand He lights the sun—and with the other hand He darkens Sodom with the smoke of the devouring flames! Ah, Friends, remember that this is what shall be done all the story through!

A day is coming when we who, like poor Lot, have been running to Heaven in the dark, with many clouds of fear and much gloom and sorrow, will reach the river of death! And when the Christian comes to die, God the mighty Savior is pleased to take the film from his eyes and enables him to see the angels! He opens wide his eye and bids him behold the glorious City that is built on high and those shining ones that perpetually traverse its streets! He opens his ears and bids him listen to the hallelujahs of the blessed and then, sometimes, He catches away his spirit and seems to waft it almost over Jordan, till, before the man dies, he says, "Whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell, only God knows, but I have been caught up to the third Heaven and have seen and heard things which mortals cannot utter." Oh, who can describe the raptures of the dying saint, the glories of that moment when God is pleased to cut the fetters that bind us to our clay and give us leave to soar into His Presence?!

But while God is doing that with His right hand, what is He doing with His left? He is smoothing the path of His children to the grave, but what

is He doing to the wicked? He is not smoothing their path. "Upon the wicked He shall rain snares, fire and brimstone and a horrible tempest." When they are dying, He draws no curtains around them, except the black curtains of doom! When they are expiring, no angels attend their deathbed—but grim fiends are waiting there. The left hand of God falls heavily upon the wicked man and as he is entering the world of spirits, God sometimes gives him a foretaste and prelude of the horrors of Hell. His right hand wheels the sun to give light to the Christian and bids him look to Heaven—but His left hand rains down a tempest on the wicked and bids him dread to die!

And now follow the two spirits out of this world. The vital spark of the Christian has fled—

"In vain my fancy tries to paint
The moment after death,
The glories that surround the saint,
When yielding up his breath."

The right hand of God is under the saint and in love He embraces him! God upholds His child in the floods. He whispers, "I am with you, Israel, passing through the stream; be not afraid, underneath you are the everlasting arms." Listen to the shouts of victory! Mark the calm composure of the countenance and see the joy flashing in the eyes! This is what God's right hand is doing to the righteous. But what is His left hand doing to the wicked! My dear Brothers and Sisters, I dare not attempt to describe the sinner as he dies! And when he is dead, it were too awful for me to suppose how he feels the moment his spirit is out of his body. Oh, what an awful sensation that must be when the first pang of Hell shoots through the soul! My imagination can just mount to it, but I cannot go further. That man was a blasphemer—how must he feel when he confronts the God whom he blasphemed and stands before the burning eyes of his incensed Creator! Can you imagine that solitary moment—for I should suppose there is but one such—although eternity is horrible, there can scarcely be more than one moment so new with horror, so dolefully novel with torment as when the soul is launched upon that everlasting sea, the waves of which are fire, and the depths of which are Hell! I cannot tell all that it means. I only know that these are the Lord's own words, "Consider this, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there is none to deliver."

And now comes the Last Great Day! The world is standing before God's bar. *Look what He is doing with His right hand*! He is beckoning the righteous to Glory! He is adorning their heads with crowns that excel the sun in brightness! He is girding their loins with snow-white robes of immaculate purity! He is touching their lips and making them sing like cherubim! He is setting their hearts on fire with the bliss of Heaven and kindling their spirits with everlasting Glory! He is lifting them up and making them sit together with Christ, far above all principalities and powers and every name that is named! See how the sun is risen upon them! Describe if you can, or imagine if you dare, the brightness of the sunlight of Glory when it shall dawn upon redeemed man in the day of the final account! Look, it is a sunshine without a cloud! It is a sun with-

out an eclipse! Look, see, their happy faces! Listen to their joyous songs!—

"No groans do mingle with the songs
That warble from immortal tongues."

Words fail me to depict the bright sunlight of the Savior's love as it shines on every happy saint! Thought cannot let me tell the brightness of the Glory that shall stream from the brow of the eternal Father when He shall smile upon His well-beloved children! And who can describe the Glory of the Sacred Spirit when, in all the riches of His fullness, He shall beam in the eye and heart of every blood-bought soul? This is what God is doing with His right hand—leading all His saints to Heaven and setting them upon thrones forever and ever!

And what is He doing with His left hand? No, pardon me, excuse me from the task of picturing that dread work of Judgment! I might, perhaps, say things that would be horrible, terrible and doleful—yet, even then, my speech would fall infinitely short of the terrible reality! What is God doing to the wicked? He is unloosing the loins of the mighty and breaking the iron sinews of their necks! What is God doing to the wicked? He is alighting them with terror and driving them mad with despair! See them as they fly from His Presence! Listen to them as they shriek in their agony! There they go—down, down, down—to the gulf of everlasting woe! What is God doing with His left hand? He is hurling fire upon them! He is launching thunderbolts! What is He doing? O earth, I see you shaking! O stars, I behold you vanishing from the vault of night! Sun, you are quenched! Moon, you are a clot of blood! I see the heavens stripped of their light and the glorious Son of God seated on His snow-white Throne! And I see sinners trembling at their everlasting doom! I see them bite their tongues, that, like firebrands, scorch their mouths. I see them dying, but not dead! Damned, but not annihilated—not ceasing to be—forever bruised beneath the foot of vengeance and yet never crushed out of existence! O my God, no mortal tongue can tell this dreary tale! Had I been dead and passed the burning lake, and smelt the sulfurous flame, then, perhaps, I might have spoken of all these terrible realities, but tonight I cannot speak! Take your Bibles and read of the fire that cannot be quenched, of the worm that dies not, of the Pit that is bottomless—and remember that this is what God is doing with His left hand!

The sun had risen upon Zoar and the fire was falling upon Sodom. Ah, Sinner, will it not be an awful thing to see the contrast between you and the righteous? If you perish in your ungodly state, it will make your Hell more awful when you behold, afar off, the righteous exalted in Heaven! Nothing makes the famished man more hungry than to see others feasting when he has nothing! O young man, what will it be to see your mother there in Heaven and you cast out? O young woman, will you see your companion glorified with Jesus and you cast away with devils? O husband, will you find yourself crying, with Dives, for a drop of water, while your wife is in the Presence of Jesus? Ah, son, will you see your parents glorified and you, yourself, cast out? Set the two in contrast—look on this picture and on that! God give you Grace to bow the knee and "kiss the Son." And if He has taught you your need of a Savior, may He

give you Grace to accept the hearty invitation I would tender you in His name, "Come, and welcome, Sinner, come!"

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 24:42-51; MATTHEW 25:1-13.

Matthew 24:42. *Watch therefore: for you know not what hour your Lord does come.* That He will come is certain. That His coming may be at any moment is equally sure and, therefore, we ought to always be ready for His appearing. The Lord make us to be so!

43, 44. *But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore be you also ready, for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man comes.* Perhaps you can imagine how eagerly the householder watches when he expects thieves. Every little sound alarms him. He thinks he hears someone at the door, then he fancies it is someone at the window! But he is on the alert, with eyes and ears and his whole being wide awake. So ought we to be with regard to the coming of the Lord, as watchful as if we knew that Christ would come tonight! We do not know that He will come so soon, yet it may be so, "for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man comes."

45, 46. *Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord has made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord, when he comes, shall find so doing.* Doing whatever the Master has appointed him to do. If he is a minister, preaching the Truth of God with all his heart. If he is a teacher, endeavoring to feed the minds of the young with sound doctrine. Whatever may be his calling, endeavoring to fulfill it to the great Taskmaster's satisfaction, as if He should suddenly break in upon the work and look at it, then and there, and judge His servant by it. This is the way to live!

47. *Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.* There are rewards for faithful service—not of debt, but of Grace—not according to the Law, but according to the discipline of the House of God. Oh, that we may be such faithful servants that our Lord may make us rulers over all that He has!

48-51. *But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delays his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looks not for him and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* He was a servant, you see. So this is a warning, not to the outside world, but to you who are inside the nominal church and who *profess* to be servants of God. And it is especially a warning to those of us who are ministers of the Gospel! Oh, that we may never begin to smite our fellow servants! Of course, we shall not do it with our fists, but we may do it with our tongue. May we never be numbered with those who are living for the delights of the flesh! If so, see what must come to us. Our Lord still continued to speak upon the

same subject of watchfulness by delivering the very striking parable of the wise and foolish virgins.

Matthew 25:1-4. *Then shall the kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten virgins which took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.* There did not seem to be much difference between them. They were all virgins, they all carried lamps, their lamps were all lit. And, perhaps, the lamps of the foolish were quite as bright as those of the wise. The difference was unobservable to most onlookers, but it was an essential and fatal difference.

Ah, dear Friends, it is the lack of oil that is the ruin of many a professor's lamp! Men have a name to live, but they have not the true life which is the evidence of the effectual working of the Grace of God within their souls. They make a profession of religion, but they have not the secret Grace to keep it up. There is a glitter and flash, but there is no permanency—and there cannot be any unless the Spirit of God is, indeed, in us! We may make a fair show in the flesh for a while, but what will be the end of it. This is the all-important question—Can we hold on and hold out? Certainly not without that heavenly oil which only the Spirit of God can supply!

5. *While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.* Oh, how sadly true it is that, sometimes, true saints as well as mere professors slumber and sleep! Even those who have the oil of Grace are not always wide awake to serve their Master and to proclaim the Gospel as they should. There are, alas, sleeping Believers and sleeping hypocrites, side by side!

6, 7. *And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom comes; go out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.* They were suddenly awakened, and they leaped to their feet—

"Rising up at the midnight cry,
'Behold the heavenly Bridegroom nigh!'"

They all trimmed their lamps. That was the first thing for them to do—to look to their torches and have them ready. They could not meet the Bridegroom in the dark. They must each have a light, so they began their lamp-trimming. It is a pity to have to trim your lamp at the last. O dear Friends, it is hard work, upon a dying bed, to have to be looking to one's lamp! You need your evidences to be bright there—your faith to be firm and all your Graces brilliant! There must be no doubts and questions there, else they make a dying bed feel hard as granite. May we, none of us, have at last to trim our lamps! Those virgins who had oil in their vessels were able to trim their lamps and, though the work was done hurriedly, it was done, and they were able to take their places in the bridal procession.

8. *And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.* The modern rendering of this request is, "Send for the minister and ask him to pray for us, for our lamps are gone out." Take heed, I pray you, you who are bold professors, now—lest you should have to say at the last, "Our lamps are gone out." It was too late for trimming and lighting then!

9, 10. *But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go you to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came.* There are deathbed repentances, undoubtedly, but I fear that, in the great majority of cases, people who wake up so late will find that while they go to buy, the Bridegroom will come and there will not be, after all, the time in which to find the Savior. The mental capacity with which to think of Him may fail. The poor head may be so distracted with pain that it may not be able to catch the meaning of what faith in Christ is, or how it can be exercised. And so, the lamp will have gone out, and it will be too late to buy the oil which alone can make it burn. "While they went to buy, the bridegroom came."

10, 11. *And they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.* "Open the door at least to *us*, for we came to meet you, and we carried lamps, and we were with the other virgins. 'Lord, Lord, open to us.'" You know, perhaps, those striking lines which describe the foolish virgins request and the Bridegroom's response to it—

"'Late, late, so late; and dark the night and chill!
Late, late, so late; but we may enter still.'—
'Too late! Too late!
You cannot enter now.'"

12. *But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.* When that door is once shut, it will never again be opened! All Scripture goes to prove that. There are some who foolishly dream about an opening of that door after death for men who have died impenitent—but there is *nothing* in Scripture to warrant us in having any such expectation. The final answer of the Bridegroom to these foolish virgins is, "Verily I say unto you, I know you not."

13. *Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man comes.* That is, we do not know when it will be. Some have foolishly said, "We do not know the day, or the hour of Christ's coming, but we may find out the *year*." We shall not do anything of the kind—the time is hidden altogether! It is not revealed to us and it shall not be known till, suddenly, the Lord Himself shall come in the clouds, with His bright heavenly retinue, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all them that believe! Therefore, be always on the watch, Beloved, "for you know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man comes." God help us to be ready for His appearing at any moment, for His dear name'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.

THE HONORED SERVANT
NO. 2643

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 8, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 22, 1882.

"Whoever keeps the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof: so he that waits on his master shall be honored."
Proverbs 27:18.

IN Solomon's day, every man sat under his own vine and fig tree and there was peace throughout the whole country. Then, God's Law about dividing out the land among the people, so that every man had his own plot, was rightly observed and each one had a fig tree of his own, to which he gave his personal attention. And, in due time, having waited upon the fig tree and kept it, he ate the fruit thereof. Solomon says, in another place, "In all labor there is profit," and it is well when men feel that it is so, for then they will be inclined to labor. A man would not long keep a fruitless fig tree. If he was quite sure that no fruit would be the result of his toil, he would leave the tree to itself, or else he would say, "Cut it down; why cumbers it the ground?"

There were some men, in Solomon's day, who, for divers reasons, became servants to others—as there still are and always must be—and they looked for some return from their service. And the wise man here tells them that just as, "Whoever keeps the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof," so, "he that waits on his master shall be honored." It is a commonplace truth that those who are faithful servants ought to be honored. I wish, in these times, that matter was more often thought of and that men did honor those who are faithful to them. There are some people who permit others to minister to their comfort, but it never occurs to them to provide for the comfort of their servants. They will allow a man to spend most of his life in increasing their business and yet, when he is getting old, he is discharged and left to perish by starvation so far as they are concerned. I notice this kind of thing frequently, with very much regret—and I am not always able to make exceptions on behalf of Christian masters, for, sometimes they seem only to remember their business and to forget that they are Christians—and they act as cruelly as did that Amalekite in David's day, who left his servant to die because he was sick. I pray that the time may come when there shall be so good an understanding between all men that Solomon's words shall be true, "he that waits on his master shall be honored."

I am sorry that they are not always true in that sense, now, but I am going to leave that *literal* meaning of the words and apply the text to

those who wait upon the Lord Jesus, having made Him to be their Master, for, most certainly, as surely as he who keeps the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof, even much more certainly shall those who wait upon our great Master in Heaven find a sweet return from their service, for they shall be honored by Him. Very simple will my talk be and you, Beloved, who are His servants, do not need anything else, I am sure.

I. The first observation is that OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IS OUR MASTER.

He said to His disciples, after He had washed their feet, "You call Me Master and Lord: and you say well; for so I am." Is it so with you, dear Friends? Let conscience answer the question. Is Jesus Christ really Master and Lord to each one of us? It is a wonderful way in which He masters us if we are, indeed, His servants. I can never forget how, in my own case, it came to pass that I, who had been bought with His precious blood and, therefore, belonged to Him, had yet lived forgetful of His claims. He passed by and looked on me—and that very look made me go out to weep bitterly! But He did more. He laid His hand on me—it was a pierced hand and from that day I had a twist in my understanding and my judgment! Those who knew me saw that something extraordinary had happened to me which had altogether changed me. From that time I thought very little of men, and very much of One whom, until then, I had despised! Many of my former pursuits ceased to have the slightest charm for me and I had, for my one pursuit, the desire to do everything to His honor and glory! From that twist I have never been able to escape and I have never wanted to do so—from that mystic influence which He cast over me, I have never come forth and, what is more, I trust I never shall!

I know that I am describing many of you as well as myself. Oh, did He not master you from head to foot? If you are really converted, it was not the conversion of the feelings only, or the intellect only—it was the subjugation of everything within you to that sweet power of His! You were quite broken down. You had no strength to stand up against Him any longer—and the joy of it was that you had not any wish to do so! When He was about to fix the chains of His love on you, you held out your hands saying, "Here, Lord, bind my wrists." You put forth your feet, crying, "Place the fetters here." You asked Him to cast a chain around your heart—you made a covenant with Him and agreed to be bound all over—for that part of you which was unbound, you reckoned to be enslaved and only that which He did bind, you considered to be free! When He had so mastered us, we longed to lie forever at His feet and weep ourselves away. Or we wished to sit forever at His feet and listen to His wondrous Words and learn His blessed teaching. Yet we also wanted to run about the world on His errands—it mattered not to us where He might send us—we would not make any choice of our sphere of service! If He would but employ us, that would be all we would ask. We wanted, then, to have a dozen lives and to spend them all for Him! Yes, we remember singing—

"Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise!"

We said—and we meant it—

"Had I ten thousand hearts, dear Lord,
I'd give them all to You,"

and we did give ourselves up wholly to our Lord. We could not help doing so! We were carried right away, as when a mountain torrent comes, removes the earth from the young tree that is growing by the river side and gradually undermines it until the tree falls into the stream, and the current sweeps it on and on, and never lets it rest again, but bears it right down to the sea! So was it with us that blessed day when first we knew that we could call Christ, "Master and Lord."

Brothers and Sisters, our Lord Jesus Christ has so completely mastered us that now, today, *He is our only Master*. It is not always a thing to ennoble a man when he is able to call another person his master, but we feel that the more fully we are mastered by Christ, the better will it be for us—and the more absolutely we can become His servants, the more noble and honored shall we be! In many passages of Scripture where our translation uses the term, "servant," the true word is, "slave," and I think the time has come when we had better speak of it as it ought to be, that we may learn the full force of the expression! We do not mean that there is any cruel slavery of Christ's people to Himself, but we do mean that just as much as the slave completely belonged to his master, to do his master's bidding, to live or die at his master's will, so have we given ourselves up to Christ! He has become our only Master. There are others who struggle for the mastery over us, but no man can serve two masters. He may serve two rival powers—one struggling against the other for a while—but they cannot both be masters. Only one can be supreme within the spirit. In this way Christ has become so completely the Believer's Master that sin shall not have dominion over him—and he shall not be any longer under the domination of Satan. Christ is the Master of all His people, whatever happens to them. We may wander like sheep, but Christ is still our Shepherd, and He will bring the straying sheep back, for they are still His property even when they are wandering away from Him!

What do you say, Brothers and Sisters? Do you acknowledge any other master beside Christ? If you do, in that divided sovereignty you shall find ten thousand miseries! Oh, if your right eye is contrary to Christ, pluck it out and cast it from you! If your very life should stand up in rivalry with Christ, it would be much better for you that you should die than that you should lead such a life as that! Our Lord Jesus is our only Master!

And what *a choice Master* He is! If we had had the opportunity, in our old state, of choosing our master, we were so blind and foolish that we would not have chosen Him. But if we had known, then, what we know, now, we would have chosen Him. And if we knew infinitely more about Him, we could never discover a reason why He should not be our Master, but we would continually find stronger arguments why we should be His servants forever! There was never such a Master as our Lord Jesus Christ, who took our nature that He might be able to master such servants as we are, who even died to win us and whose only mastership, after all, is that of love! He rules us sovereignly, yet in His hand is the silver scepter, not the rod of iron!

Our Master is, at the same time, *our Husband*, whom we must obey. Oh, it is blessed to obey Him to whom our hearts are fully surrendered and in whom all loveliness is centered! When a husband truly loves his wife, it becomes easy for the wife to be obedient unto her husband and, as Christ loves us infinitely, we must love Him and serve Him in return. Look, by faith, into His blessed face—it is Jehovah's joy to look upon Him—and it shall be forever ours! Was there ever such another Countenance? Was ever such loveliness imagined as really exists in Him? Look at all His Character, from Bethlehem even until now—peep in upon Him in His loneliness, or see Him in the midst of the crowd and will you not say of Him, "He is the standard-bearer among ten thousand; yes, He is altogether lovely"? Pick out all the charms that ever could be found in the most amiable character, gather up all the virtues that ever glittered in the most spiritual man or woman, and bring them all here. Ah, but they are not worthy to be compared with the glory and beauty and excellency of the Well-Beloved! All *their* goodness came from Him, therefore let them all lie at His feet, for there is none to be compared with Him!

Next, our spirit exultingly says, "As He is our choice Master, so He is *our chosen Master*. Since He has chosen us, we have learned to choose Him." The love was, at first, all on His side, but now, through the effectual working of His Grace, it is on our side, too. We can, each one, say, "I love my Master. I love His house. I love His children. I love His service. I have chosen Him to be mine forever. If He should dismiss me from His service, I would come back to Him. If He gave me what men call, liberty, I would beg of Him to withdraw such accursed liberty and let me be, forever, and only, and completely, and entirely His, for, as He has chosen me by His Grace, so has His Grace led me to choose Him." I know that many of you can say the same and I daresay, while I have been speaking, you have been thinking of George Herbert's lines—

"How sweetly does 'my Master' sound! 'My Master!'
As ambergris leaves a rich scent
Unto the taster—
So do these words give a sweet content
An oriental fragrance, 'My Master.'"

We delight to use this title concerning our Lord, for He is, further, *our gracious Master*. That word, "Master," seems to lose the idea of masterfulness when it is applied to Him. He is most graciously and wondrously our Lord, but yet we no more call Him, "Baali," that is, "my Lord," but we call Him, "Ishi," that is, "my Man," "my Husband." There is, truly, a service to which we are called, yet His message to His disciples was, "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knows not what His lord does, but I have called you, Friends, for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." We can never forget that with all His love, He is our Lord! It is our joy to remember that, yet what loving service we have received at His hands! He has been so much *our servant* that we have sometimes had to ask ourselves, "Who is the servant?" He is *Servus Servorum*—the Servant of Servants—as He proved when He washed His disciples' feet. He has done more than that for us, for He stooped so low as to be despised of men and rejected of the people in or-

der that He might save us. Then, surely, it shall be our joy, bliss and glory to henceforth call Him Master and Lord!

He is also *our lifelong Master*. No, that is a mistake, for there was, alas, a time when we lived, yet we lived not unto Him. Some of us were but boys when we first began to serve Him. I always feel glad to think that I wore a boy's jacket when I was baptized into His name. I had not assumed the garb of a man, but my whole soul was His and I was buried with Him. I wish it had been still earlier! O dear young people, there is no such joy as that of knowing Christ in your early youth! We hear, sometimes, of life-long teetotalers, but I could wish that I had been a life-long abstainer from self-righteousness, a life-long drinker of the river of the Water of Life! But, as all of us have failed to serve the Lord at the beginning of our life, let us try, with all our hearts, to serve Him right to the end! Oh, to have Him for our lifelong Master—with no little intervals of running away, no furloughs, no holidays!

Brothers and Sisters, we have our recreations in Christ's service, but we never have any holidays. That is to say, He re-creates us, but He permits us to continue in His work without cessation or intermission. It would be no recreation for us to have a furlough from the great work of the Lord—we only wish that we could live, labor, spend ourselves and find our rest, as some birds do, on the wing—flying, mounting, singing and so resting and making this to be our continual joy! So, you see, we are in our Master's service for life. We have entered His employ and we are bound to Him—and "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" and Master—forever blessed be His name!

II. Now I hasten, in the second place, to remind you that OUR BUSINESS IS TO SERVE OUR MASTER.

That business is expressed in the Hebrew of our text by the word, "keep." I will read you the text as it should be rendered and as the translators will make it read if they use their senses in their revision of the Old Testament. That is, if they give the same meaning to a word in all places. The previous translators thought that the Bible would sound tautological if they gave the same translation of a word everywhere, so, to charm the ears, they changed the words. But then, alas, they sometimes changed the *sense*. Here, the original ought to be rendered thus—"Whoever keeps the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof: so he that *keeps* his master shall be honored." Is not that a wonderful word? In the interpretation I am giving to the passage, it means that as certainly as the farmer keeps and tends a fig tree, so you and I are to keep and tend Christ! Is it really true that He has committed Himself to our keeping? Yes! On earth, among the sons of men, there is One who keeps Israel, but Israel, in another sense, is made to be a keeper, and is to keep the Lord Jesus Christ!

How are we to do that? Well, first, we must keep Him *by always remaining His servants*. We must keep Him as our Master. I like the idea of that man who once said to his master, "Sir, you talk about discharging me, but you see, Sir, if you don't know when you have a good servant, I

know very well when I have a good master—and I don't mean to be discharged. If you put me out of the front door, I shall come in at the back, for I have been your servant ever since I was a boy. I was born in your father's house and I mean to die in this house." The gentleman saw that it was quite hopeless to try to get rid of the old man, as he would not go, so he decided they should not be parted. And I think some of us have come to the same point with our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. Truly, He knows that, in us, He has, even at our best, only unprofitable servants, but then He accepted us. He knew all that we were and all that we should be. He had a clear foresight of our whole future and He has still engaged us for life!

Some of our friends think He only engaged them for a quarter or half a year, or for a limited period, but I know that He took me on for life—and for eternity, too! And my soul rejoices in the fact that He will keep to the bargain. Like the old man, I am determined that if He puts me out at the front door, I will come in at the back, for I know that I have a good Master and I will not leave Him. Do you not say the same, Beloved? Then hold on to Him and tell Him that you will not let Him go! Should He chasten you with the rod of men and lay many stripes on you, yet be like some dogs that seem to love their masters all the better the more they beat them! And so, dear Friends, love your Lord all the better when He treats you roughly—kiss the hand that smites you, and let this be your settled resolution—that from Him you will never go.

What else are we to do in order to keep our Master? I think, next, we are to keep Him *by defending Him*. We must defend our Lord's name, honor and cause at all costs and all hazards. We must not let Him sleep like King Saul, with his spear stuck in the ground by his bolster, and his bodyguard asleep! But if the enemy should ever come to attack our Master, our watchword must be, "Up, guards, and at them!" Give them a warm reception from whatever quarter they may come. You and I, Beloved, are put in charge of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and every child of God is bound to be upon the defensive just as if the keeping of the Gospel depended entirely upon him. I believe that I am as much bound to preach against error, and to war for the Truth of Christ, as if there were not another minister living—and I think that every other minister stands in the same responsible position! And *it is the same with every Christian*. Keep your Master and all that He has in safety—let no traitor come near Him! Guard His ordinances, His doctrines, His precepts! Adore His matchless Person and extol His blessed work—and so keep Him against all comers.

Then, dear Friends, keep Him *by guarding all His interests*. It is the duty of a servant to reckon that what belongs to his master is, in a certain sense, his, and, therefore, to be sacredly defended. I have heard of servants in the olden times, saying, "That is *our* park!" "This is *our* country house," or, "this is *our* town house!" "These are *our* horses" and one of them was heard by his master to say, "There come *our* children, bless their little hearts!" Well, they were no children of his, were they? Yes they were, for they were his master's children and he had become so identified with his master's interests that he regarded his master's children as be-

longing to him! So ought we to think of everything that appertains to Christ—and if the Lord has, anywhere, a little child who needs to be cared for, each of us who are His servants should be prepared to nurse it and watch over it for Him—and say to Him, with good Dr. Doddridge—

"Have You a lamb in all Your flock
I would disdain to feed?
Have You a foe, before whose face
I fear Your cause to plead?

Thus, dear Friends, keep your Master! Watch over your Master's possessions! Guard your Master's Truth! Defend your Master's honor! Care for your Master's children! As far as your power goes, try to keep everything that belongs to Him, labor for the good of His cause, struggle for the advancement of His interests and for the overthrow of His adversaries, just as every loyal soldier seeks to preserve his sovereign's dominions intact and to keep his king's arms from suffering any dishonor. Thus let us keep our Master and all that belongs to Him.

Now let us come back to our own Authorized Version—"he that waits on his master shall be honored." This also is a very good translation, if not equal to the other, and I think it conveys an important meaning for us. You and I are like servants who wait upon our Master. And that waiting consists, in part, in waiting for His orders, trying to ascertain what they are and, when we know them, waiting until He bids us carry them out. It is not intended that you and I should be inventors of rites, ceremonies, novelties of worship and all manner of strange doctrines! Our position is simply that of servants. Our Master has a certain way of setting out His Table and inviting His guests to it. And I have no business to go to Him and say, "Look how the king of Syria arranges *his* table? Is not that a better plan than Yours?" No, that would be utter disloyalty! I have to set the Table according to my Master's plan and custom. There are some old country squires who have acquired odd ways of their own and the servants whom they employ must drop into them, whatever their own notions may be. Now, the ways of the Lord are right—and it is your duty and mine to ask what they are and to conform our practice to them.

The same rule is to be observed in matters of church government and discipline, in the ordinances of the Lord's house, in the Truths of God to be preached, and in the way we go about our Master's business. It is not for us to make our own laws, or to invent our own methods, but to wait upon our Master and learn His will concerning everything. If we do not do that, we shall get into a world of trouble! But if we wait upon Him for our orders and then obey the orders we receive from our Master, we shall be honored.

Next, we must wait *upon Him for strength to obey His orders*; for if we do not, we shall either fail in our attempts, or else we shall fail altogether to make the attempt. We must also wait upon our Master, *seeking His smile*. I am afraid we do a great deal to get the smiles of our fellow men—and if they think we have done well, we congratulate ourselves. But, oh, to preach for the Master, to pray for the Master, to teach that class for the Master—not for your pastor! Not for the elders or deacons! Not for your fellow members, that they may say, "What a zeal for the Lord this person has!" Let it all be done for the Master! "He that waits on his mas-

ter shall be honored." Do you not think that sometimes you and I wait upon ourselves, and that, while we are very busy and fancying we are working for the Lord, we may be doing it entirely for self? Because we find some sort of pleasure in it, we keep on doing it just for that pleasure, or because we feel that some kind of credit must come to ourselves as the result of it. If we are serving self, not our Master, we shall have a reward, but it will be a poor commonplace reward—like that of the Pharisees, of whom the Master said, "Verily I say unto you, they have their reward." That is the end of it! They have had their reward and they cannot expect to be paid twice for what they have done.

We are, dear Friends, further to wait upon the Lord *by expecting Him to fulfill His promises.* And His promises will only be fulfilled in His own time. We are not to run before the Lord, nor to seek to hurry the Lord as though we thought He was slow in accomplishing His purposes. If we ever cry, "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord," we shall probably receive for an answer, "Awake, awake! Put on your strength, O Zion." It is *we* who are asleep—the Lord never is. And so we are to wait upon Him and plead the promises that He has given us.

This waiting also includes *acquiescence in His will.* Not only doing it, but doing it *willingly*—being ready for anything that He may appoint. Perhaps lying on a sick bed for months. Why, if we never rose again and had to lie bedridden until we died, we ought to be perfectly willing to do so to wait on our Master! You remember the story of poor old Betty who said that the Lord told her to do this and that, and she tried to do it, and at last He said to her, "Betty, go upstairs and lie in your bed and cough." She said, "I am doing it, and I take satisfaction even in coughing if that is according to my Lord's will." If you have no will of your own in such matters, you will have very little sorrow. Our troubles mostly grow from the root of self-will—but when self-will is conquered and we hold ourselves entirely at God's disposal, then there is a sweetness even in wormwood and gall—and our heaviest cross becomes our joy and delight and we say, with holy Rutherford, "I find the Cross of Christ no more a burden to me than wings are to a bird, or sails are to a ship." That saintly man said that sometimes he felt so deeply in love with his cross that he almost feared lest his sufferings and grief should become so lovely to him as to be a rival to the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no such danger, I am afraid, with the most of us, for we are as bulls unaccustomed to the yoke—and we kick against the pricks. But if you can wait upon your Master and say, "Do with me as You will, Lord," all will be well. Try to be like the shepherd on Salisbury Plain, whose story should never be forgotten. When he was asked, "Is it good weather?" he answered, "Yes, it is all good weather that God sends." "But does this weather please you?" "If it pleases God, it pleases me," was his reply. That is the point to get to—may God bring us there by His Grace!

III. When we get there, we shall come to our last point, OUR SERVICE WILL BRING US HONOR—"He that waits on his master shall be honored."

O Brothers and Sisters, the thought of waiting upon Christ and being His servant is an unspeakable honor! Therefore I will not try to speak

about it, but ask *you* to just sit still and think about it. You are His servants, the servants of the eternal Son of God! Perhaps somebody is going to be made an earl or a duchess. I do not think that would be any honor to you, for you have already a higher honor than that, for you are a servant of the Lord! There will be a coronet for somebody to wear, but really, I do not see that it could add any luster to you, for you are a prince of the blood-royal of the skies! As for our pedigree, there is none like it. We do not trace it to the Normans, but to Calvary! We are of that seed that was to crush the serpent's head. Our coat of arms is much more ancient than any that the Heralds' College can ever issue! We need no other honor and can have no higher glory than to be servants of Christ! Are you only a little nurse-girl? Well, if you belong to Christ, you are one of those whom He counts right honorable! Are you a chimneysweep, my Brother? Never mind that—if the Lord has washed you in His precious blood, you are as noble as any peer of the realm and nobler than most of them! Do you have to go to the workhouse for weekly help? Never mind about your poverty—you are not so poor, now, as your Lord was—for He had nowhere to lay His head. Do not talk about being mean and obscure—why, you are descended from the King of Kings! "This honor have all His saints." "Unto you that believe, He is an honor"—that is the meaning of the Greek—and I take it that it is honor enough for us to have such a Savior to believe in and such a Master to serve!

You shall have honor, dear Friends, *among poor fellow Christians*. If you really honor only your Master's name, it will not be long before they will honor and esteem you. I notice that the moment a man begins to seek honor for himself, he loses the esteem of his fellows. Do you ever hear any minister who preaches very grandly? If so, you think to yourself, "What a splendid preacher he is!" But you will find that, as a rule, God's people do not care much about him. Notice any worker in the church who wants to be very prominent and push himself forward—everybody desires to kick him! But there is another Brother who serves Christ in the rear rank and who blushes when he is pushed to the front—he is the man to whom his Brothers and Sisters look up to and though they may say little to him, they delight to honor him in their hearts. Perhaps the most honorable thing in Christ's house is the doormat—when all the brethren wipe their dirty boots upon it, they are so much the cleaner.

I know some people who do not like to be in the position of the doormat—if a person brushes against them, they cry, "What a shame!" It is a great honor to do anything for your Master's children which will be for their good. In the Kingdom of God, the way to go up is to go down—and the way to grow great is to grow little. Look at little Paul—that man short of stature and with many infirmities. Why, he is the biggest of all the Apostles! And what is "great Paul"? Oh, he is only sounding brass and the less we hear of him, the better. Get to be like little Paul, Brother, and your sound shall go out to the very ends of the earth! Whereas if you are ever a big Paul, you will only give out a brazen note which will be heard for a very little way. If the Lord Jesus Christ has made us to be His ser-

vants, let us count it our highest honor to be a servant of the least of *His servants* so that we may bless *them* and glorify *Him*!

But our *highest honor is yet to come.* It is in that day when Christ shall call His chosen ones to His own right hand to reign with Him. It is when He shall appoint unto them a Kingdom even as His Father appointed it to Him. It is when he who was faithful in a few things shall be made ruler over many things in the Kingdom of the Master forever and forever! I think I see the King coming into His court—it is crowded with cherubim and seraphim and all the shining ones that form His royal retinue! There they stand in all their gorgeous glory and the Master, from the Throne, looks over all their ranks as He accepts their loyal and reverent homage. But He is looking for one poor man who on earth loved Him and who kept the faith under much derision and scorn. At last He spies him out and says, "Make way, My angelic servants! Cherubim and seraphim, stand in line and let him come! This man was with Me in My humiliation, as you could not be. For Me he bore the cross and was despised. Make way and let him come and sit with Me, for they who have been with Me in My humiliation shall be with Me in My glory."

Oh, that you and I, dear Friends, may have that honor at the last! And what will we do when we get it? Why, we will cast our crowns at our Savior's feet and say to Him, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Your name be all the praise and glory forever!" And in that very deed we shall find the highest honor of all! And we shall then, perhaps, remember this Thursday evening and this text, "He that waits on his master shall be honored." The Lord bless you all, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 25:14-30.

Verse 14. *For the kingdom of Heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his servants and delivered unto them his goods.* This parable has to do with you who are professors of Christianity. He, "called his servants," those who, by their own consent, were numbered among his household servitors. "He called his servants and delivered unto them his goods." Not theirs, but his! And therefore to be used *for* him. If you are Christ's servant, your abilities are His, He has lent them to you to be employed for your Lord. "He called his servants and delivered unto them his goods."

15. *And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his ability; and straightway took his journey.* He is gone. Our Lord has risen and we, His servants, are left behind to trade with His goods for His glory.

16-18. *Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them another five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained another two. But he that had received one went and dug in the earth and hid his lord's money.* We are grieved to know that there are persons with five talents and others with two talents who do as this man did—but the case is put in this way so as to reach us all. Since most persons have but one talent, they are the most often

found, each one, saying, "I have so little ability, I will not do anything. If I had five talents, I might become distinguished. If I had two, I might be very useful. But with only one, I need not attempt anything. I am a private person—a mother, quite obscure, with my little family around me—what can I do?" It is very often a strong temptation from Satan to those who have but one talent, to make them think that they may, with impunity, hide that one. And then, you see, the argument cuts the other way. If it is wrong to hide one talent, it is much more wrong to hide two, and far worse to dig in the earth and bury five!

19. *After a long time the lord of those servants returned and reckoned with them.* Always remember the reckoning. We have heard of one who went into a house of entertainment and fed most luxuriously. But, when the landlord brought him the bill, he said, "Oh, I never thought of that!" And there are many who spend their whole lives without ever thinking of the reckoning—yet it must come, and for every hour, for every opportunity, for every ability, for every sin and for every omission of duty, they must give account! "The lord of those servants returned and reckoned with them."

20, 21. *And so he that had received five talents came and brought another five talents, saying, Lord, you delivered unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, you good and faithful servant: you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things: enter you into the joy of your lord.* I do not doubt that this man had often reckoned with himself—for he that never reckons with himself may well be afraid of being called to reckon with his God—and I expect that he had often grieved to think that he had not turned the five talents into twenty. He must have thought that to gain only five talents more was very little. But he found his master was well content with what he had done. Do you think, Brothers and Sisters, that all of you who have five talents have gained five talents more? You were richly endowed as a youth—have you increased the ability to serve your God? You see the parable speaks not so much of what they had *done for other people*, as of what they had themselves gained and still had in hand! Have you more Grace? Have you more tact? Have you more adaptation to your Master's service? Are you conscious that it is so? I should not wonder if you are mourning that you are not more useful and more fit to be used. It is well that you should mourn in that way, but when your Master comes, I trust that He will say, "Well done, you good and faithful servant."

22, 23. *He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, you delivered unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I shall make you ruler over many things: enter you into the joy of your lord.* That is a beautiful reward—not so much to have a joy of our own as to enter into the joy of our Lord! It is not a servant's portion that is given to us—it is the Master's portion *shared* by His servants. How it ennobles Christian work to feel that it is not simply our work, but work done by the Master through the servant—and the reward shall not so much be our joy as our entrance into our

Master's joy! That is, indeed, giving to us the best of the best in return for our poor service here!

24, 25. *Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew you that you are an hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered: and I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the earth: lo, there you have what is yours.* "I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the earth." See, Friends, how fear may often be the mother of presumption? Confidence in God begets holy fear, but unholy fear begets a doubt of God and leads us to desperate rebellion of unbelief. God save us from such fear!

26, 27. *His lord answered and said unto him, You wicked and slothful servant, you knew that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not scattered? You ought therefore to have put my money in the bank, and then at my coming I should have received my own with usury.* His lord took him on his own ground and condemned him out of his own mouth.

28, 29. *Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which has ten talents. For unto everyone that has shall be given, and he shall have abundance.* He that has faith shall have more faith. He that has a secret taste for heavenly things shall have a greater love for them. He that has some understanding of the Truth of God shall get more understanding of it. God gives to those that have—it is equally true that He gives to those who confess that they have not.

29. *But from him that has not shall be taken away even that which he has.* If you need an instance of taking away from a man what he has not—you may have seen it sometimes in the case of a person without any education or knowledge who is quite content to remain in that condition. But, all of a sudden he is introduced into learned society—he hears what educated people have to say, and he exclaims, "What a fool I am!" What he thought he had, though he never had it, suddenly goes from him!

30. *And cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* If we give any description of the world to come which is at all terrible, those who reject the Scriptures begin to cry out that we have borrowed it from Dante, or taken it from Milton! But I take leave to say that the most awful and harrowing descriptions of the woes of the lost that ever fell from human lips do not exceed or even equal the language of the loving Christ, Himself! Listen—"Cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." He is the true lover of men's souls who does not deceive them! He that paints the miseries of Hell as though they were but little is seeking to murder men's souls under the pretense of being their friend! May God give all of you Grace to trust in Jesus for yourselves and then to point others to Him, 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.

THE LAST WORDS OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS
NO. 2644

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 15, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 25, 1882.

"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said this, He gave up the ghost."
Luke 23:46.

"Into Your hands I commit my spirit: You have redeemed me, O LORD God of Truth."
Psalm 31:5.

"And they stoned Stephen, as he was calling upon God and asking, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."
Acts 7:59.

THIS morning, dear Friends, I spoke upon the first recorded words of our Lord Jesus [Sermon #1666, Volume 28—*The First Recorded Words of Jesus*—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org] when He said to His mother and to Joseph, "How is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" Now, by the help of the blessed Spirit, we will consider the last words of our Lord Jesus before He gave up the ghost. And with them we will examine two other passages in which similar expressions are used.

The words, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit," if we judge them to be the last which our Savior uttered before His death, ought to be coupled with those other words, "It is finished," which some have thought were actually the last He used. I think it was not so, but, anyway, these utterances must have followed each other very quickly and we may blend them together. And then we shall see how very similar they are to His first words as we explained them this morning. There is the cry, "It is finished," which you may read in connection with our Authorized Version—"Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" That business was all finished—He had been about it all His life and now that He had come to the end of His days, there was nothing left undone—and He could say to His Father, "I have finished the work which You gave Me to do."

Then if you take the other utterance of our Lord on the Cross, "Father, into your hands I commend My spirit," see how well it agrees with the other reading of our morning text, "Did you not know that I must be in My Father's house?" Jesus is putting Himself into the Father's hands because He had always desired to be there, in the Father's house with the Father. And now He is committing His spirit, as a sacred trust, into the

Father's hands that He may depart to be with the Father, to abide in His house, and go no more out forever.

Christ's life is all of a piece, just as the alpha and the omega are letters of the same alphabet. You do not find Him one thing at the first, another thing afterwards, and a third thing still later—He is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever." There is a wondrous similarity about everything that Christ said and did. You never need write the name, "Jesus," under any of His sayings as you have to put the names of human writers under their sayings, for there is no mistaking any sentence that He has uttered!

If there is anything recorded as having been done by Christ, a believing child can judge whether it is authentic or not. Those miserable false gospels that were brought out did very little, if any mischief, because nobody with any true spiritual discernment was ever duped into believing them to be genuine! It is possible to manufacture a spurious coin which will, for a time, pass for a good one, but it is not possible to make even a passable imitation of what Jesus Christ has said and done! Everything about Christ is like Himself—there is a Christ-likeness about it which cannot be mistaken! This morning, for instance, when I preached about the Holy Child Jesus, I am sure you must have felt that there was never another child as He was. And in His death He was as unique as in His birth, childhood and life. There was never another who died as He did and there was never another who lived altogether as He did. Our Lord Jesus Christ stands by Himself! Some of us try to imitate Him, but how feebly do we follow in His steps! The Christ of God still stands by Himself and He has no rival!

I have already intimated to you that I am going to have three texts for my sermon, but when I have spoken upon all three of them, you will see that they are so much alike that I might have been content with one of them.

I. I invite you first to consider OUR SAVIOR'S WORDS JUST BEFORE HIS DEATH. "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit."

Here observe, first, *how Christ lives and passes away in the atmosphere of the Word of God*. Christ was a grand original thinker and He might always have given us words of His own. He never lacked suitable language, for, "never man spoke like this Man." Yet you must have noticed how continually He quoted Scripture—the great majority of His expressions may be traced to the Old Testament. Even where they are not exact quotations, His words drop into Scriptural shape and form! You can see that the Bible has been His one Book. He is evidently familiar with it from the first page to the last and not with its letter, only, but with the innermost soul of its most secret sense and, therefore, when dying, it seemed but natural for Him to use a passage from a Psalm of David as His expiring words. In His death, He was not driven beyond the power of quiet thought—He was not unconscious, He did not die of weakness—He was strong even while He was dying! It is true that He said, "I thirst," but, after He had been a little refreshed, He cried with a loud voice, as only a strong man could, "It is finished!" And now, before He bows His head in the silence of death, He utters His final words, "Fa-

ther, into Your hands I commend My spirit." Our Lord might, I say again, have made an original speech as His dying declaration. His mind was clear, calm, and undisturbed—in fact, He was perfectly happy, for He had said, "It is finished!" So His sufferings were over and He was already beginning to enjoy a taste of the sweets of victory. Yet, with all that clearness of mind, freshness of intellect and fluency of words that might have been possible to Him, He did not invent a new sentence, but He went to the Book of Psalms and took from the Holy Spirit this expression," Into Your hands I commend My spirit."

How instructive to us is this great Truth of God that the Incarnate Word lived on the Inspired Word! It was food to Him, as it is to us and, Brothers and Sisters, if Christ thus lived upon the Word of God, should not you and I do the same? He, in some respects, did not need this Book as much as we do. The Spirit of God rested upon Him without measure, yet He loved the Scripture and He went to it, studied it and used its expressions continually. Oh, that you and I might get into the very heart of the Word of God and get that Word into ourselves! As I have seen the silkworm eat into the leaf and consume it, so ought we to do with the Word of the Lord—not crawl over its surface, but eat right into it till we have taken it into our inmost parts! It is idle to merely let the eyes glance over the Words, or to remember the poetical expressions, or the historic facts—but it is blessed to eat into the very soul of the Bible until, at last, you come to talk in Scriptural language and your very style is fashioned upon Scripture models—and, what is still better, your spirit is flavored with the words of the Lord!

I would quote John Bunyan as an instance of what I mean. Read anything of his and you will see that it is almost like reading the Bible itself. He had studied our Authorized Version, which will never be bettered, as I judge, till Christ shall come. He had read it till his very soul was saturated with Scripture and though his writings are charmingly full of poetry, yet he cannot give us his *Pilgrim's Progress*—that sweetest of all prose poems—without continually making us feel and say, "Why, this man is a living Bible!" Prick him anywhere—his blood is Bibline—the very essence of the Bible flows from him! He cannot speak without quoting a text, for his very soul is full of the Word of God. I commend His example to you, Beloved and, still more, the example of our Lord Jesus! If the Spirit of God is in you, He will make you love the Word of God and, if any of you imagine that the Spirit of God will lead you to dispense with the Bible, you are under the influence of another spirit which is not the Spirit of God at all! I trust that the Holy Spirit will endear to you every page of this Divine Record so that you will feed upon it and, afterwards, speak it out to others. I think it is well worthy of your constant remembrance that, even in death, our blessed Master showed the ruling passion of His spirit so that His last words were a quotation from Scripture.

Now notice, secondly, *that our Lord, in the moment of His death, recognized a personal God.* "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit." God is to some men an unknown God. "There may be a God," so they say, but they get no nearer the truth than that. "All things are God," says another. "We cannot be sure that there is a God," say others, "and, there-

fore, it is no use our pretending to believe in Him and so to be, possibly, influenced by a supposition." Some people say, "Oh, certainly, there is a God, but He is very far off! He does not come near to us and we cannot imagine that He will interfere in our affairs." Ah, but our blessed Lord Jesus Christ believed in no such impersonal, pantheistic, dreamy, far-off God, but in One to whom He said, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit." His language shows that He realized the Personality of God as much as I would recognize the personality of a banker if I said to him, "Sir, I commit that money into your hands." I know that I should not say such a thing as that to a mere dummy, or to an abstract something or nothing—but I would say it to a living man and I would say it only to a living man.

So, Beloved, men do not commit their souls into the keeping of impalpable nothings! They do not, in death, smile as they resign themselves to the infinite unknown, the cloudy "Father of everything," who may be nothing or everything. No, no, we only trust what we know! And so Jesus knew the Father, and knew Him to be a real Person having hands—and into those hands He commended His departing spirit. I am not now speaking materially, mark you, as though God had hands like ours, but He is an actual Being, who has powers of action, who is able to deal with men as He pleases and who is willing to take possession of their spirits and to protect them forever and ever. Jesus speaks like one who believed that and I pray that, both in life and in death, you and I may always deal with God in the same way. We have far too much fiction in religion—and a religion of fiction will bring only fictitious comfort in the dying hour. Come to solid facts! Is God as real to you as you are to yourself? Come now, do you speak with Him, "as a man speaks unto his friend"? Can you trust Him and rely upon Him as you trust and rely upon the partner of your bosom? If your God is unreal, your religion is unreal! If your God is a dream, your hope will be a dream and woe be unto you when you shall wake up out of it!

It was not so that Jesus trusted. "Father," He said, "into Your hands I commend My spirit."

But, thirdly, here is a still better point. Observe how *Jesus Christ here brings out the Fatherhood of God*. The Psalm from which He quoted did not say, "Father." David did not get as far as that in words, though in *spirit* he often did. But Jesus had the right to alter the Psalmist's words. He can improve on Scripture, though you and I cannot. He did not say, "O God, into Your hands I commend My spirit." He said, "Father." Oh, that sweet word! That was the gem of our thought, this morning, that Jesus said, "Did you not know that I must be at My Father's—that I must be in My Father's house!" Oh, yes, the Holy Child knew that He was especially and, in a peculiar sense, the Son of the Highest, and therefore He said, "My Father." And, in dying, His expiring heart was buoyed up and comforted with the thought that God was His Father. It was because He said that God was His Father that they put Him to death, yet He still stood to it even in His dying hour and said, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit"!

What a blessed thing it is for us, also, my Brothers and Sisters, to die conscious that we are children of God! Oh, how sweet, in life and in death, to feel in our soul the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, "Abba, Father"! In such a case as that—

"It is not death to die."

Quoting the Savior's words, "It is finished," and relying upon His Father and our Father, we may go even into the jaws of death without the "quivering lips" of which we sang just now. Joyful, with all the strength we have, our lips may confidently sing, challenging death and the grave to silence our ever-rising and swelling music! O my Father, my Father, if I am in your hands, I may die without fear!

There is another thought, however, which is perhaps the best one of all. From this passage we learn that our *Divine Lord cheerfully rendered up His soul to His Father when the time had come for Him to die.* "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit." None of us can, with strict propriety, use these words. When we come to die, we may perhaps utter them and God will accept them—these were the very death-words of Polycarp, Bernard, Luther, Melanchthon, Jerome of Prague, John Huss and an almost endless list of saints—"Into Your hands I commend my spirit." The Old Testament rendering of the passage, or else our Lord's version of it, has been turned into a Latin prayer and commonly used among Romanists almost as a *charm*—they have repeated the Latin words when dying, or, if they were unable to do so, the priest repeated the words for them, attaching a sort of magical power to that particular formula! But, in the sense in which our Savior uttered these words, we cannot, any of us, fully use them. We can commit or commend our spirit to God, but yet, Brothers and Sisters, remember that unless the Lord comes first, we *must die*—and dying is *not* an *act* on our part. We have to be passive in the process because it is no longer in our power to retain our life. I suppose that if a man could have such control of his life, it might be questionable when he would surrender it because suicide is a crime and no man can be required to kill himself. God does not demand such action as that at any man's hands and, in a certain sense, that is what would happen whenever a man yielded himself to death.

But there was no necessity for our blessed Lord and Master to die except the necessity which He had taken upon Himself in becoming the Substitute for His people! There was no necessity for His death even at the last moment upon the Cross, for, as I have reminded you, He cried with a loud voice when natural weakness would have compelled Him to whisper or to sigh. But His life was strong within Him—if He had willed to do so, He could have unloosed the nails and come down into the midst of the crowd that stood mocking Him! He died of His own free will, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." A man may righteously surrender his life for the good of his country and for the safety of others. There have frequently been opportunities for men to do this and there have been brave fellows who have worthily done it. But all those men would have had to die at some time or other. They were only slightly anticipating the payment of the debt of nature. But, in our Lord's case, He was rendering up to the Father the sprit which He might have kept if

He had chosen to do so. "No man takes it from Me," He said concerning His life. "I lay it down of Myself."

And there is here a cheerful *willingness* to yield up His spirit into His Father's hands! It is rather remarkable that none of the Evangelists describe our Lord as *dying*. He did die, but they all speak of Him as giving up the ghost—surrendering to God His spirit. You and I passively die, but He actively yielded up His spirit to His Father. In His case, death *was an act* and He performed that act from the glorious motive of redeeming us from death and Hell! So, in this sense, Christ stands alone in His death.

But, oh, dear Brothers and Sisters, if we cannot render up our spirit as He did, yet, when our life is taken from us, let us be perfectly ready to give it up! May God bring us into such a state of mind and heart that there shall be no struggling to keep our life, but a sweet willingness to let it be just as God would have it—a yielding up of everything into His hands, feeling sure that, in the world of spirits, our soul shall be quite safe in the Father's hands and that, until the Resurrection Day, the life-germ of the body will be securely in His keeping, and certain that when the trumpet shall sound, spirit, soul and body—that trinity of our manhood—shall be reunited in the absolute perfection of our being to behold the King in His beauty in the land that is very far off! When God calls us to die, it will be a sweet way of dying if we can, like our Lord, pass away with a text of Scripture upon our lips, with a personal God ready to receive us, with that God recognized distinctly as our Father and so die joyously, resigning our will entirely to the sweet will of the ever-blessed One, and saying, "It is the Lord." "My Father." "Let Him do as seems good to Him."

II. My second text is in the 31st Psalm, at the 5th verse. And it is evidently the passage which our Savior had in His mind just then "Into Your hands I commit my spirit: You have redeemed me, O Lord God of Truth." It seems to me that THESE ARE WORDS TO BE USED IN LIFE, for this Psalm is not so much concerning the Believer's death as concerning his life.

Is it not very amazing, dear Friends, that the words which Jesus uttered on the Cross you may still continue to use? You may catch up their echo and not only when you come to die, but tonight, tomorrow morning and as long as you are alive, you may still repeat the text the Master quoted, and say, "Into Your hands I commit my spirit."

That is to say, first, *let us cheerfully entrust our souls to God* and feel that they are quite safe in His hands. Our spirit is the noblest part of our being; our body is only the husk, our spirit is the living kernel, so let us put it into God's keeping. Some of you have never yet done that, so I invite you to do it now. It is the act of faith which saves the soul, that act which a man performs when he says, "I trust myself to God as He reveals Himself in Christ Jesus. I cannot keep myself, but He can keep me and, by the precious blood of Christ He can cleanse me. So I just take my spirit and give it over into the great Father's hands." You never really live till you do that! All that comes before that act of full surrender is death! But when you have once trusted Christ, then you have truly begun to

live. And every day, as long as you live, take care that you repeat this process and cheerfully leave yourselves in God's hands without any reserve. That is to say, give yourself up to God—your body, to be healthy or to be sick, to be long-lived or to be suddenly cut off. Your soul and spirit, give them, also, up to God, to be made happy or to be made sad, just as He pleases. Give Your whole self up to Him and say to Him, "My Father, make me rich or make me poor, give me sight or make me blind. Let me have all my senses or take them away. Make me famous or leave me to be obscure. I give myself up to You—into Your hands I commit my spirit. I will no longer exercise my own choice, but You shall choose My inheritance for me. My times are in Your hands."

Now, dear children of God, are you always doing this? Have you *ever* done it? I am afraid that there are some, even among Christ's professing followers, who kick against God's will and even when they say to God, "Your will be done," they spoil it by adding, in their own mind, "and my will, too." They pray, "Lord, make my will Your will," instead of saying, "Make Your will my will." Let us each one pray this prayer every day, "Into Your hands I commit my spirit." I like, at family prayer, to put myself and all that I have into God's hands in the morning—and then, at night, to just look between His hands and see how safe I have been. And then to say to Him, "Lord, shut me up again tonight! Take care of me all through the night watches. 'Into Your hands I commit my spirit.'"

Notice, dear Friends, that our second text has these words at the end of it—"You have redeemed me, O Lord God of Truth." Is not that a good reason for giving yourself up entirely to God? Christ has redeemed you and, therefore, you belong to Him. If I am a redeemed man and I ask God to take care of me, I am but asking the King to take care of one of His own jewels—a jewel that cost Him the blood of His heart!

And I may still more especially expect that He will do so, because of the title which is here given to Him—"You have redeemed me, *O Lord God of Truth.*" Would He be the God of Truth if He began with redemption and ended with destruction—if He began by giving His Son to die for us and then kept back other mercies which we daily need to bring us to Heaven? No, the gift of His Son is the pledge that He will save His people from their sins and bring them home to Glory—and He will do it. So, every day, go to Him with this declaration, "Into Your hands I commit my spirit." No, not only every day, but all through the day! Does a horse run away with you? Then you cannot do better than say, "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit." And if the horse does not run away with you, you cannot do better than say the same words! Have you to go into a house where there is fever? I mean, is it your *duty* to go there? Then go saying, "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit." I would advise you to do this every time you walk down the street, or even while you sit in your own house.

Dr. Gill, my famous predecessor, spent very much time in his study and, one day, somebody said to him, "Well, at any rate, the studious man is safe from most of the accidents of life." It so happened that one morning, when the good man left his familiar armchair for a little while, there came a gale of wind that blew down a stack of chimneys which crashed

through the roof and fell right into the place where he would have been sitting if the Providence of God had not just then drawn him away! And he said, "I see that we need Divine Providence to care for us in our studies just as much as in the streets." "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit." I have often noticed that if any of our friends get into accidents and troubles, it is usually when they are away for a holiday. It is a curious thing, but I have often remarked about it. They go out for their health and come home sick! They leave us with all their limbs whole and return to us crippled! Therefore we must pray God to take special care of friends in the country or by the sea—and we must commit ourselves to His hands wherever we may be. If we had to go into a leper colony, we would certainly ask God to protect us from the deadly leprosy. But we ought to equally seek the Lord's protection while dwelling in the healthiest place or in our own homes!

David said to the Lord, "Into Your hands I commit my spirit." But let me beg you to add that word which our Lord inserted—"*Father.*" David is often a good guide for us, but David's Lord is far better. And if we follow Him, we shall improve upon David. So, let us each say, "*Father, Father*, into Your hands I commit my spirit." That is a sweet way of living every day—committing everything to our Heavenly Father's hands, for those hands can do His child no unkindness. "Father, I might not be able to trust Your angels, but I can trust You." The Psalmist does not say, "Into the hand of Providence I commit my spirit." Do you notice how men try to get rid of God by saying, "Providence did this," and, "Providence did that," and, "Providence did the other"? If you ask them, "What is Providence?"—they will probably reply, "Well, Providence is Providence." That is all they can say.

There is many a man who talks very confidently about reverencing nature, obeying the laws of nature, noting the powers of nature and so on. Step up to that eloquent lecturer and say to him, "Will you kindly explain to me what nature is?" He answers, "Why, nature—well, it is—nature." Just so, Sir, but, what is nature? And he says, "Well—well—it is nature." And that is all you will get out of him. Now, I believe in nature and I believe in Providence, but at the back of everything, I believe in God, and in the God who has hands—not in an idol that has no hands and can do nothing—but in the God to whom I can say, "'Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit.' I rejoice that I am able to put myself there, for I feel absolutely safe in trusting myself to Your keeping." So live, Beloved, and you shall live safely, happily and you shall have hope in your life, and hope in your death!

III. My third text will not detain us many minutes. It is intended to explain to us THE USE OF OUR SAVIOR'S DYING WORDS FOR OURSELVES. Turn to the account of the death of Stephen, in the 7th chapter of Acts, at the 59th verse, and you will see, there, how far a man of God may dare to go in his last moments in quoting from David and from the Lord Jesus Christ. "And they stoned Stephen, as he was calling upon God and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." So here is a text for us to use when we come to die—"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." I have explained to you that, strictly, we can hardly talk of yielding up our spirit,

but we may speak of Christ *receiving* it and say with Stephen, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

What does this prayer mean? I must just hurriedly give you two or three thoughts concerning it and so close my discourse. I think this prayer means that, *if we can die as Stephen did, we shall die with a certainty of immortality*. Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." He did not say, "I am afraid my poor spirit is going to die." No, the spirit is something which still exists after death, something which Christ can receive and, therefore, Stephen asks Him to receive it! You and I are not going upstairs to die as if we were only like cats and dogs—we go up there to die like immortal beings who fall asleep on earth and open our eyes in Heaven! Then, at the sound of the archangel's trumpet, our very body is to rise to dwell, again, with our spirit—we have not any question about this matter! I think I have told you what an infidel once said to a Christian man, "Some of you Christians have great fear in dying because you believe that there is another state to follow this one. I have not the slightest fear, for I believe that I shall be annihilated and, therefore, all fear of death is gone from me." "Yes," said the Christian, "and in that respect you seem to me to be on equal terms with that bull grazing over there, which, like yourself, is free from any fear of death. Pray, Sir, let me ask you a simple question. Have you any *hope*?" "Hope, Sir? *Hope*, Sir? No, I have no hope! Of course I have no hope, Sir." "Ah, then!" replied the other, "despite the fears that sometimes come over feeble Believers, they have a hope which they would not and could not give up." And that hope is that our spirit—even that spirit which we commit into Jesus Christ's hands—shall be "forever with the Lord."

The next thought is that, *to a man who can die as Stephen did, there is a certainty that Christ is near*—so near that the man speaks to Him and says, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." In Stephen's case, the Lord Jesus was so near that the martyr could see Him, for he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." Many dying saints have borne a similar testimony. It is no strange thing for us to hear them say, before they die, that they could see within the pearly gates and they have told us this with such evident truthfulness, and with such rapture, or sometimes so calmly—in such a businesslike tone of voice—we were sure that they were neither deceived nor speaking falsehood. They spoke what they knew to be true, for Jesus was there with them! Yes, Beloved, before you can call your children around your deathbed, Jesus will already be there! And into His hands you may commit your spirit.

Moreover, *there is a certainty that we are quite safe in His hands.* Wherever else we are insecure, if we ask Him to receive our spirit, and He receives it, who can hurt us? Who can pluck us out of His hands? Awaken, Death and hail! Come forth, all you powers of darkness! What can you do when once a spirit is in the hands of the Omnipotent Redeemer? We will be safe there!

Then there is the other certainty, *that He is quite willing to take us into His hands*. Let us put ourselves into His hands now—and then we need not be ashamed to repeat the operation every day and we may be sure

that we shall not be rejected at the last. I have often told you of the good old woman who was dying and to whom someone said, "Are you not afraid to die?" "Oh, no," she replied, "there is nothing at all to fear. I have dipped my foot in the river of death every morning before I have had my breakfast, and I am not afraid to die now." You remember that dear saint who died in the night, and who had left written on a piece of paper by her bedside these lines which, before she fell asleep, she felt strong enough to pencil down?—

"Since Jesus is mine, I'll not fear undressing,
But gladly put off these garments of clay—
To die in the Lord, is a Covenant blessing,
Since Jesus to Glory thro' death led the way."

It was well that she could say it—and may we be able to say the same whenever the Master calls us to go up higher! I want, dear Friends, that we should, all of us, have as much willingness to depart as if it were a matter of will with us! Blessed be God it is not left to our choice—it is not left to our will when we shall die. God has appointed that day and ten thousand devils cannot consign us to the grave before our time! We shall not die till God decrees it—

"Plagues and deaths around me fly,
Till He please I cannot die!
Not a single shaft can hit
Till the God of love sees fit."

But let us be just as willing to depart as if it were really a matter of choice, for, wisely, carefully, coolly consider that if it were left to us, we should none of us be wise if we did not choose to go! Apart from the coming of our Lord, the most miserable thing that I know of would be a suspicion that we might not die. Do you know what quaint old Rowland Hill used to say when he found himself getting very old? He said, "Surely they must be forgetting me up there." And every now and then, when some dear old saint was dying, he would say, "When you get to Heaven, give my love to John Berridge, and John Bunyan and ever so many more of the good Johns, and tell them I hope they will see poor old Rowley up there before long." Well, there was common sense in that wishing to get Home, longing to be with God. To be with Christ is far better than to be here!

Sobriety itself would make us choose to die! Well, then, do not let us run back and become utterly unwilling and struggle and strive and fret and fume over it. When I hear of Believers who do not like to talk about death, I am afraid concerning them. It is greatly wise to be familiar with our resting place. When I went, recently, to the cemetery at Norwood, to lay the body of our dear Brother Perkins there for a little while, I felt that it was a healthy thing for me to stand at the grave's brink and to walk amid that forest of memorials of the dead, for this is where I, too, must go. You living men, come and view the ground where you must shortly lie and, as it must be so, let us who are Believers welcome it!

But, what if you are not Believers? Ah, that is another matter altogether! If you have not believed in Christ, you may well be afraid even to rest on the seat where you are sitting! I wonder that the earth itself does not say, "O God, I will not hold this wretched sinner up any longer! Let

me open my mouth and swallow him!" All nature must hate the man who hates God! Surely, all things must loathe to minister to the life of a man who does not live unto God. Oh that you would seek the Lord and trust Christ and find eternal life! If you have done so, do not be afraid to go forth to live, or to die, just as God pleases.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *JOHN 15:1-8.*

Verse 1. *I am the true vine.* Now we know where to find the true Church. It is to be found only in Christ and in those who are joined to Him in mystical but real union. "I am the true vine."

1. *And My Father is the vinedresser.* Now we know who is the true Guardian of the Church. Not the so-called "holy father" at Rome, but that Father above, who is the true Guardian, Ruler, Keeper, Preserver, Purifier, Vinedresser of the one Church, the vine!

2. *Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away.* There are many such branches, in Christ's visible Church which are not fruit-bearing branches and, consequently, are not partakers of the sap of life and Grace which flows into the branches that are vitally joined to the central stem. These fruitless branches are to be taken away.

2. *And every branch that bears fruit, He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit.* There is some work, then, for the knife upon *all* the branches—cutting off for those that are fruitless—cutting for those that are bearing some fruit that they may bring forth yet more.

3. *Now you are clean [purged] through the word which I have spoken unto you.* The Word is often the knife with which the great Vinedresser prunes the vine. And, Brothers and Sisters, if we were more willing to feel the edge of the Word, and to let it cut away even something that may be very dear to us, we would not need so much pruning by affliction. It is because that first knife does not always produce the desired result that another sharp tool is used by which we are effectually pruned.

4. *Abide in Me, and I in you.* "Do not merely find a temporary shelter in Me, as a ship runs into harbor in stormy weather and then comes out again when the gale is over, but cast anchor in Me, as the vessel does when it reaches its desired haven. Be not as branches that are tied on and so can be taken off, but be livingly joined to Me. 'Abide in Me.'"

4. *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abides in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in Me.* You must bear fruit, or else be cast away, but you cannot bear any fruit except by real union and constant communion with Jesus Christ your Lord!

5. *I am the vine, you are the branches: he that abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without Me you can do nothing.* Not merely will you do very little, but you can do nothing at all if you are severed from Christ! You are absolutely and entirely dependent upon Christ, both for your life and for your fruit-bearing. Do we not wish to have it so, Beloved? It is the incipient principle of apostasy when a man wishes to be independent of Christ in any degree—when he says, "Give me the portion of goods that falls to me that I may have something in

hand, some spending money of my own." No, you must, from day to day, from hour to hour and even from moment to moment, derive life, light, love, everything that is good from Christ! What a blessing that it is so!

6. *If a man abides not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.* There is a sad future in store for tares, according to another parable, but, somehow, there is a much sadder lot reserved for those that were, in some sense, branches of the vine—those who made a profession of faith in Christ, though they were never vitally united to Him. Those who, for a while, did rum well, yet were hindered. What was it that hindered them that they should not obey the Truth of God? Oh, it is sad, indeed, that any should have had any sort of connection with that Divine Stem and yet should be cast into the fire!

7. *If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.* Do not think that all men can pray alike effectually, for it is not so. There are some whom God will hear and some whom God will not hear. And there are some even of His own children whom He will hear in things absolutely vital and essential, to whom He never gave carte blanche after this fashion. "You shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." No, if you will not hear God's words, He will not hear yours! And if His words do not abide in you, your words shall not have power with Him. They may be directed to Heaven, but the Lord will not listen to them so as to have regard to them. Oh, it needs very tender walking for one who would be mighty in prayer! You shall find that those who have had their will at the Throne of Grace are men who have done God's will in other places—it mast be so. The greatest favorite at court will have a double portion of the jealousy of his monarch, and he must be especially careful that he orders his steps aright, or else the king will not continue to favor him as he was known to do. There is a sacred discipline in Christ's house, a part of which consists in this, that, as our obedience to our God declines, so will our power in prayer decrease at the same time.

8. *Herein is My Father glorified, that he bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciples.* If we are His true disciples, we also shall bring forth much fruit.

—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 TIME OF JACOB'S TROUBLE"
NO. 2645

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DRY, OCTOBER 22, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 29, 1882.

"It is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it."
Jeremiah 30:7.

GOD here calls the Jews by the name of Jacob. These were His people in a very special sense, for He had chosen them from among all the nations of the earth and had brought them near Him that they might be His own portion, His inheritance. Yet upon these people He laid many stripes and visited them with sore chastisements. It is true that they were a sinful people, though they were, in many respects, better than other nations who were, for a long while, allowed to go unpunished. Year after year, the heathen prospered in war and had success in other ways—but as for God's own people, waters of a full cup were wrung out to them. As soon as the Lord had a people, they began to suffer. We learn this very early in their history, for, after Isaac, the child of promise, was born, it was not very long before Ishmael—"he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit."

And, as that persecution began early, it has continued late, for the Apostle adds, "Even so it is now." There is still an enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman—and the seed of the woman is made to feel the serpent's malice so that, what with a chastising God and a biting serpent, the children of God are pretty sure to be often in trouble! And when, by Grace, you see them in their glittering ranks above, and ask, "Who are these which are arrayed in white robes, and from where did they come?" This will be the summary of the answer concerning them all, "These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." "The sacramental host of God's elect," in its march through the world, may be tracked by its own blood! Read both ancient and modern history and what will you find but an account of the suffering and the triumphs of the people of God? Even to this day we have to cut a lane through the enemy and fight our way to Heaven in a stern hand-to-hand conflict. God has not yet prepared "flowery beds of ease" for any of us, nor shall we be "carried to the skies" in ambulances of luxury. We shall have to fight if we are to reign and we shall have to suffer if we are to ultimately reach the land of perfect blessedness!

This is "the time of Jacob's trouble," even this day, this present life! Thank God it is but a day and will come to an end. But this is not the

time of Jacob's joy. He does have some delights, even here, but his great joy is reserved for the hereafter. This is rather the time in which the sinner rejoices and fattens himself as for the slaughter. But God's people must expect to find that this is "the time of Jacob's trouble."

But, dear Friends, the other Truth in our text is equally attested by history—"he shall be saved out of it." How gloriously God's people have been saved all along their line of march! Their campfires still show their trail and those campfires have been the burnings of the furnace that God has set up for the trying and purifying of His chosen people. But nowhere have they been destroyed, though everywhere they have been in affliction! They had a very narrow escape from destruction in Haman's day—the enemy then thought that he would utterly cut off the people of God from the face of the earth. Haman thought that he had managed everything so well that his wicked scheme had to succeed. The king's mandates had already gone out and on a certain day all the Jews would be put to death. But you know how Esther, at the peril of her life, went into the king's presence to plead for her nation and, soon, new edicts were sent out and the chosen people put their enemies to death! And they, themselves, were not destroyed.

Haman was hanged on the gallows that he had fixed for Mordecai, for the hated Jew belonged to the seed which cannot be crushed, to the immortal race which can never die out! God's people may be often trodden down, like the grass of the field, but, as the grass springs up again and even outlive the men who tread upon it, so will it be with God's people even to the end! This is "the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." Christ's Church shall live and flourish when her persecutors lie in ignominious graves! Herod thought that he could crush the chosen seed, but he was eaten by worms—while the Church of God still lived on. The tyrant was soon swept away and so shall all be who lift their puny hands against the people of the Most High!

It would be a very profitable subject, if one had the time to work it out, to see how true this verse is in relation to the Jewish people and to God's own elect ones. "It is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." But I want at this time, to get at *individuals*. You know that God's Truth, in Scripture, is like a crystal. You may take a great mass of it and if you break that crystal into fragments, every little piece will be of the same form, for every division of the crystal is crystallized after the same fashion! In like manner, you can split God's Truth up so as to apply it to individuals, and then you can further divide it and apply it to each separate incident in the life of every man—and it will still hold good—for the Truth of God is always true and the faithful promise of God is applicable to every part of the Christian's life.

I am going to speak to persons who are in trouble and I thought I would take up a series of trials as illustrated by the life of Jacob—not so much referring to his descendants, who are here called, Jacob, but speaking concerning Jacob, himself. He was a much-tried man and one reason for that was that he had a great deal in him that had to be driven out. And much of it could not be gotten out of him except with a severe shaking. Abraham, the father of the faithful, was a far grander man in

every way. Isaac was of a calm and quiet spirit, but Jacob was naturally a worldly man. He is the father of the Jews, a business man, a scheming man, a man who is determined not to be overreached, but who is, perhaps, more likely to overreach others. Jacob was too much of a man until God broke him down—he certainly was a man of a very distinct type—and he has perpetuated that type in the whole Jewish nation to this day. I sometimes think that the Jews seem rather to have descended from Jacob than from Abraham, though, of course, they have really come from Abraham, *through* Jacob. I have already reminded you that Jacob was a man who had great trouble. There was a great deal of husk to that corn and, therefore, it needed a good deal of threshing.

I. Now, looking at Jacob's career in detail, I note that he began his life as an individual apart from the family by a trial which must have been a very heavy one—HE HAD TO LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER. It must have been especially painful to him to go away from his mother, Rebekah, who had had so much of the handling of him, so much of the making of him and, I must add, so much of the *spoiling* of him. And now, because he has treated his brother Esau unfairly and has robbed him of his blessing, coming before his father with a lie in his right hand, he must leave his home and go among strangers. Possibly I am addressing some who are now undergoing that experience. To leave home for the first time, whatever your age may be, is usually very painful. Some of us have known what it was to lie awake at night, when we had said goodbye to father and mother and were far away from them. Some of you have, perhaps, crossed the sea and left dear ones behind—that first night on board ship, away from all you loved—you sobbed yourself to sleep. These changes must come. We cannot always live in the family nest—we must go out of it and make nests of our own. But when the parting comes, it is often a hard task—not to coarse, rough natures—but then I do not suppose such people are here. Gentle, kind, delicate souls—these are they who most feel the separation from those who are dear to them!

In Jacob's case there was a bitter ingredient which I hope is absent from yours. *The separation came very much as the result of his own fault and his mother's fault.* They must have felt it very keenly when they were caused to part from one another. Their scheming had won the blessing away from Esau, but now they had the shady side of the blessing—and the shady side of a blessing is, for a while, not materially different from a *curse*. Yet, by-and-by, that very shady side becomes a marvelous blessing to the soul! When Jacob started off alone upon his weary way, he journeyed on till, at night, he lighted upon a certain place and took of the stones of that place for his pillow, for that was "the time of Jacob's trouble." But, ah, dear Friends, how sweet was the second part of our text to him! May it be equally precious to you—"but he shall be saved out of it."

He lies down to sleep and he is saved out of his troubles as soon as he has fallen asleep, for, in his dream, he sees a mystic ladder, the foot of which is on earth, but the top reaches to Heaven—a marvelous vision of that way by which we shall ascend to God—the Lord, Himself, having first come down to us in the Person of His dear Son. It was worth while being away from home and having such lodgings as that—to have such a

dream! Jacob did not mind the cold and heavy night dews, for there was a dew from the Lord that refreshed his spirit! It mattered little to him that the beasts of prey might be round about him, for the angels of God were ascending and descending between him and the Throne of the Infinite One! Let it be the same with you, also, dear Friend. If it is with you, "the time of Jacob's trouble" because you are separated from those you love, now get into all the closer union with your God! Now begin to use that ladder, that wondrous means of communication between your immortal spirit and the immortal God! Through Christ Jesus, look up to your Father who is in Heaven—carry on a sacred commerce between your soul and the heavenly world and seek to be spiritually enriched thereby!

It would be a blessed thing if you were no longer able to rely upon an arm of flesh, that you might be obliged to come and rest upon the unseen arm of God. It shall be a gainful loss to you to have lost your mother's care, but to have come nearer to the Most High! I grieve, sometimes, when I see how God's people manage to live a great way off from Him and yet appear to be quite comfortable, and to have all that they could wish. But I am glad when any one of them is thrust right out of all harmful associations and so is drawn nearer to God, for when God says, "Come you out from among them, and be you separate," if we do not at once obey His command, He has many ways of *making* us come out and it may be that we have to come out in a fashion that is exceedingly painful. Yet, however trying it is, it matters little if we but get nearer to Him! We may even sing—

"Nearer, my God, to Thee—
Nearer to Thee!
Even though it be a cross
That raises me,
Still all my song shall be,
'Nearer, my God, to Thee —
Nearer to Thee!'"

Dear young Friend, you who are just now all alone, in trouble and have come in here in the hope of receiving some comforting message, I trust that God has meant this part of the sermon to be a word especially for you.

II. Jacob's next trouble was that HE GOT TO HIS UNCLE LABAN. "*Laban*"—read his name backwards and it is "*Nabal*." There was not a great deal of difference between the two men, for they were both of a churlish disposition. Laban was a hard, grinding taskmaster to Jacob. He cheated him whenever he could, robbed him in all manner of ways, changed his wages when he thought his remuneration was too large, while, by night, the cold devoured the poor shepherd—and by day, the heat was most trying. Yet Laban never had such a faithful servant as his nephew Jacob—and God blessed Laban for Jacob's sake. I really think that I may say of that period in the Patriarch's life, "This *is* the time of Jacob's trouble," for it is a very hard thing to work for an unthankful master and, after all your trouble and pains, to get no word of gratitude or love. Laban ought to have loved Jacob, for he was both his nephew and his son-in-law. Jacob's wives were the daughters of Laban and their father ought to have

been kindly disposed towards him. But both the father and the sons seem to have treated him rather as an enemy than as a friend and so he had hard times all the while he was with them. Perhaps some of you are saying, "Ah, Sir, you do not know *my* circumstances! Mine is hard and grinding labor. I am bowed down by it and I seem to have no sympathy whatever, even from those who ought to be kind to me." Well, dear Friend, Jacob, you see, went that way, and you may be content to endure, for a while, the same lot as that eminent Patriarch. But, truly, it is a bitter grief and I can understand your saying, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" "Oh that I had wings like a dove! For then I would fly away and be at rest."

Now listen to the second half of our text and believe that as it came true to Jacob, it shall also come true to you—"It is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." And he *was* saved out of it! He might have never left Padanaram if he had not been forced out of it—and it was his duty to get back, as soon as he could, into the promised land—and there live the separated life. The very hardness of the burdens that were put upon him weaned him from the house of Laban and made him willing to bear the hardships of a wandering life—which must have seemed little compared with those which he endured with churlish Laban. My dear tried Friend, God is working out some great end for you through your troubles! It is good for young people to bear a certain amount of burden—not that this excuses those who oppress them and exact more than is right from them, but, "it is good for a man that he bears the yoke in his youth." I believe that the drinking out of the bitter cup early in life is often followed by a long stretch of peaceful rest, besides teaching us many a useful lesson which, otherwise, we might never have learned!

You would like to have all things arranged according to your own wishes, would you not? And then you would grow up and be like a bull unaccustomed to the yoke! But that is not God's method. You have to be tamed and trained while you are young—you have to bear the yoke and, oftentimes, you may cry to God because it seems to gall your unwilling shoulders. But then, in later years, you will be of a tender spirit, yourself, and so you will be the more ready and able to sympathize with those who are down-trodden and persecuted. And you will often have to bless God for those early afflictions which taught you wisdom and fitted you to be the helper of others. Be always more earnest to do your duty than to be at ease. Be more concerned to be right than to be happy! Be more determined to act uprightly than to secure the rewards of your work. God will lay them up in store for you and you shall have them in due season. Bear, and forbear, and still bear—remember how the saints of God have often had to endure harsh usage from those who ought to have loved them—and be content to bear the cross which they carried before you.

III. Now I must pass on to notice Jacob's next trouble. He has got away from Laban and he starts off with his family and his flocks and herds. Now HE REMEMBERS HIS BROTHER ESAU whom he had treated so badly and, behold, Esau is coming to meet him with 400 armed men! Now, if it were "the time of Jacob's trouble" when he was under Laban's

power, surely *this* is even worse than any trial that went before, for will not Esau come with his armed men and smite Jacob and destroy the mothers and the children? Is he not full of wrath against him for what he did long ago? And has he not *just cause* for that wrath?

This is, indeed, "the time of Jacob's trouble." He sends all that belong to him across the brook and he spends the night in prayer—not sweet and tranquil prayer such as is our privilege to often enjoy, but we read, "There wrestled a Man with him until the breaking of the day." We generally lay the stress upon the thought that Jacob wrestled with the Angel. No doubt he did, but the Bible does not say so—it says, "There wrestled a Man with him." There was a great deal in Jacob that needed to come out and this Angel came and wrestled with him in order to get it out! And Jacob's victory was not won until the Angel had touched the hollow of his thigh so that he should always need to lean upon a staff even till he died. His weakness had been proven and he had been overcome—and then it was that *he* overcame and became a prevailing prince, having power with God and with men!

But, oh, that was a dark night for Jacob! Try to put yourselves into his position, when, even in his prayers, he was disturbed, "and there wrestled a Man with him until the breaking of the day." His heart, surely, must have been ready to break within him, yet the whole of our text is true of that memorable night, "This is the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." And was he not? Ah, yes, and the joys of Peniel shall always exceed the sorrow with which the wrestling of Peniel is commenced! When he went, limping upon his thigh, to join his family, his grief was gone and his fear was removed. God had appeared to him, so all would be well, all was safe, all must be right, for God had heard his cry and he had obtained the blessing!

He was delivered out of his trouble, but how strangely it came about! When Esau came, he was full of love. Instead of war being in his heart, sweet words were upon his lips! If he had not altogether forgiven Jacob, yet, at any rate, he was willing to say nothing about the past and he spoke like a true and noble brother! This is a Truth of God which we often forget—that God has absolute power over men's hearts. You say that somebody is going to betray you—that is more than he can do unless God *lets* him. Somebody threatens to do a very dreadful thing to you and you feel that you are quite in his power. Yes, but so is that man quite in *God's* power—and God can turn him whichever way He likes! You are afraid to meet him, you say. Well, just pluck up your courage and go to him—and you shall, perhaps, find that he is now your friend—the very person that you have looked upon as your worst enemy! This has frequently happened. God, who struck down Saul of Tarsus when he was about to destroy the saints at Damascus, is quite as able to strike down the most violent person when he is about to do mischief to any of His children. Never mind about Esau—be more concerned to give up what the Angel intends to wrestle out of you and to hold Him fast, and say, "I will not let You go, except You bless me." God will speak to Esau and He will take care of you and you shall yet go on your way rejoicing!

IV. Jacob goes on till he gets to Succoth and he is so pleased to be quiet, and at rest, that HE SEEMS TO FORGET HIS GOD, for he builds a house for himself and booths for his cattle, and does not continue to live the wandering life that he should! Therefore God soon sends him a trouble. His sons, in the most brutal manner, destroy the men of Shechem, taking them at unawares and murdering them, so that Jacob's name was made to stink, as he said, among all the tribes. And any *one* of those tribes was quite able to come and destroy him—but if they had banded together, they would have swept him and his family off the face of the earth! Jacob is very much afraid concerning this and now, I think, when he is going into the midst of the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land are justly indignant against his sons, we may again say, "This is the time of Jacob's trouble.'" It is a trouble and no mistake about it. There might be some sentimentalism about his sorrowing on leaving home. There might be some compensation for his hard treatment by Laban. We may suppose that there was too much suspicion of Esau in his third trouble—but now this is a *real* trial—"I shall be destroyed, I and my house."

"It is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." And, oh, how wonderfully was he saved out of it, for the Lord put a fear on all the people round about! He seemed to say to them, "Touch not My anointed" and, though willing enough to fall upon Jacob, and to slay his wives and children, and take his property, they left them all alone! It is truly marvelous how God can make our enemies to be at peace with us! There are more people than Daniel who have slept in the lions' den—yes, and found soft pillows on the lions' manes and slept soundly among them! "My God has sent His angel, and has shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me," said Daniel, and often have others of God's servants felt that they have been delivered in the same way! I remember a poor man who used to preach and who, in a sermon, once gave a description of Daniel in the lions' den. He said, "I do not think the painters make the lions look as fierce as they really were. In most of the pictures, they look as if they could not possibly have eaten Daniel, they are so meek and mild, as if they had padlocks on their jaws. But they were real lions and hungry lions, too, as was proved by the way in which they ate up Daniel's enemies." He said he believed that when Daniel was thrown into the den, they all came rushing towards him to devour him, but an angel flew down from Heaven and said to them, "Hush!" And they all lay as still as possible at the Prophet's feet.

No doubt it was something like that and, sometimes, when the enemies of God's people are most infuriated, He seems to say to them, "Hush!" and they cannot touch them. Why did the Romanists not burn Luther? I never could make that out. If I had been the Pope, I think I would have got rid of him someway or other. Yet nobody could touch Luther! They made short work of John Huss and Jerome of Prague, but, even when the princes and prelates had Luther before them at the Diet of Worms, they did not destroy him! It could not be, for God meant that Luther should die in his bed, notwithstanding all the rage of the enemy!

Therefore, if it is a time of trouble with us, let us rest and be quiet, for surely we shall be saved out of it.

V. Was this the end of Jacob's troubles? Oh, dear, no! All his life he must have troubles of one sort or another. HE HAS A DEAR SON WHOM HE FAVORS and he has made a coat of many colors for him, such as young princes wear. This young man is different from all his brothers. He has a gentle spiritual nature. God has spoken to him and worked upon him most graciously. The Lord is evidently with him and his father's heart goes out to the young dreamer and he dotes upon him. You know the story of how his brothers, after a while, bring Joseph's coat dipped in sheep blood and hold it up before the poor old father. And they say, "This we have found: know now whether it is your son's coat or not." Oh, this—*this* is "the time of Jacob's trouble"!

All those other troubles are nothing at all compared with this one which will surely break the old man's heart! Joseph! Dear Joseph, worth more than all the others, is taken away, "an evil beast has devoured him. Joseph is, without doubt, torn in pieces." Jacob will go to his grave sorrowing because his beloved Joseph is taken away from him. Now shout it to the ends of the earth—"This is the time of Jacob's trouble!" If any of you have had a favorite child and you have allowed all the tendrils of your heart to entwine themselves about it. And if that child is suddenly taken away, it leaves a mark upon the heart that will never be erased in time. I have known the father, if he has been an ungodly man, become rebellious against God from that time forth—there is a bitterness infused into his unbelief that was never there before. But even a gracious man has gone sorrowfully and sadly all his days after some dear child has been taken away—a child of so much promise—a child who was so gracious and who seemed to be such a help to the father, and likely to lift the family up to a better condition of things. Yet, Joseph is gone, and this is "the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it."

And was he not? It took a long time for him to see it, but when he wept on Joseph's neck and when he saw him as the second ruler over all the land of Egypt—and when Joseph came down to him and brought his two sons, and Jacob said, "I had not thought to see your face: and, lo, God has showed me, also, your seed"—then did he know that God had delivered him out of his trouble and multiplied the blessing exceedingly abundantly above what he asked or even thought!

Now, dear Friends, if this is your case, be satisfied about the dear child whom the Lord has called Home to Himself. "Ah," you say, "there is no mistake about it. I know that my child is dead." Yes, but I also know that your child is alive! Come, shall we quarrel over it? You say that he is dead—I say that he lives. God knows that that dear one, taken away in infancy, or taken away as a gracious child, lives! Did you ever notice that passage which says that God gave Job twice as much as he had before? "Yes," you say, "but He did not give him twice as many children, did He? He gave him exactly the same number again, did He not? Then how did He give him twice as much as he had before?" Why, because those first ones that were dead were still his! You know how Wordsworth puts it, "We are seven." Though some were gone, yet they were still seven—and

Job counted all those that were gone as his—and then, with the others, he *did* have twice the number in his family than he had before!

So, Beloved, count your dear ones as though they were still with you, and wait patiently till you meet them again. Refrain from undue weeping, for they shall come again from the land of their captivity. Your dead ones shall live again! Mother of mortals, you did well to weep, but your children live, so you are the mother of *immortals*! Then why do you sorrow? Dry your eyes and bless God that you have another link with Heaven and that you have helped to fill the choirs that, day without night, circle the Throne of God with hallelujahs!

VI. Is Jacob through with his troubles yet? No, no, no! He has got out of one trouble, but he has got into another—

"A Christian man is never long at ease—
When one trouble's gone, another does him seize,"

which, if it is not good poetry, was written by John Bunyan, and is good sound truth! JACOB'S NEXT TIME OF TROUBLE AROSE THROUGH A FAMINE IN THE LAND. The death of Joseph, as his father thought, seemed a dreadful thing, but a famine of bread that will kill the whole family is a great deal worse trouble! There is nothing to eat, so what will become of them? There is corn in Egypt, however, and the good old man sends his sons down there to buy food. And on the back of that comes another trouble, for when they return home, they say that the lord of the land will not let them have any more corn unless they take Benjamin back with them. But Jacob cannot spare Benjamin and, depend upon it, this is the last ounce that will break the camel's back! Says the old man, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and you will take Benjamin away? All these things are against me." This, *this* has to be "the time of Jacob's trouble." Surely, he is now in the very depths of it! But Benjamin must go, notwithstanding all that his father may say. Jacob must part with his last idol and God will make us part with our last idols, too. Therefore mind what you set up in your house as idols, for it is written, "The idols He shall utterly abolish."

That was "the time of Jacob's trouble," but the Lord delivered him out of it! You need not that I should stay to tell you how sweetly the Lord was working on Jacob's behalf all the while. Joseph was in Egypt to keep the whole family alive in the time of famine. Benjamin came back all right and they *all* went down into Egypt and sojourned there. And just as surely as Jacob was delivered, so shall you be. When the worst comes to the worst, then the best of the best will come. When the whole store of bread seems gone, then shall you find this promise true, "Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure."

VII. Well, that is the end of Jacob's trouble unless I add what I hardly think I dare call a trouble. JACOB HAD TO GATHER UP HIS FEET IN BED AND DIE. I do not think that it was a trouble to him. The few and evil days of his pilgrimage were now over and he was to meet his fathers, and his fathers' God. Yet still, it matters not who we are, if we look only at the *earthly* side of death, it *is* a trouble to die. No one can go down into the disembodied state without having some sort of fear. The immortal tenant, however badly lodged, still seems to love the house of clay. But

whether it was a trouble to Jacob, or not, certainly he was saved out of it. He dies with benedictions on his lips and he falls asleep to awake in Glory and there to sit down with Abraham and Isaac at the feast of everlasting blessedness! It was well with Jacob and it shall be well with you who believe in Jesus! You, also, shall say, "I have waited for Your salvation, O Lord." And that salvation will come at *exactly* the right time! You have tarried till the fourscore years are ended. You are getting somewhat weary amidst the toil and infirmities of a body that is inclining to the tomb. Be of good courage! To such as you are—

"It is not death to die."

If you are in Christ, you shall fall asleep in Him and then you shall be "forever with the Lord."

But perhaps there is some poor soul here saying, "I have not got any comfort out of the sermon because all my trouble is about my *sin*. I have not lost a child. I am not suffering through a famine. My great sorrow is concerning my sin, my sin, my sin! It haunts me. It eats like a canker into my spirit. It withers all my joys. It turns my life almost into a Hell." I know where you are, dear Friend, for I have been that way myself. "This is the time of Jacob's trouble." There is no trouble like genuine conviction of sin! Racks, scorpions, death—these are troubles to be laughed at compared with the weight of guilt pressing on the conscience, the sight of an angry God and the fear of the wrath to come! "This is the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." The Lord Jesus Christ has come to save just such as you are! To you He extends His pierced hand. He waits to receive you just as you are. Look to Him! Look to Him! Look to Him, you lost and ruined! Look and live, for in a look at Him there is life for you! Your trouble is great, but you shall be saved out of it though your sins were more numerous than the stars and each one more weighty than the world! Do but look to Him—take your eyes off yourself and fully gaze on Him who bore your sins in His own body on the Cross!

Do you trust Him? Then you are saved! Your sin is gone—it is buried in His sepulcher. God has forgiven you all your transgressions for Jesus' sake! Go on your way rejoicing! "This is the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." God bless you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 31.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

This Psalm was meant to be sung, therefore it was dedicated to the chief musician. Yet it is a Psalm of which at least half is very sorrowful. All our hymns were not meant to be joyous ones. God permits us to take a wide range in our Psalmody and to express the feelings of our heart whatever they may be. You will see here and there the Light of Christ shining on this Psalm. If it does not shine on Him, at any rate He shines on it.

Verse 1. *In You, O LORD, do I put my trust.* Is that true of you, dear Friends? Never take your trust upon trust, but be quite sure that you

trust in God. If it is so, acknowledge it and never be ashamed to say, "In You, O Lord, do I put my trust."

1-3. *Let me never be ashamed: deliver me in Your righteousness. Bow down Your ear to me; deliver me speedily: be You my strong rock for an house of defense to save me. For You are my rock and my fortress; therefore for Your name's sake lead me, and guide me.* See how logical David is with his, "for," and, "therefore"? It is the very essence of prayer to be able to urge pleas with God and to say to Him, "Do it for this reason," or, "Therefore, do it for such another reason." I would that we, all of us, studied more fully this blessed art of pleading with God—bringing forth sound arguments as we approach Him.

4. *Pull me out of the net that they have laid privately for me: for You are my strength.* How sweetly and blessedly he pleads! "'You are my strength.' I cannot get out of this net, I am entangled in it, but You can pull me out, for, 'You are my strength.'"

5. *Into Your hands I commit my spirit: You have redeemed me, O LORD God of Truth.* This is a blessed prayer—a holy resolution which we may use every day in the week all through our lives.

6. *I have hated them that regard lying vanities: but I trust in the LORD.* "In Jehovah." David had no patience with those who trusted in gods of wood and stone. He knew very little, indeed, of that spurious charity which leads some men to speak respectfully even of idolatry! David was "a good hater" and there is something gracious about that when the thing hated is really hateful and something which ought to be hated!

7. *I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy.* David makes the cymbals clash together—"I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy."

7. *For You have considered my trouble; You have known my soul in adversities.* It is said to be the highest wisdom to know yourself, but, to my mind, it is a much better thing for God to know you! You may know yourself and fall into despair—but if God knows you and you know God, there is abundant room for you to hope in His mercy.

8. *And have not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: You have set my feet in a large room.* "You have given me a broad place to live and You have given me abundance to eat there." So David praises and blesses his God. But now see how the note falls. From the highest point of the scale, he suddenly descends to the very lowest. "We spend our years as a tale that is told"—and such a tale is sometimes very joyful—but sometimes it is full of woe.

9, 10. *Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble: my eyes are consumed with grief, yes, my soul and my belly. For my life is spent with grief and my years with sighing.* Sighing is better than sinning, any day. Though we may deplore that our life melts away in sighs, it is better that it should go so than that it should be wasted in sins.

10, 11. *My strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones are consumed. I was a reproach among all my enemies, but especially among my neighbors, and a fear to my acquaintance: they that did see me outside fled from me.* He was in such a sorry plight that men would not acknowledge him! They were afraid that they should be disgraced by being found

in his company! It is a sad condition for a man of God, like David, to be found in—for others to be afraid to be seen speaking to him.

12. *I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel.* An old pot, flung on the dunghill, as of no further use.

13, 14. *For I have heard the slander of many: fear was on every side: awhile they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life. But I trusted in You, O LORD.* Now the strain will mount again! It is faith that tunes the royal singer so that he rises to heights of joy though just now he had sunk so low!

14, 15. *I said, You are my God. My times are in Your hands.* He had put his spirit there—"Into Your hands I commit my spirit." And now he says, "My times are in Your hands."

15-19. *Deliver me from the hand of my enemies, and from them that persecute me. Make Your face to shine upon Your servant: save me for Your mercies' sake. Let me not be ashamed, O LORD; for I have called upon You: let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave. Let the lying lips be put to silence which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous. Oh how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for them that fear You.* If he was not tasting of it, just then, he blessed God that it was laid up for him, put by in store.

19, 20. *Which You have worked for them that trust in You before the sons of men! You shall hide them in the secret of Your Presence from the pride of man: You shall keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.* What a blessing that is—to be separated from the noise and strife and the malignant calumny of wicked men! God has a blessed way of keeping His servants away from all such evils.

21, 22. *Blessed be the LORD: for He has showed me His marvelous kindness in a strong city. For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before Your eyes: nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications when I cried unto You.* "If we believe not, yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself." The Psalmist was full of doubts and he said, "I am cut off," but, nevertheless, God heard the prayer of His poor mistrusting servant and brought him out of his distresses!

23, 24. *O love the LORD, all you His saints: for the LORD preserves the faithful, and plentifully rewards the proud doer. Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all you that hope in the LORD.*

—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 BAPTIST'S MESSAGE
NO. 2646

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 29, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 2, 1882.

"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" John 1:29.

JOHN was the herald of Christ. He came to bear witness to Him and to prepare the way for Him. In olden times when kings traveled, they were accustomed to send heralds before them to announce their coming, and to prepare the way for them. And I have read that on several occasions the herald wore such gorgeous apparel—adorned with gold and lace—that when he went into some of the towns and villages, the people thought that *he* must be the king, himself! So they made ready to receive him with royal honors. When he said, "No, I am not the king, I have merely come to sound the trumpet and to say that he is coming," they wondered what the king, himself, must be like if his herald was so resplendent—and it is said that in several instances they refused to receive the king when he came, for they said, "The man who told us that he was only your servant was a far finer looking man than you are, and much more grandly dressed." So, when the king arrived and they saw that he was but plainly dressed, as kings usually are when not wearing their state robes, they would not receive him.

Something like that happens with some of Christ's heralds, but it did not occur in the case of John the Baptist. He was not arrayed in soft raiment or rich apparel. He came straight up from the wilderness clothed in a garment of camel's hair and with leather trousers about his loins—and his food was locusts and wild honey. Nor was there anything at all about John's mode of speech which was likely to attract attention to himself and make men think less of his Master when He should come. I wish that all of us, when we go forth as Christ's heralds, crying, "Behold the Lamb of God"—and that is our main business here below—would take care that we were never so grand in our style of thought or language that when the Master, Himself, comes in all His wondrous simplicity, men would begin to despise Him because they remembered the fine tones of His pretended herald! No, let us be simple and plain whenever we have to speak of Christ and when our King, Himself, comes, let us step back and get out of sight, that He, alone, may be seen, and that all the people's hearts may be won to Him.

I have plunged into the middle of my subject at the very beginning of my sermon, for that is the theme on which I want to speak to you. First, I

am going to describe *the true messenger*, John the Baptist, or anyone else who is like he. Then, secondly, I hope to talk about *the true message*—"Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." And then, thirdly, I must say a little upon *the true reception of this message*, telling what they do who really hear and believe the true messenger of God.

I. First, then, let us think of THE TRUE MESSENGER and, as I know that there are many here who try to do good by speaking for the Lord to their fellow men, let this first part of my subject be a lesson in self-examination—not by way of discouragement, but rather of encouragement, I hope, to those whom I am addressing. Who are they who will be acknowledged by Christ, at the Last Great Day, as the true messengers of God? What are the special characteristics by which they may be known?

Well, first, the true messenger is *one who sees the Lord Jesus for himself.* "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him." To be His herald and witness, John must see Jesus and he must see Jesus coming to him. Those Prophets who lived a long while before the coming of Christ were but dim seers compared with John the Baptist. He was like the morning star which is so near the sun that it is the brightest of the stars. We see it shining almost like a little sun and then, when the sun rises in all its brightness, the star disappears. John was "a burning and a shining light" and all who came before him were, in Christ's judgment, inferior to him. He said to the multitudes concerning John, "What did you go out to see? A Prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a Prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who shall prepare Your way before You. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist." This was the difference between John and the Prophets—his sight of Christ was clearer than theirs because he was nearer to Christ. And his view of Christ was brighter, fuller and clearer than that of all who had gone before.

Yet they were also true witnesses to Christ, according to the light they had. Our Savior said to the Jews, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: he saw it and was glad." And if he had not seen Christ by faith, he could not have been one of the witnesses who testified beforehand concerning Him. All the Prophets looked through the haze of the ages and, by faith, perceived their Lord. And then they wrote of Him and spoke of Him to the people. The ancient name for a Prophet was a very instructive one—he was called a *seer*—and you and I, Beloved, must *see* Christ or else we cannot bear witness to Him. As the Prophets saw Christ by faith and as John actually looked upon Him and then bore witness to Him, so must you and I see Him. Not with these *eyes*—that sight is reserved until the Resurrection—but with the eyes of our spirit, with the eyes of our mind and heart we must see Jesus before we can rightly speak of Him.

Are you anxious, my Brother, to go and preach? Have you seen Jesus? If not, what can you say when people ask you, "What is He like? Who is He that we should believe in Him?" You must look unto Him before you can speak of Him and, the more steadfastly you gaze upon Him, His

work, His offices, His humiliation, His glorification, the better will you be able to bear your witness concerning Him. You will then speak more surely and confidently for your God if you can testify concerning that which your heart knows to be true because you have perceived and enjoyed it yourself!

Yes, and if you have seen Him in the past, try to see Him, again, and to be continually "looking unto Jesus." Let not any of us go and talk to our Sunday school class, or preach from the pulpit, or write a letter about our Lord until we have had a fresh glimpse of Him. It is wonderful how nimbly the pen or the tongue moves when the eye has just feasted itself upon Christ! The Psalmist said, "My heart is overflowing with a good theme: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer." When you have, yourself, been with Christ. When you have just come forth from the ivory palaces of communion and fellowship with the Lord Jesus, all your garments will smell of myrrh, aloes and cassia! And your words will have some of the precious savor clinging to them. So again I say that we must see Christ or else we cannot be witnesses to Him.

And, therefore, let us fix our hearts, our thoughts and our meditations so completely upon Christ that when we cry to other men, "Behold the Lamb of God," it will be because we have just beheld Him ourselves! If a man who is blind were to stand up in the street and cry, "Behold," people would be apt to ask, "What can a poor blind man bid us look at? He cannot see anything himself." If you say to the people, "Behold Christ," yet all the while your eyes are turned toward *yourself* and you are wondering whether you will get through the sermon all right—whether you will have a fine conclusion at the end and what the congregation will think of it when you have done—that will be like saying, "Behold!" while you, yourself, are looking the other way! And other people will look in the same direction! They will be sure to do as you *do* and not as you *say*. And if you do not behold Christ, neither will they! Our inward thought, conviction and belief must be in strict accordance with our outward speech, or else we shall misrepresent ourselves—and our message will be poorly delivered and will fall without power upon our hearers.

I also remind you that we must preach Christ as *coming*. "Why," says one, "He *has* come!" I know that He has, but He is coming again. It is a blessed thing that, whereas the Prophets saw Him as coming, they only differed from us in this respect—that we can look *back* to His first coming, as they looked *forward* to it. And we can also look *onward* to His coming a second time, "without sin unto salvation"—and so we are to speak of Him as coming. It is grand preaching when the preacher can see Christ coming, when he can behold the Throne of Judgment set and can gaze upon the King in His beauty sitting upon it, and see Him reigning over all, King of Kings and Lord of Lords! It is glorious when he hears the hallelujahs of the approaching millennial age even while he is preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ! "Lo, He comes," he says, and he sees Him coming, for he is not like the virgins who had fallen asleep and so did not watch for the bridegroom's appearing. Oh, for open eyes, expectant hearts and earnest tongues to see, and long for, and tell of our coming Lord! This is the way the faithful witness preaches Him to the people.

But, next, the true messenger *calls upon men to see Jesus*. He calls them away from seeing other things and bids them look, and, "behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" God-sent servants do not say, "Look to the priest! Look to the altar! Look to the sacraments! Look to yourself—come and confess your sins and I will give you absolution!" No, no, no, no! Forever and forever NO! They do nothing of that sort. The priests of Antichrist do that, but the servants of Christ cry, "Behold the Lamb of God." Our great difficulty is to get men's eyes off themselves, off their works, off their forms and ceremonies, off mere creed-religion and to get them to look at the living Christ who is still among us bearing the sin of all who truly seek His face!

O dear Hearers, I know that I am, in this respect, a faithful witness. Wherever else I fail in my testimony, for my soul's labor and travail, even unto anguish, is to get you away from depending even in the slightest degree upon anything else but what Christ has done! I would not wish you to have the shadow of a shade of a ghost of a pretense of a confidence anywhere out of Christ! Jesus is the *only* hope of sinners! Let Him be A to you, and Z, and all the letters between—the beginning and the end—and the middle and everything else! Take your eyes off all ministers, all books, all feelings and even all believing! Do not even fix your gaze on your own faith. You know that the eye cannot see itself. Did you ever see your own eye? In a mirror, perhaps, you may have done so, but that was only the *reflection* of it and you may, in like manner, see the evidence of your faith, but you cannot look at the faith itself. Faith looks away from itself to the Object of faith, even to Christ! And this is what the true witness desires. He will, if he can, keep men from looking anywhere but on his Master!

Some look at their repentance, but if you cannot keep your eyes on Christ, then away with your repentance! Some are always looking to their faith, but if there is a faith that hides Christ, away with it! Some need feelings and right feelings we may wish to have—but as for those feelings which come between us and Christ, away with them! It is not fit that they should live. Our one business is to get men away from anything and from everything, however good it is, that they may look alone to Christ Jesus, the Lamb of God!

The third mark of a true witness is that *he leads his own disciples to Jesus*. It is generally thought to be a good thing to lead another man's disciples beyond their master, but it is not always so easy to lead our own disciples beyond ourselves. The preacher is often conscious that there are many weak persons who stop short at what he says. To them it is a great help to faith that their pastor or their minister says such-and-such. Well, for lame people, we do not object to crutches for a time, but we always anxiously pray that the faith of these poor cripples may not stand—at least, for any length of time—in the power of man, but in Christ alone! I would say to you what the Apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians, though I wish I could say something that would be worthy to be placed beneath what he said, and so be more suitable for one so much inferior to him. He says, "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." That is, "Let us, ourselves, be accursed if we ever

dare to lead you away from Christ. It is an imprecation upon our own souls if we dare to make ourselves your masters instead of your *servants* for Jesus' sake!"

It was a beautiful trait in the character of John the Baptist that he was so ready to pass on to Christ his own disciples—he did not want to keep them merely to swell the number of his own followers, but only kept them with him until he could point them to his Master. When we try to win souls, if we find that people have confidence in us and affection for us, let us use that influence not to attach them to ourselves except with the earnest desire to pass them on to Christ—that they may become disciples of the Savior for themselves and grow up from being babes who have to be nursed to become strong men in Christ Jesus.

One more thing about John the Baptist which is also a characteristic of the true witness for Christ is that *he lost himself in his Master*. Without a single atom of regret he said, "He must increase, but I must decrease." Oh, how grandly he witnessed for Christ by sinking himself until he was lost in Christ! And my Brother, it must be the same with you—if you would be a true witness for Christ, you must say that which glorifies Him, even though it dishonors yourself! Perhaps there is a very learned man sitting over yonder and the temptation to the preacher is to say something that shall make him feel that the minister to whom he is listening is not so ignorant as some people suppose. But if there is an unlearned, simple sinner anywhere in the place, the preacher's business is just to chop his words down to that poor man's condition and let the learned hearer receive the same message if he will!

Luther said, "When I am preaching, I see Dr. Jonas sitting there, and Oecolampadius, and Melanchthon and I say to myself, 'Those learned doctors know enough already, so I need not trouble about them. I shall fire at the poor people in the aisles.'" That is the way Luther preached and God richly blessed his ministry because he did it. Though he was a truly learned man, he was willing to be reckoned as knowing nothing at all if by that means he could the better serve his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Dear Brothers and Sisters, when you are serving Christ, do not also seek to serve yourself in a sneaking kind of way. It is easily done—under the appearance of glorifying Christ, you may really be extolling yourself. You may even seek to win souls with the view of having the credit of doing it—and if you do, you will spoil the whole work! It must not be so with you. This royal crown must be touched by none but Christ. You and I cannot really put the crown on His head, though we may wish to do so. Christ is greater than that monarch who, when the Pope was about to crown him, took the crown out of his hands and said, "I won it myself, so I will put it on my own head." And Christ must crown Himself! The words we sometimes sing—

"Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all,"

are very good and right, but, after all, Christ is His own Glory and the Holy Spirit truly glorifies Him. How can we be worthy to put the crown on His head when we are not worthy to unloose the laces of His shoes! Oh, what poor things we are! We are not fit to be the dust under His feet! Glory, glory, glory be unto Him and unto Him alone!

Thus I think I have said enough about the true messenger. Aim at being like John the Baptist in these respects, Brothers and Sisters, as God shall help you.

II. But now, secondly, we are to consider THE TRUE MESSAGE which is this—"Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

In these few words we have the substance of the message to be delivered by God's faithful ministers. *First, John declared that God had sent His Son into the world that men might live through Him.* He taught that Jesus of Nazareth is the eternal Son of God, appointed by Him to redeem mankind and that He came into the world on purpose that He might save His people from their sins. Oh, tell this wondrous story! Tell it till every wave bears onward the message and every wind moves it till all born of woman have heard the glad tidings that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." All our hopes spring from Christ and Him crucified! They begin with Him and they end with Him. And whoever believes on Him has everlasting life! But whoever rejects Him by not believing Him, there remains no hope for him—he must be lost forever! There is but one way to Heaven, and that one way is marked by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Further, in telling the true message, we must go on to explain that *Jesus Christ is thus the Savior because He is the one Sacrifice for sin.* This verse reads, in the margin, "Behold the Lamb of God, who *bears* the sin of the world." And in that rendering there is a great Truth of God which is not to be kept back. Christ Jesus did actually bear the sin of His people in His own body on the tree. It was lifted bodily off those whom it would have crushed forever—and it was laid on Him. He was, indeed, the great Sin-Bearer—He who knew no sin was made sin for us, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Now here is a point at which some are always sticking. Robertson, of Brighton, with his magnificent genius, practically taught the Atonement in some such fashion as Dr. Duncan used to say, that Jesus Christ did something or other which, in some way or other, in some degree or other, made it possible for men to be forgiven! That was Robertson's notion of the Atonement, but we say not so! We say that He really took the sin of men upon Himself and who can read that marvelous 53rd Chapter of Isaiah without seeing that this is no figure, no metaphor, but literal Truth of God—"the Lord has made to meet upon Him the iniquity of us all"! So says the Prophet. But what says the Apostle? "Who His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." And I cannot preach the Gospel without proclaiming this great Truth of Christ's atoning Sacrifice and I do not mean to try to do so! I know of no way by which sin can be taken off us except by laying it on Him who was our Surety and our Substitute. And He did take it and He did bear it—and the true messenger, sent from God, tells you that—whatever else he may say or may not say.

And he tells you more than that, namely, what the text says in our Authorized Version. "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away"—as well as takes upon Himself—"the sin of the world." Oh, blessed word—*takes it away*! Where did He take it! I will tell you—"As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." He took the sin

of all Believers away so completely that it sank into the bottom of the sea! God has cast it behind His back and it shall not be mentioned against them any more forever. There is no such thing, now, as the sin of the saints, for Christ has utterly annihilated it. He came to finish transgression and to make an end of sins—and if He made an end of them, there is an end of them—they are gone forever and those who believe in Jesus are washed white as the driven snow and clothed in His matchless righteousness! This is what the true messenger has to tell, that Jesus bore the sin of His people and that He took it right away. Oh, what joyous work is ours!

This is to be our message—we are to *set Christ forth as the Object of faith*. We are to say to men, "Behold the Lamb of God." Is that all the sinner has to do? Yes, behold Him! Never was there another Savior like Christ Jesus our Lord. The mere looking at Him saves the soul! Whoever looks to Christ lives by that look and shall live forever. There is not a sinner in Hell who ever looked on Christ with the eyes of faith—and there never shall be such a soul! And all who are in Heaven entered there simply through beholding the slain Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. Would you get there, young man? Then behold the Lamb of God and you shall get there! There is life in a *look* at the Lamb of God. Would you get there, poor sinner, driven and hunted about by the devil? Then behold the Lamb of God! Do but look out of the corner of your eye, if that is all that you can do. Look through your blinding tears. Look through the mists and clouds that surround you. Do but look unto Jesus and, as every bitten one who looked at the bronze serpent, lived, so every sick soul that looks to Christ shall live—and live forever!

That is the Gospel, and it is a blessed Gospel to have to preach! And blessed is the messenger who proclaims boldly and plainly, in the name of Jesus, saying on Christ's behalf, "Look unto Him, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth. Look and live." May many do so at this very moment!

III. Now I close by turning to the third head of my discourse which is THE TRUE RECEPTION OF THE MESSAGE. How can I truly receive this true message of the true messenger? Well, Brothers and Sisters, if we, by faith, "behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world," observe what we shall do.

First, *we shall follow Jesus.* Read from the 35th verse to the 37th — "Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, Behold the Lamb of God! The two disciples heard him speak and they followed Jesus." That is to say, they did behold the Lamb of God and, believing in Him, they followed Him. And if you have really believed in Christ, you will try to walk in His footprints. You will call Him Master and Lord. He will be your Leader and Commander and you will willingly follow where He leads and cheerfully do what He commands. Christ has not come to give you license to sin, but He has brought you to liberty from sin. Blessed liberty! If you do, indeed, thus look to Christ, follow Him at once! Become His disciple, do what He bids you, feeling that it is—

"Yours not to reason why,
Yours not to make reply"

but just to do as He commands—and believe what He teaches by the implicit faith which yields itself up entirely to Him. This is the test of real faith in Jesus, that the man is no more his own master, but takes Jesus to be his Master and follows wherever He leads.

The next thing that happens with those who give a true reception to the message is that *they want to abide with Christ.* The two disciples followed Jesus and, "They said unto Him, Master, where do You dwell?' He said unto them, "Come and see. They came and saw where He dwelt and remained with Him that day." I do not know where He dwelt. I am sure that it was not a very luxurious mansion and, in later days, he had nowhere to lay His head. But as soon as ever these men had looked to Him and followed Him, they wanted to live with Him! Oh, that is the highest joy of a Christian, to live with Christ! A look of faith saves the soul because it is the beginning of a life of living with Christ forever and ever! I am afraid that some of God's people fail to realize this blessed living with Christ. They get a little joy and they seem very pleased with it, but in a little time they lose it. Why is that? Because they rejoiced merely in *their own joy* and when a man does that, he will soon lose it. It is as old Master Brooks says, "If a loving husband were to give his wife earrings, bracelets, jewels and then, instead of loving him for his gifts, she began to be in love with his presents and cared little for him, he would be inclined to take them away from her so as to have all her love for himself."

And surely it is so with Christ. He puts the earring of holy joy in His bride's ears and she begins to say, "Oh, how joyful I am!" No, no, do not talk like that! I heard one, the other day, bragging about his own holiness and I thought to myself, "That holiness which talks about itself is an unholy holiness." Do you think that holiness is a thing to be proclaimed about the streets, or set up for a show? Oh, no! As I think of the thrice-holy God, I lay my face in the very dust before Him. O Brothers and Sisters, true holiness is something very different from this tinsel stuff that men, in these days, boast about as they beat their drums! True holiness beats on its breast and gets away into its place of secret communion—and if it has any beauties, it shows them only to the Lord in secret, with many a blush and many a lament that it is not much more nearly what it ought to be. O Beloved, may God grant us Grace to follow Jesus and to live with Jesus!

I said that some of God's people do not seem to understand this living with Jesus, but why should not we? Why need we have doubts and fears? Why need we get away from Christ? Had we but the faith He deserves and believed in Him as He ought to be believed in, we might go from joy to joy and so ascend to Heaven as on a ladder of light! God give us this Grace of living with Christ! It is to be had by those who seek it aright.

Then, lastly, the proof which these people, who had seen Christ and followed Him, gave that they had really found Him was *that they went and tried to bring others to Him.* They said to their kinsfolk and acquaintances, "We have found the Messiah!" "We have found Jesus!" Ah, you have never truly found Jesus if you do not tell others about Him! You know how children act—we ought to be children in all things before God. If a little child, in its rambles, were to find honey and its brothers and

sisters were all around, I feel certain that it would give such a cry after it had first sucked its own fingers, that all of them would soon be plunging their hands into the honey, too! You have never tasted its sweetness if it has not made you cry, "Come here! Was there ever such joy as this? Was there ever such delight, such rapture as this?" It is the instinct of true children of God to desire to fetch others in to taste and see that the Lord is good—to share the unspeakable bliss which is already their own!

Many of you are coming to the Lord's Table. As you come to it, I would whisper in your ear, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" Never mind that bread and wine unless you can use them as poor old folks often use their spectacles. What do they use them for? To look at? No, to look *through* them. So, use the bread and wine as a pair of spectacles—look through them and do not be satisfied until you can say, "Yes, yes, I can see the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" Then shall the Communion be really what it ought to be to you. God make it so, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 1:19-51; MATTHEW 4:12-24.

John 1:19, 20. *And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who are you? And he confessed, and denied not, but confessed, I am not the Christ.* "I am not the One anointed of God to save mankind."

21. *And they asked him, Who then? Are you Elijah?* "Are you Elijah come back to earth?"

21. *And he said, I am not.* For, though indeed he was the true *spiritual* Elijah who was to come as the forerunner of the Messiah, yet, in the sense in which they asked the question, the only truthful answer was, "I am not."

21. *Are you that Prophet?* The long-expected prophet foretold by Moses?

21-23. *And he answered, No. Then they said unto him, Who are you, that we may give an answer to them that sent us? What do you say of yourself? He said, I am the voice.* That is all. A voice and nothing more. John did not profess to be the Word—he was only the voice which vocalized that Word and made it audible to human ears. He came to bear witness to the Christ, but he was not, himself, the Christ. "I am the voice"

23-27. *Of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the Prophet Isaiah. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. and they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptize you then, if you are not that Christ, nor Elijah, neither that Prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there stands One among you, whom you know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe laces I am not worthy to unloose.* How wisely does God always choose and fashion His servants! John is evidently just the man for his place—he bears testimony to Christ very clearly. He earnestly turns away all attention from himself to his Master and he has such a reverent esteem for Him of whom he is the herald that he puts all honor and glory upon Him.

28-30. *These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing, The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. This is He of whom I said, after me comes a Man which is preferred before me: for He was before me.* You know, dear Friends, that Christ existed from all eternity, so, in very truth, He *was* before John. You know, too, the glory and the excellency of our Divine Master, so that, in another sense, He was and is before John and all other creatures whom He has made.

31-34. *And I knew Him not: but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bore record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.* The secret sign of the descent of the Spirit, in dove-like form, upon our Lord, was given to John. And as soon as he saw it, he knew for sure that Jesus was the Sent One, the Messiah, and that he must point Him out to the people.

35, 36. *Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, Behold the Lamb of God!* This was the same text from which he had preached the day before and it was the same sermon, somewhat shortened. So should it be with us—

"His only righteousness I show,
His saving truth proclaim
'Tis all my business here below
To cry, 'Behold the Lamb!'"

37. *The two disciples heard him speak and they followed Jesus.* Thus John was losing his own disciples. By his testimony to the Truth of God, he was sending them to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. And he did it well and gracefully. There are many who would find it a hard task to reduce the number of their disciples, but it was not so with John.

38-46. *Then Jesus turned and saw them following, and said to them, What do you seek? They said unto Him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master) where do You dwell? He said unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where He dwelt, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour). One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother, Simon, and said unto him, We have found the Messiah, (which is, being interpreted, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, He said, You are Simon the son of Jonah: you shall be called Cephas, (which is by interpretation, A Stone). The following day Jesus wanted to go into Galilee, and found Philip, and said unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael, and said unto him, We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law, and the Prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip said unto him, Come and see.* It was all a *seeing Gospel*. John said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" Then Jesus said, "Come and see." And now Philip says the same. Faith is that blessed sight by which we discern the Savior! Whoever looks to Christ by faith shall live!

47. *Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him and said of him, Behold an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no guile!* "There is no craft or deception in this man, as there was in Jacob; he is a true Israelite, like Israel at his best."

48. *Nathanael said unto Him, How do You know me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.* What Nathanael had been doing there, we do not know. Probably he had been meditating, or he may have been engaged in prayer. But this announcement was proof to Nathanael that Jesus could see all things and read men's hearts—and know what they were doing in their chosen retreats. "When you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Christ knows all of you who came in here tonight, in a prayerful spirit, seeking Him! And whenever men are seeking Him, you can be sure that He is also seeking them!

49. *Nathanael answered and said unto Him, Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel.* "You saw what I was doing in secret and by that token I perceive that You are God's own Son."

50. *Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these.* Those who are ready to believe Christ, on what may be thought to be slender evidence, shall "see greater things than these." "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." They shall gaze upon a wonderful sight, by-and-by!

51. *And He said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter you shall see Heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.* "You are a true Israelite, and you shall have Israel's vision. You shall see the same sight as your father, Jacob, saw when he fell asleep with a stone for his pillow! Only your vision shall be far grander than his." Christ always knows how to meet the needs of our hearts and to give us something in accordance with our own expressions, and to make His answers fit our requests—only He always far exceeds all that we ask or even think, blessed be His holy name!

Matthew 4:12. *Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, He departed into Galilee.* Notice that there were at that time only two great ministers of God, John the Baptist, he must go to prison and to death—Jesus, the Son of God, He must go to the desert to be tempted of the devil. If any Christians escape temptation, they will not be the leaders of the hosts of God! Those who stand in the van must bear the brunt of the battle. Oh, that all who are called to such responsible positions might be as prepared to occupy them as John was and as Jesus was!

13-16. *And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali: that it might he fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the Prophet, saying, The land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which eat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.* Oh, the tender mercy of our God! Where the darkness is the deepest, there the Light of God shines the brightest! Christ selects such dark regions as Naphtali and Zebulun that He may dwell there and shine in all His Glory.

17. *From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* He was not afraid to give an earnest exhortation to sinners and to bid men repent. He knew better than we do the inability of men concerning all that is good, yet He bade them repent!

18-23. *And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon, called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And He said unto them, Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets and followed Him. And going on from there, He saw two more brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. And He called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed Him. And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.* I like those words, "all manner"—that is, Christ met every kind and every sort of sickness and disease. Perhaps you, dear Friend, are afflicted in your soul after a very peculiar fashion. Yes, but this great Physician heals all manner of diseases! None are excluded from the list of patients whom He can cure! Twice the words, "all manner," are used—"Healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people."

24. *And His fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatics and those that had the palsy; and He healed them.* Our Lord Jesus lived as in a hospital while He was on earth! Wherever He went, the sins and sorrows of men were all open before His sympathetic gaze. But oh, what joy it must have been to Him to be able to deal so well with them all! Am I addressing any who are sick in soul? Our Master is used to cases just like yours! Your malady is not new to Him. He has healed many like you—of all that were brought to Him, it is written, "He healed them." Lie before Him, now, in all your sin and misery, and breathe the prayer, "Son of David, have mercy on me," and He will surely hear you and heal you, for He delights to bless and save all who trust Him!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN ROOK"—492, 331, 276.

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

PREPARATION NECESSARY FOR THE COMMUNION
NO. 2647

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 5, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING IN THE AUTUMN OF 1857.

"Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup."
1 Corinthians 11:28.

WE do not hold it right to admit all persons indiscriminately to the Lord's Supper—we believe the Lord's Table is the place of communion—and we would have none there with whom we cannot have true Christian fellowship. We can commune with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ, however different may be their views upon some points of doctrine. So long as we find it possible to have fellowship with them, we believe it to be our duty to welcome them to the Supper of our Lord. When, through unholiness of life, lack of piety, or unsoundness in the fundamental Truths of the Gospel on the part of those who apply to us to be received as communicants, we feel that we cannot commune with them, we hold it to be our bounden duty, as God has given us authority in His Church, to prevent those from drawing near unto the Table who would but commune unworthily and so eat and drink unto themselves judgment—as the Word in the 29th verse should be translated. Among our Baptist Churches, fashioned, we trust, somewhat nearer to the Scriptural order than certain others we know of, we do exercise at least some measure of discipline. We require from those who are members of the Church and who are, by reason of that membership, entitled to commune, that they should, at their reception, give us what we consider satisfactory proofs of their conversion. And we require of them, afterwards, that their conduct should be consistent with the Law of Christ. Otherwise, we would not, in the first place, receive them, or, having received them, we would not be long before, by the Scriptural process of excommunication, we would remove from our midst those members whose lives and conversation were not in accordance with the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

But, my Brothers and Sisters, do what we may—though we fence the table with the utmost diligence—and though we continually warn you not to deceive us. And not to deceive yourselves, seeing that you cannot deceive God—yet are we perfectly aware that the greater part of the guarding of the Table must rest with yourselves. We believe it to be our bounden duty, as God shall give us Grace, to take care, so far as we can,

that unworthy persons are not received at the Lord's Table. Yet man being mortal, is fallible and erring, so we cannot judge you and we must leave the greater part of your examination, before you come to the sacred Table of the Master, with yourselves. Remember, dear Friends, that no recognition by the minister, no reception by the deacons or elders of a Church will excuse you for coming to the Lord's Table if, when you come, you are not a really converted person. It is true that you cannot come there unless the Church, itself, consents to your coming—but the Church takes upon itself none of the responsibility of your fitness. It says to you, "You may come to the Communion Table, but if you have deceived us, on your own head is the sin! And if you are not what you profess to be—true believers in Christ—your unlawful observance of the ordinance must be accounted for, at the Last Great Day, among the rest of your transgressions."

And I do now, most solemnly and earnestly, as the Pastor of this Church, in the name and on behalf of this Church, warn all men and women now about to draw near unto this Table that if they are not God's children and have no faith in Christ, they stop before they, with sacrilegious hands, touch the elements of this sacred Supper! We would have them know that it can be of no service to them, but will increase their sin and add to their guilt if they, after such a warning as this, come to the Master's Table without having examined themselves and without being thoroughly persuaded in their hearts that they have been born of God—let that thought have due weight with all intending communicants—and if some of them even withdraw from the Table as the result of this fencing of it, I shall rejoice that they have had the honesty to do what is right.

I. Now, Beloved, turning from that point for a little while, I would remind you that THERE IS A PREPARATION NECESSARY FOR RECEIVING THE LORD'S SUPPER ARIGHT.

In certain churches, among persons who are only nominally religious—mere formalists and ceremonialists—it has been customary to set apart a whole week for preparation. And you may remember how Mr. Rowland Hill, in his *Village Dialogues*, tells of Mistress Too-Good, who, after spending a whole week in preparation for the Lord's Supper, found that it was not to be administered till the next Sabbath—whereupon she fell into a great passion and cursed and swore because she said that she had wasted a week! I doubt not that there have been some who have made a kind of hypocritical preparation which would have been better omitted. I do not exhort you to do any such thing! But if a right thing is abused, that is no reason why we should not use it properly. Everyone of us, before we come to the Supper of the Lord, ought to have prepared our hearts, under the help of the Holy Spirit, for a right participation. We are not to rush to our Master's Table as a horse runs into the battle, not knowing where it is going! We are not to come to this sacred Feast as we go to a meal in our own houses. We are not to partake of the emblems of the body and blood of Christ as we would sit down at our common tables to eat and drink.

We are to come here with devout solemnity and due preparation. Nor may we expect to receive a blessing, in the reception of the Supper,

unless we have properly prepared ourselves for it before we come here. Alas, this is too much forgotten—and men think they may draw near to God without making any preparation whatever! Not so was it with the ancient saints. When Jacob was going to build an altar and to sacrifice to the Lord at Bethel, he felt it necessary to bid his family to put away all their strange gods from among them. When God was about to appear on Sinai, He commanded the people to purify themselves because He was coming near to them. And not only was it so in olden times, but it should be so now. We should not draw near unto God with hasty and careless steps, but we must remember and obey Solomon's injunction—"Keep your foot when you go to the House of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they consider not that they do evil." As Moses took his shoes off because the place whereon he stood was holy ground, so ought we, my Brothers and Sisters, to put away all carnal thoughts and all worldly things when we approach this most sacred circle—a circle even more hallowed than that which surrounded the burning bush, for this surrounds the cross of Calvary, the death place of our Lord and Master—

"Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
Which before the Cross I spend,
Life, and health, and peace possessing,
From the Sinner's dying Friend!
Here I'll sit forever viewing
Mercy's streams in streams of blood!
Precious drops my soul bedewing,
Plead and claim my peace with God!
Truly blessed is this station,
Low before His Cross to lie
While I see Divine compassion
Floating in His languid eyes!
Here it is I find my Heaven,
While upon the Cross I gaze.
Love I much? I've more forgiven—
I'm a miracle of Grace!
May I still enjoy this feeling,
In all need to Jesus go
Prove His wounds each day more healing,
And Himself more fully know."

Let me press upon your consideration two or three thoughts with regard to what is necessary in a proper preparation for the Lord's Supper. First, I think, *before coming to the Lord's Table, every professing Christian should occupy himself, in some measure, in contemplation and meditation.* We ought not to come here without due consideration of what we are about to do. We ought to consider, in the first place, that we are coming into the more immediate Presence of God. It is true that during Divine service in the House of God we are especially in the Presence of the Most High, but when, at eventide, we eat and drink the Supper of the Master, we get nearer to Him than we do in any of our other religious exercises, with the solitary exception of the ordinance of Believers' Baptism. This Communion service has about it something so humbling, so tender, so full of fellowship—bringing us so near to Christ—while Christ is so near to us, that we ought not to come to it without feeling that we are entering

into the immediate courts of the Most High! And, surely, if the contemplation of God makes the angels veil their faces with their wings, it should make us come to this Table with great reverence and solemnity of spirit.

We ought, in the next place, before we come here, *contemplate the authority upon which we celebrate this ordinance*. If any of you come to this Table because I administer the ordinance, or because your parents partake of it, or because, according to the old orthodox doctrine of the Baptist Churches, this is regarded as being a Divine ordinance, you have made a mistake! It is your duty, in the reception of the Lord's Supper, or the observance of the ordinance of Baptism, to consider the authority by which you do it and to be certain that, in coming here, you are doing God's will and that you are performing that which God has commanded you. If you come not to the Communion as to a Divine ordinance, you come not to it aright. If you merely partake of it as a matter of form, instead of knowing that God has commanded the form and that His Son, Jesus Christ, is embodied in it, you have not the preparation which you ought to have in coming here.

Again, before coming to the Communion, *it behooves you to consider the great distance there is between you and God*. Even though you now have very blessed and hallowed fellowship with the Lord Jesus, remember that in this Supper, there is a memorial of *your guilt*. It is true that you see here how your sins were taken away by the broken body and the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, but let the very bath in which you were cleansed remind you of your sinfulness! And, oh, my Brothers and Sisters, when we sit here, let us not eat and drink in a showy manner, as if we were doing some praiseworthy act, but let us do it as if we felt that we were not fit to sit on the lowest seat of the Church of Christ. God grant that this may be a time when we shall humble ourselves and cast ourselves in the very dust before Him! We might, instead of being at the Table of the Lord, have been sitting on the ale-bench. We might have been drinking the cup of devils and holding communion with Belial—but Grace, Free Grace, has brought us here! Let us abase ourselves in the Presence of God. Let us humble ourselves before Him and, while we feed, by faith, on our Master's body, let us feel as if our own proud flesh were cut away and humbled by the very communion we hold with Christ, our Redeemer.

Then, Christian, this should be a further subject of contemplation before you come here—*you should have a right idea of the Savior, whose body and blood are here typified to you*. I think we should not come to this ordinance unless we have, for some time at least, devoutly considered the broken body, the shed blood, the sufferings, the agonies, the death and the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us all, before we sit at this Table, remember whose death it is we commemorate here. We should view the Savior as the Son of God and then as the Son of Man, born of the Virgin Mary. We should view Him as He walks along His way of sorrow. We should seek, by earnest contemplation, to view Him prostrate in the Garden, to see Him plowed with bloody furrows at Gabbatha and to behold Him dying amid terrible tortures upon the hill of

Calvary. Unless, my Brothers and Sisters, we have done this, or are enabled by God's Spirit in a special manner to do this, now, we must not expect to derive any benefit from the mere eating of the bread and drinking of the wine. You might eat your bread and drink your wine at home. You might be taking your ordinary suppers. You might break your crusts and drink from your cups in your own houses. But of what use would all of this be? They would not be the Lord's Supper and neither shall *this* be the Lord's Supper to you unless your hearts are occupied with a devout contemplation of the Presence of God, of your own nothingness before Him and of the glorious Sacrifice and Atonement of Jesus Christ evidently set forth before you.

In the next place, *not only contemplation, but supplication should form a part of our preparation for this Supper*. If we acted aright, we would never come, even to the *hearing* of a sermon, without prayer! Were our hearts in a proper spiritual condition, we would never leave our houses to go to the House of Prayer without first supplicating God to help the minister and to help us! We would never leave the tents of Jacob without asking that the pillar of cloud might be manifestly seen resting upon the tabernacle of Israel. We would, when we come up to God's sanctuary, breathe a prayer the moment we enter it, crying out for the Holy Spirit to rest upon us during this day. And certainly, if we ever neglect prayer before holy duties, it should never be omitted before this sacred Supper! O my Brothers and Sisters, I fear that many of us have lost the sweetness of this ordinance because we have forgotten to pray for a blessing upon it! It was but this very day that I found myself preparing to come to this place without having, first of all, sought fellowship with Jesus—and I felt grieved and vexed within my spirit that I should have been so guilty as to have forgotten the solemnities to which I was about to attend! And, by His Grace, I sought at once to spend some time in silent meditation and prayer to God. So should every Church member do likewise.

Oh, what blessed communion services would we have then! We would not go away from the Table of the Lord barren and cold, as we often have done, blaming the minister because we think he has not spoken with sufficiently affecting words and has not distributed the sacred elements in a profitable manner. Whereas the fault has been in ourselves and not in the minister—and we have been eating and drinking unworthily. And, as the judgment upon that wrong state of heart, we have found the Lord's Table, itself, to be barren instead of proving it to be the King's banqueting house and a feast of fat things to our souls!

II. Now, Beloved, I ask you to notice that MY TEXT GIVES US THE BEST PART OF PREPARATION, WHICH IS SELF-EXAMINATION. "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup."

How many of us have thus examined ourselves? I fear many of us have come here without any self-examination whatever. Well, then, let us begin at once to examine ourselves and, during the little interval between this service and the time of the administration of the Supper, perhaps it might not be amiss if you were to read over the hymn which we sometimes sing, from which you can see what are the questions incumbent

upon you to ask yourselves in self-examination and what are the marks of those who have the right to sit down at the Table of the Lord—

"The sacred Word declares them such,
Whose hearts are changed by Sovereign Grace,
Who place their confidence and hope
In Jesus' blood and righteousness.
Who know the Truth and in the ways
Of holiness direct their feet.
Who love communion with the saints
And shun the place where scorners meet.
With past attainments not content,
Increasing purity they seek.
By whom uprightness is maintained
In all they do, and all they speak.
These are the men whom God invites,
For them the Church sets wide her door,
Whatever their birth or rank may be,
The bond, the free, the rich, the poor!"

This hymn suggests some solemn questions which none of us ought to have ventured here without having answered. And I think many of us can easily answer them. My Brothers and Sisters, *have we not been changed by Sovereign Grace?* Can we not, each one, say, "By the Grace of God I am what I am and I am not, now, what I was once"? Can we not, unless we are awfully deceived, say, with unfaltering lips, "We know whom we have believed and we are persuaded that we have been born again"? If we *cannot* say so—O my Friends, if any one of you cannot say so, I charge you, before God, before Jesus Christ and the elect angels—if you cannot say that you believe and know that you have been born again, do not come and profane this Table of the Master by *daring* to sit with the saints while you are unrenewed and not begotten again unto a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead!

How many of you are among those whom the hymn next describes?—

"Who place their confidence and hope
In Jesus' blood and righteousness."

I know that, by God's Grace, it is so with many of us. I have no other hope! No rock, no refuge for my weary spirit is there beside the Atonement of Jesus Christ. I trust you can say so, too, my dear Friends. But if you cannot. If you are resting anywhere else but in Jesus. If you have any dependence upon rites or ceremonies or good works, I again solemnly command you by the Judge of the quick and the dead—venture not to this Table to receive the Lord's Supper—for, in so doing, you would but eat and drink unworthily, not having faith in Jesus and confidence in His precious blood.

Can you say, also, as the hymn does, that *you know the Truth and that in the ways of holiness you direct your feet?* I fear we must all confess that we cannot say this as much as we would desire. Let us, however, still make it a point of self-examination. Come, Friend, it is now a month since the last time you sat down at this Table—what have you done during this time? How have your steps been directed? How has your speech been ordered? What about your acts towards God? Towards man? Make this a time of turning over the pages of your diary for the last month. Come, Brothers and Sisters, let us examine ourselves and so let us eat of

this bread, and drink of this cup. It cannot be an unprofitable exercise which is commanded in our text, so let us obey it! Let us now question ourselves. Are we truly the Lord's? If He should say to us, as He said to His disciples, "One of you shall betray Me," what would we say? Let us, each one, ask the question now, "Lord, is it I?" Have we, like Judas, been plotting against the Master? Have we been robbing the Lord's treasury, depriving Him of what we promised in our vows? Not giving Him the time and service which we solemnly pledged to give Him?

Let us look again at our hymn. *Have we broken the communion of saints during the last months?* Have we not, by anger and wrath and bitterness, injured our own spirituality when we have been talking against the children of God? Have we not felt that we have broken the sacred link which united us with them? Have we washed the saints' feet this month? Have we not rather bemired and befouled them by going astray, ourselves, and leading them astray, too? Have we humbled ourselves during the last month? Have we taken the towel and girded ourselves, as Jesus did, to do menial work for the Church? Has there not been too much pride creeping into all our services? Has it not marred all our deeds and spoiled our best endeavor? And how about prayer? Have we not been sadly negligent in that holy exercise? And with regard to love to our Master, have not our hearts been too often cold towards Him, who had His heart set open for us, that all the blood therein might be spilt in one great torrent for our sakes?

O Friends, I cannot suggest all the questions that you have need to ask yourselves in such an examination as our text enjoins! Begin from the last Communion evening and go through the Sundays, through the Mondays, and Tuesdays, and Wednesdays, and all through the weeks—and then surely both you and I will have work enough to do, during the next hour, to examine ourselves! Ah, we ought to have done it *before*, that we might be able, now, to apply ourselves more solemnly to Communion rather than to self-examination. But now I entreat you once again, as I am bound to do, to be faithful to my God—if you are lovers of our Lord Jesus Christ. If you are faithful to the Truth of God. If you have been really converted—if you have partaken of the Holy Spirit—I invite you to the Master's Table and may the Spirit of God rest on you! But, as an honest minister, I warn you who are not what you should be from coming to this Table. Oh, if any of you have been mere professors and hypocrites, I charge you not to come here! As in your dying day you shall remember your deeds of formality and hypocrisy, I beseech you, do not dare to touch that bread with unhallowed lips, nor sip that wine! Do not take them unless you feel that you have God's Spirit within you and are really united to the Lamb!

I fear there are some of you who have, for many months received these emblems, who would this night, for the first time, leave them untasted if you really knew yourselves! There are some in this Church, I grieve to say, with whom I can hold but very little fellowship by reason of the hard words they sometimes utter against certain of us because of some little difference of opinion. And there are many others with whom we can have no communion at all because their lives are so unholy and their conduct

is so un-Christian that, though they are sound enough in the faith, we can but wonder that they know so much of the Truth and yet have so little of the spirit of Christ in them. Ah, dear Friends, it is not all gold that glitters, and all *professors* are not *possessors*! There are some in Christ's Church everywhere and God forbid that I should flatter this Church—there are some even here—who are enough to tear the church in two by their bitterness, and wrath, and evil speaking! There are others who are enough to bring down God's rod upon us for their unholy living—yes, and the very best of us, the Johns and the Enochs—have they not cause to humble themselves on account of their manifold shortcomings and misdoings? Let all professors of religion examine themselves lest it should be found that they have been deceiving themselves and others—have trusted in themselves that they were righteous when they had not passed from death unto life!

Ah, Friends! I cannot speak with the solemnity I would desire to command on such an occasion as this. I cannot bar this table, God forbid that I should do so!—from any one of you—come and welcome all you who love the Lord Jesus! But although I cannot force back any of you who are not converted. Though I cannot thrust you away if you have the right to come, because you are members of this Church or of some other, I do, as far as human power can have any influence with you, solemnly warn you not to come to the Communion unless you are really regenerated by the Holy Spirit! I would rather have six members in my Church, who are living souls in Zion, than 600 mere professors. O Lord God, sift and fan this Church yet again! If any are only chaff, drive them out of it, or make them Your wheat, that they may be housed in Your barn and not be burned up with unquenchable fire! O Lord, make each of us sincere! Impress upon our minds the solemnity of this act and when we draw near unto this Table, may it be especially under Your smile and with Your benediction, through Jesus Christ our Lord! To God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, be glory forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 116.

I knew a godly woman who, when she was very sick, would always say, "Read me the 116th Psalm." It is deservedly a great favorite with many experienced Christians. May the Holy Spirit apply it to our hearts as we read it!

Verse 1. *I love the LORD, because He has heard my voice and my supplications.* It is a great condescension on God's part to listen to us. You know what a comfort it is to find a sympathetic listener who will let you tell out your griefs. It is not wise to tell them to everybody, but there are some who have an ear into which it is both pleasant and profitable to pour the story of our woes. Because God had listened to the voice of His servant's supplications, David therefore said, "I love the Lord." Nothing will make us love God better than the assurance that He hears our prayers. We could not love a deaf God, so, when Jehovah does attend to

our voice and our supplications, we feel drawn more closely than ever to Him.

2. *Because He has inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live.* That same blessed experience which is a reason for love is also an argument for continued prayer. "As He has heard me, He shall still hear me. As He has listened to me, He shall listen to me again—at least, it shall not be for lack of my cries that He does not listen." That expression, "He has inclined His ear unto me," seems to me to mean, "He has stooped down to me to catch my faintest words. He has been favorable to me. He has smiled as He has heard my broken prayers and cries. He has inclined His ear unto me. It was not a mere hearing such as His Omniscience might warrant me to expect—it was such a favorable hearing as only Infinite Love would have given to me and, oh, if He is so favorable as to hear, can I be so ungrateful as not to pray?" Here was the case that David had laid before the Lord.

3. *The sorrows of death compassed me.* Just as the dogs surround the poor stag and shut him in the fatal circle.

3. *And the pains of Hell got hold upon me.* They set their teeth into him as the dogs do into the stag.

3. *I found trouble and sorrow.* He was in a double grief—he had trouble outside and sorrow within—it was troubled sorrow and sorrowful trouble, wormwood mingled with gall.

4. *Then called I upon the name of the LORD.* That was the very best time to pray. Satan does his utmost to prevent our praying when we are in extremities, but, oh, dear Friends, if Jonah prayed in the whale's belly, where can you and I be where we may not and cannot pray? If we sat down upon the very doorstep of Hell—yes, if the Pit opened her mouth to swallow us up, we might still pray! And the mercy is, that while we are on praying ground we are also on the ground of Grace where God can meet with us! "Then called I upon the name of the Lord."

4. *O LORD, I beseech You, deliver my soul.* It was a short prayer—an eager, earnest petition—full of passionate importunity. There was no dictating to God how the deliverance should be worked. "I beseech You, deliver my soul. Do it in Your own way. Do it in the way that will bring most glory to You. If You do not deliver my body, yet deliver my soul. If my goods must go. If all I have must melt away, yet, O Jehovah, I beseech You, deliver my soul!" This is one of the best prayers in the whole Bible. It is very much like the publican's prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

5. *Gracious is the LORD, and righteous.* That is a strange combination which the ungodly cannot understand. It is a riddle never to be read except at the Cross! "Gracious is the Lord, and righteous." That is what every troubled conscience wants to know—how God can be just and yet can pardon sin—but we who have believed in Jesus do know! It is our joy to say, "Gracious is the Lord, and righteous."

5. *Yes, our God is merciful.* I always feel inclined to mispronounce that word, or to divide it into two, and read it, "Our God is mercy full," for so He is—He is brimming over with mercy!

6. *The LORD preserves the simple.* The sincere—sometimes the ignorant—those who do not pretend to know. Or, the simple, those from whose heart the Lord has driven out all guile, making them to be simple-minded. They are such fools (as the world calls them) as to be believers in the Lord Jesus Christ—and that is to perform the highest act of wisdom on the part of man! They are such simpletons as to believe the old, old Bible, and to cling to the great atoning Sacrifice, and to let the novelties of modern thought blow away like the down of the thistle in the summer breeze! "The Lord preserves the simple." How did David know that? Listen.

6. *I was brought low and He helped me.* There is no way of knowing a general doctrine so good as that of having a particular experience of it! "I was brought low, brought to be a simpleton, brought so very low that I was obliged to pray a simple prayer—brought so very, very low that I was obliged to have a simple faith in God—for I had nobody else to believe in and nobody else to trust. 'I was brought low, and He helped me.'" What a help that is—a help in which God virtually does it all—for our poor weakness, with its best attempts, would rather hinder than help.

7. *Return unto your rest, O my soul; for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.* Poor dove, you are dropping into the water. Your wings can scarcely sustain you—come back to Noah—"Return unto your Noah, O my soul!" That is the Old Testament reading of it and the New Testament rendering is, "Return unto your Jesus, O my soul, for He is your true rest! Get back to Him, 'for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.' In past times, when you were dwelling with Him in close communion, it was better with you than it is now, that you have wandered from Him. Return, return, poor prodigal, for there is every inducement to bring you back! In your Father's house there is bread enough and to spare. He never stinted you. 'The Lord has dealt bountifully with you' and He is dealing bountifully with you even now in giving you the opportunity to come back, in giving you the power to pray and in permitting you to go to the blood-sprinkled Mercy Seat."

8. *For You have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.* Just now he prayed, "Deliver my soul." He has received the answer to his petition, for he says, "You have delivered my soul from death." He said nothing, then, about his eyes, but God gives exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. He did not say anything about his feet, but the Lord gave him a blessing for them, also—"You have delivered my feet from falling." Oh, for an all-over blessing, a blessing from head to foot—from the eyes that stream with tears to the feet that are slipping away from under us! A blessing that begins within by delivering the soul and then works its way into the very countenance and makes it resplendent with joy and thankfulness and gets into the daily life, helping us to march boldly along the slippery way! Glory be to God! He has given this deliverance to many of us!

9. *I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.* "I will not care who sees me so long as He sees me. I will court no presence but His Presence, 'I will walk before Jehovah.'" It is grand walking under a constant sense of the Lord's inspection and a delightful consciousness of His

smile! This is like Enoch's walk and you know how it ends, for Enoch could not die for the life of him—he walked so near to God that he did not pass into Heaven by the ordinary road—he "was not, for God took him." And we, too, though we may die as to these bodies, know that we shall never die as to our souls, for He has given to us who have believed in Jesus, eternal life! And we can never die or be separated from Him.

10. *I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted.* "I believed." Come, Friends, can you all say that? It is a blessed thing for you if you can say that when the sorrows of death compass you and the pains of the grave lay hold upon you. That is glorious faith which says, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." "I believed, therefore have I spoken." Faith is not a dumb Grace of God—it will make its voice heard.

11. *I said in my haste, All men are liars.* You see, he had once spoken in the power of the flesh. It was well, therefore, that he should now speak in the power of faith. "I said in my haste, All men are liars." But it was true for all that, for they will fail us if we trust them instead of the Lord. Yet, in another sense, they are not all liars, so David retracts the hasty words which might have a double meaning and might imply what he did not intend, or what he should not mean. See how quickly he turns away from this unpleasant subject! Note what comes next.

12. *What shall I render unto the LORD for all His benefits toward me?* "There," he seems to say, "put all men away, I have done with them. If they are all liars, let us say no more about them, but let us turn to God." When you, dear Friends, are disappointed with men, do not sit down and worry—you should have known what to expect before you began with them—and now you have found it to be so, turn it to good account. David feels that he has received everything from God, so he says, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" Well, what can he do? His own poverty comes rushing over his sight, again, and the answer to his question is—

13. *I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD.* "I ask, 'What shall I render?' and I reply, 'I will take.'" That is what you and I also must say—

"The best return for one like me,
So wretched and so poor,
Is from His gifts to draw a plea,
And ask Him still for more."

You have given God all you have when you have given Him your weakness, your sin, your emptiness—that is all that is truly yours—and then it is that you render to Him that which He asks for, that He may put away your sin, that He may fill your emptiness and glorify Himself in your weakness.

14. *I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all His people.* If you have made any vows, mind that you keep them. It is often better not to vow, but when the vow is made, let it be diligently paid.

15. *Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints.* It is very painful for us to witness, but it is precious to God. We think that they have ended their usefulness when they reach that point, but God estimates their very death to be precious! Tread very softly when you go to the bedside of a departing saint—you may brush against an angel's

wing, for the room is full of them—the place whereon you stand is holy ground! Troops of angelic messengers are there to do their Master's bidding in the last hours of His child—which are about to become his first hours in Glory! Besides, the Master, Himself, is there—He is never absent when His children are dying. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

16. *O LORD, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, and the son of Your handmaid.* "Born in Your own house, of one who belonged to You—a home-born slave—and glad to glory in that fact! Born in Your house, bought with Your money and yielding up myself joyfully to You—'I am Your servant, and the son of Your handmaid.'"

16. *You have loosed my bonds.* Why, we thought he was going to say, "Your Grace has, like a fetter, bound my wandering heart to You." Just so—that is the liberty which he enjoys—"You have loosed my bonds." We are never so free as when free-will has had its deathblow and we have come under the power of Sovereign Grace. And now there is another free-will, born of Grace, and with its full consent we give ourselves up to God, saying, with David, "O Lord, truly I am Your servant; You have loosed my bonds."

17. *I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD.* Now David has grown into a priest, offering sacrifices. He has also grown into a singer, praising the Lord with thanksgiving, and he has grown into a preacher—"And will call upon the name of the Lord." The very man who found the pains of Hell laying hold upon him is now engaged in the holiest exercises!

18, 19. *I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all His people, in the courts of the LORD'S house, in the midst of you, O Jerusalem. Praise you the LORD.* Or, "Hallelujah!" I cannot close this reading without remarking how often my ears are shocked with the blasphemous way in which this thrice-holy word is dragged into the mire—"Hallelujah fiddles!" "Hallelujah lasses!" and I know not what. "Hallelujah"—praise unto Jehovah—is one of those words which never ought to be pronounced except with the utmost solemnity! Although there should be mixed with it the most rapturous joy. Let us take heed lest we be found guilty of taking the name of the Lord, Jehovah, our God, in vain, by using that word flippantly. But let us solemnly feel in our hearts and say with our lips, "Hallelujah—Praise the Lord!"

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

SACRED MEMORIES
NO. 2648

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 9, 1882.

"Let Jerusalem come into Your mind."
Jeremiah 51:50.

This message from the Lord was written by the Prophet Jeremiah to the Jews who were carried away to Babylon or even to more distant places. They were entreated not to forget the holy city where they had worshipped Jehovah in His Temple. Among all their thoughts, they were bidden to take care that the thought of Jerusalem should often come into their minds. This would keep them from settling down in the places to which they had been carried as captives. They were always far too ready to mingle with other nations and to forget that God had separated them to be a people unto Himself forever. So Jeremiah begged them to keep the holy city in their minds, that they might not judge themselves as having become Persians or Babylonians, but might still remember that they were Israelites and that Jerusalem was their mother city and home.

Besides, this kind of meditation would raise in their hearts ardent longings to get back. "Let Jerusalem come into your mind," that is, "Sigh for it. Earnestly desire to come back to it and as you cut the various ties which bind you to the distant land, let the links which unite you to Jerusalem become stronger every day." We know, from the 137th Psalm, that this is just what the captives did—"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yes, we wept when we remembered Zion. We hung our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember you, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." This was a proof that they regarded the country where they dwelt—and where many of them prospered and became great—as a place of banishment. Their pathetic lament proved that they never could be truly happy till they were back at the place of Israel's solemn assemblies, the spot which was specially dedicated to the worship of the Most High.

This feeling that they were aliens in a strange land and their longing desire to return to their native country would make them quick to observe everything that might work for the good of Jerusalem. If any of them came to be the king's cupbearer, as Nehemiah was, or occupied any

position at court, as Mordecai and Esther did, they would be on the lookout for opportunities of working for the good of their beloved city and they would avail themselves of every occasion for protecting and benefiting the race to which they belonged. This was the Prophet's desire and it was also the Lord's purpose, that they might find no permanent satisfaction in Babylon, but always sigh for the city of their solemnities, "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth"—that they might *never* sing the praises of Shushan, but might reserve all their admiration for Zion, where God revealed Himself to His people as He never did to the other nations of the earth.

It is somewhat in the same sense that I beg you, who are the Lord's people, to remember the *spiritual* Jerusalem and, for similar reasons, that you may feel that this world is not your rest, that your citizenship is not upon earth, but is in Heaven, that you may sing, from your very heart—

"Jerusalem, my happy home!
My soul still pants for you."

I shall use the text in two ways and show you, first, that *there is a Jerusalem here below which should come into our minds. And, secondly, that there is a Jerusalem above which should come into our minds.*

I. First, we will use the text with reference to THE JERUSALEM HERE BELOW WHICH SHOULD COME INTO OUR MINDS, that is, the Church of God on earth. The Church is all one, whether in Heaven or on earth. I may call the heavenly Jerusalem the Upper City where stands the tower of David, built for an armory, and the Temple in all its glory. While here below is the Lower City—but one wall runs around all. There is but one Church of the living God—

"For all the servants of our King,
In earth and Heaven are one."

Still, at present, the division stands good because it is so to our experience. And we still have to say, concerning the "one army of the living God"—

"Part of His host have crossed the flood,
And part are crossing now."

So, taking our text as referring to the Church of God on earth, I say to you, first, that if you are a true Believer, let it come into your mind *so that you may unite yourself with its citizens.* Some of you who love the Lord have attended to almost everything except the one thing which you ought to have done as soon as you trusted in Christ, namely, cast in your lot with the people of God on earth. You have made your will, you have kept your business affairs straight and right. You have set your family matters in order. All of that is as it should be, but still, "let Jerusalem come into your mind." And there are some of you who are Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who, if you *did* think of this matter, would have to say, "I am not an avowed member of Christ's Church. I trust that I belong to Jesus, but I have not said as much as that by my public profession. I hope that I follow Him, but I am afraid that it is only afar off and that I wear a mask which hides my Christianity. I have not come out boldly and said, 'I am on the Lord's side.' There sits the man of whom

Bunyan writes, 'with a book and his inkhorn before him,' but I have never said to him, 'Set down my name, Sir. I, also, belong to Jesus of Nazareth, and I will be numbered with His people.' They may not be all I would like them to be, but I am afraid they are far better than I am—and if I might but have the lowest place among them, I would be glad. 'I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.'"

I am not now talking about what is essential to salvation. I have no doubt that there are many true-hearted pilgrims to Zion who steal away to Heaven alone. They do not go on pilgrimage with their fellows and they are not to be commended for this, for they miss many privileges in neglecting Christian fellowship and, besides, they are not so serviceable to their Lord and Master. Let these lone saints seriously think over this question. If all the children of God were to go to Heaven in that fashion, each one, alone, where would there be any visible Church of God on earth at all? How would Gospel ordinances be maintained? How would the war for King Jesus be carried on? But, if one may do it, all may do it—and it is always an evil thing for any child of God to be doing what he would not have the rest of his Brothers and Sisters doing!

I remember that, one night, while preaching here, I told you that some Christians are like rats behind the wall. On the following Wednesday, when I sat to see enquirers, I had several who said that they would not be rats any longer. They could not bear to have such a title as that, so they resolved that they would come out and confess Christ! I was very glad to have barked so loudly as to frighten them out of their holes and I would like to do the same thing again! If you belong to Christ, say so in His own appointed way! In party politics, men are not generally ashamed to show on which side they are. And people of various nationalities, wherever they wander, are not ashamed to be called Britons, or Americans, or whatever they are. Then why should we, who are followers of the Savior, be ashamed to acknowledge His blessed name! Let it not be so, but rather, cry, "If there is a cross to be carried, here is a shoulder, ready to bear it!" Say you not so, my dear Friends? If there is any shame to be borne for Christ, will you stand back there, snug and comfortable, and let others bear it all alone? No. I think I hear you say, "If there is any mud to be thrown at Christ's followers, let it be thrown at me. If there is any enmity to be shown to the chosen people of God, let me participate in it, for, as I hope to share their glory, so would I willingly bear a portion of their shame."

Come now, you who have forgotten all about this matter! I beg to repeat my text especially to you—"Let Jerusalem come into your mind." Let this message be to you like the still small voice of Jehovah was to Elijah. And go and put your name down among Christ's disciples and let it not be merely a nominal thing, but give your person and your purse, your time and your talents to Christ and to His Church—and may the blessing of the Master rest upon you in doing it!

Taking it for granted that you have done this, I would next say to you, "Let Jerusalem come into your mind" *by praying for its prosperity*. "Pray

for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love you." I think that in all our prayers, there should always be a petition for the one great Church of Jesus Christ. You know that in David's penitent cry, in the 51st Psalm, when he bemoaned his sin and sought the pardoning mercy of God, he could not close his supplication without saying, "Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion: build You the walls of Jerusalem." So, when your sin and your repentance for it seem as if they must engross your prayer, and you must, with many sighs and tears, seek mercy for yourself, yet, even then, be not selfish, but pray for all who are in a same case with yourself. And pray for that happier band who have found mercy through the bleeding Lamb and are numbered with the people of God. There should be no private prayer—there should be no family prayer—there certainly should be no *public* prayer, without petitions for the prosperity of the Church of God in every place. Take care that you do not forget that important matter—in this sense, "let Jerusalem come into your mind."

And when this has been done, what are we to do next? Why, then, *let us labor for the advancement of the good cause*. If there is any object in the world worth living for, it is the Glory of the Lord Jesus and the salvation and the sanctification of those whom He has purchased with His precious blood. Now, to this end—that the Church of Christ may be made perfect in Him—there is much to be done in the ingathering of sinners and the helping and comforting and perfecting of saints. And you and I ought to take our fair share of this blessed work! There are some who have no time for any holy duties—from the moment they wake in the morning till they go to bed at night, they voluntarily give up all their energies to making money. I would like to whisper in their ear very softly, "Let Jerusalem come into your mind." Does not God deserve at least *some* part of their time? And His Church some little effort for her extension? There are some people who are busy, here and there, and rightly so, in all sorts of philanthropic movements, but they seem to forget that the greatest philanthropic organization on the face of the earth is the Church of the living God! And that there is nothing which can so bless the world as Christ in the midst of His own people.

I would like to step up to these friends and say to them, "'Let Jerusalem come into your mind.' Give the Lord Jesus some of your help. Consecrate to His cause some of your thought—some of your most tender affection." It is a great pity when we cannot do anything for Christ—are there any Christians who are in that sad condition? Are they without hands—without feet—without eyes—without tongues—without hearts? Well, then, I do not think they can do much if that is the case. But until they can prove that they have lost all these parts of their body, I shall say that they *can* do something for Jerusalem, even if they only *remember* it! If you cannot preach, you can pray! If you cannot pray aloud, you can plead with God in secret! There are many who cannot preach, but who can *give*—and there are others who cannot give, who, nevertheless, can speak a word here and there for the Lord Jesus Christ! There are plenty of weapons waiting for you if you have a mind to wield them. You know

what the Israelites took with them when they went out to fight the Philistines. They had only axes, plowshares and suchlike rough implements, but they seized everything that they were accustomed to use on the farm and employed it as a weapon of warfare! It is well to know how to use all the implements of our service in the house, shop and trade in fighting the Philistines and winning victories for the Lord God of Hosts and for His people! So, while you are diligent and energetic in your various philanthropic and other efforts, I would again whisper in your ear, "Let Jerusalem come into your mind."

Jerusalem should also come into our minds so that we should *prefer its privileges to earthly gain*. Whenever we are about to make a settlement in any place and have the choice of residence left to ourselves, the first matter we ought to consider is the *religious* advantages or disadvantages. I admire the action of that Jew who, when he was about to select a city in which he could pursue his business, asked his friend, the Rabbi, "Is there a synagogue in such-and-such a place?" The Rabbi replied, "No," so the Jew said, "Then I will not go to live there, for I will not settle in any place where there is no synagogue, for I must gather with my brethren for the worship of God." I wish Christian people always thought and acted in a similar way yet, often, for the sake of a trifling gain, they fix their abode where they are altogether deprived of the means of Grace! Now, if you should be *obliged* to go live in such a spiritual desert, that is another matter. And you should feel that you are sent there on purpose to turn the wilderness into a fruitful garden by setting up a synagogue, establishing a House of Prayer and so becoming a light in a dark place! But, wantonly, and without any objective except that of financial gain, to select a residence where there will be no spiritual meat for you looks as if you had but slight regard for Christ, or for His Church. At such a time, "let Jerusalem come into your mind," and say to yourself, "I must go where my soul will be fed, or where I can be the means of feeding the souls of others. This must be one of the chief considerations in my choice of a place to live—"Can I be of service, there, to the Church of God? If not, it is better for me to be useful in poverty than to be useless in wealth—better for me to win souls and have a struggle for bread, than to rise into the highest position of opulence and never have an opportunity of bringing a sinner to Christ." Will you kindly think carefully and prayerfully on that matter and, in all your settlements in life, "let Jerusalem come into your mind"?

Once more upon this theme, if you are a member of a Christian Church—if you are working for the Church—if you are praying for the Church, "let Jerusalem come into your mind" in this way, *always act consistently with your relationship to the Church*. I am glad that I was, while only a lad, baptized into the name of the Sacred Trinity. Well do I remember that May morning when I walked into the river at Isleham Ferry and thus declared publicly that I belonged to the Lord Jesus Christ! By that act of immersion, I felt that I had crossed the Rubicon and there was no possibility of ever going back. I had burned the boats behind me so that I could not retreat, nor have I ever wanted to do so! It

did not matter to me how many spectators looked on me that day, nor whether they were angels, men, or devils—I wanted them all to witness that, from that day on, I was Christ's servant—that I bore in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus, the watermark which could never be taken out—that I was dead to the world and risen with my Lord, to serve Him forever and ever! And I have often felt, when a temptation has assailed me, that it has been a very blessed check upon me to remember that, perhaps of all men in the world, I am the most known as having declared myself on the Lord's side.

I do not want to be less known, in that respect, but I feel that I must be doubly careful. I must mind how I act, for I have declared, before Heaven and earth and Hell, that I am the Lord's! When I hear a young person say, "I am afraid to be baptized and to join the Church, for I fear that it will be such a bond to me," I ask, "Do you not want to have such a bond as that?" Who wants to be free to sin? I do not, I am sure! No, blessed Master, if You have another chain, fling it round Your servant, for there is no freedom like the liberty of serving God and being bound to do so! You remember how sweetly David wrote upon this matter—"O Lord, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid. You have loosed my bonds"—as if he only felt sure of his *freedom* when the bonds of the Lord were round about him! And then all other bonds were gone.

If you are apt to be very quick-tempered, the next time you are going to boil over, "let Jerusalem come into your mind." Be calm and remember that you profess to be a Christian—that is, one who is like Christ. Then if, in trade, there seems at any time an opportunity of making a dishonest penny, stop, stop, stop! "Let Jerusalem come into your mind." What will men say about the Church to which you belong if they see that you can act as dishonestly as mere worldlings do? This thought ought to hold many a man back from doing what he would have done—"The vows of God are upon me. I am a Red Cross knight. I have enlisted in the army of Christ and it would be shameful for a man who is reckoned to be a Christian—called by that most wonderful of all names that comes from the Divine anointing of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God—it would be shameful for such a man to act as the ungodly would do in the same circumstances." No, no, my Brothers and Sisters, wait a while—pull up till you have thoroughly considered the whole question. Look at it from all points of view and say, with Joseph, "How, then, can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Oh, that the text and our meditation upon it may be a protection to us whenever we are tempted to sin! "Let Jerusalem come into your mind."

II. I have saved a good portion of our time for the second part of my discourse which is to be concerning THE JERUSALEM ABOVE WHICH SHOULD COME INTO OUR MIND.

First, *let it come into the mind of the Believer*. We do not think one hundredth as much about Heaven as we ought to. Most people seem to imagine we cannot know anything about it and they quote half a text, which is almost as bad as telling a lie—"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,

neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him." There they stop! But that is not where the Scripture ends, for the Apostle went on to say, "But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God." They quote the first half of the passage to prove that we do not know anything about Heaven, whereas the second part tells us that we *do* know a great deal about it! And if we would but turn our thoughts that way, we might become almost as familiar with the inside of the gates of pearl as we are with the streets of this clouded, foggy city! We may learn much about Heaven, even while we are here, if we are but willing to be taught of God.

Why should the Christian let Jerusalem come into his mind? I think, first, because Jesus is there. A little child, who was dying, expressed his intense delight because he knew that he was going to Heaven. And one who stood by said, "But, my dear, what makes you wish to be there?" His prompt answer was, with flashing eyes, "Because Jesus is there." The friend then said to him, "But suppose that Jesus should go out of Heaven?" "Then I will go with Him," replied the child, "for He has prayed that those whom His Father has given Him may be with Him where He is." That is just what we feel! Jesus is the Husband of our hearts—should we not think much of the place where He dwells? If a wife were banished from her home for a while, I know that she would like to look at the portrait of her beloved and at a view of the house where she hoped to dwell with him again. And in like manner should your thoughts go out to your Well-Beloved while you are, for a time, barred from enjoying His company and you should think much of the place which He has gone to prepare for you, as He told 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." Shall Jesus talk like that and yet shall not Jerusalem come into your mind? Oh, surely, it shall, for His dear sake! Because He is there, our heart instinctively turns that way. We watch for His appearing, with our window open towards that Jerusalem, looking for and hastening unto the day when He shall come to us! And meanwhile, the heavenly Jerusalem comes often into our mind because Christ is there.

Further, the child of God should have Jerusalem upon his mind in all his earthly enjoyments. Sometimes God permits His own dear children to have many comforts on earth. They are not always in great tribulation and then the danger is lest they should begin to love this world and the things that are in it. Are any of you, dear Friends, growing rich? Are you in good health and strength? Has God surrounded you with children? Are you blessed with every joy in this life? Then remember that these are the things that make it hard to die unless you have some counter-attraction to put side by side with them. "Let Jerusalem come into your mind" for, when a man once thinks aright of Heaven, the highest joys of earth become very secondary!

I have heard of a nobleman who lay at the gates of death and his king sent him a new title and fresh honors. He was to be a knight of some noble order. The nobleman looked at the insignia of knighthood and said, "These are fine things for you who are here below and, therefore, I heartily thank His Majesty for sending them to me. But I am going to another country where distinctions like this have no value whatever." So you may say, if you have the comforts of this life, "These are fine things, here, and I heartily thank God who gave me all of them in His kindness. But I am going to a country where these things are nothing at all and, therefore, I will have little or no regard for them. My heart is in Heaven—my heart is not here. My treasure is up yonder and it has drawn my heart away up to itself and there it abides." Oh, yes! In the times of your greatest happiness, still cling to your Lord! In the days of joy as well as in the nights of sorrow, let Him be your All-in-All! When God's light fills your sky with sunshine, still love Him as much as when you are in the darkness and, according to the judgment of the flesh, everything is going ill with you.

But, Brothers and Sisters, let us equally allow the heavenly Jerusalem to come into our mind in poverty and persecution. Ah, then is the time, when it is bleak below, to think how blessed are they who are with Jesus above! Renwick, the great Scotch divine and martyr for the Truth of God, when he was hunted over the mosses and the mountains of the land, said to certain faithful friends who gathered around him, "I have lain two nights on the bleak hillside and they have been wild and stormy nights, and I have had nothing to cover me except the curtains of Heaven. And I have experienced the most intense delight when, between the times of tempest, I have seen the stars shining in Glory—and I have thought how every saint above shall shine yet more brightly forever and ever. And when I have thought of the bliss of those who are before the Throne of God, I have laughed to think how little men can do to hurt any child of God." The good man was right and you may say the same as he did if you are hunted by cruel persecutors. If you can but maintain fellowship with Jesus, you need not fear them! They can but kill the body and afterwards there is nothing more that they can do. But, when the glorified spirit walks the streets of gold and beholds the magnificence of his everlasting inheritance, he looks down on his persecutors and says, "What can you do to me now? I am immortal and you cannot harm me! My heritage is up here and you cannot take it from me." O you who suffer poverty and persecution, "let Jerusalem come into your mind," for this will help you to bear up under the greatest trials!

So, too, should Jerusalem come into our mind whenever we are heavy and downcast. Some of the best of God's saints get into that condition. I know plenty of Christian people who are not good enough to be despondent—I mean that they do not think enough, for, if they really did think and meditate, they would soon be partakers of that heaviness of which Peter speaks when he says, "Though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold trials." I believe that most of God's children sometimes get down in the dumps. There is a coal cellar to God's house as well as a banqueting hall and, although I should like to

always live in the banqueting hall, I have many a time been down in the coal cellar—and I have learned more, there, than I have learned upstairs! Well, dear Friends, whenever you get down there in the very basement of God's great house, begin to think of the upper stories—of those windows of agate and gates of carbuncle that are up yonder! Think of how you will lean out of the windows of Heaven to look down upon this poor dusky earth. Think of how you will walk up there among cherubim and seraphim, familiar with their joyous sonnets—and then all the sorrows of your mortal life shall seem to have been but as a pin-prick, or "as a dream, when one awakes." Oh, the bliss of being able, even when you are despondent, to mount up to Heaven by faith and walk with God! Thus, "let Jerusalem come into your mind."

Further, it is well to let Jerusalem come into our mind in the time of bereavement. Who has not lost a friend, a child, a wife, a husband, a beloved one of some sort? Well, when you take out your handkerchief because the tears flow fast, "let Jerusalem come into your mind." That eminent man, Mr. Halyburton, when he was dying so triumphantly—and perhaps there was never a death more triumphant than was his—said, "I have 10 brothers and sisters, and a father and mother in Heaven, and I shall make the 11th of their children when I get there. And this is part of the joy that I have in departing, that I shall see my kindred before the Throne of God." Yes, your dear infant children—you shall see them again! Refrain from weeping, Rachel—you are the mother of immortals! True, their little coffins are beneath the ground, but their *spirits* are not there. Every day they behold the face of our Father who is in Heaven! And some of us have parents or grandparents who have been called up above. Well, we are following them and we shall be there, too, in God's good time! I would that we might be unbroken families before the Throne of God—our children and our children's children, all gathered there and not one left out! When you linger at the side of the silent grave, weep not too much, but "let Jerusalem come into your mind."

I also think it a suitable time to remember this Jerusalem when you are growing very old—when the threescore years and ten are over—when you have taken out a fresh lease for another ten or a dozen years and have almost run that out. Now you are living by the day and are liable to have notice to leave at any moment. Well, certainly, now is the time to "let Jerusalem come into your mind." There are no furrows on the brows of the glorified, no limping limbs, or failing eyes, or closing ears! The gray old man shall be as young as a child there! "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert." You may well say, "What joy is this to think of Jerusalem!"

There was a nobleman, who invited good Mr. Foxe, the man who wrote *The Book of Martyrs*, to come and spend a merry Christmas with him, "for," he said, "Mr. Foxe, next Christmas I hope to have such entertainment for my friends as you will approve." Mr. Foxe said, "I do believe that it will be a high day for me next Christmas, for I shall be where they keep

holiday forever! What do you think of the state of immortals when they quit their bodies?" His lordship was all at sea when Mr. Foxe talked to him like that—but so it proved, for Foxe had, by that time, gone up to Heaven to see the martyrs whose lives he had written about and I know that he did spend his Christmas far more merrily than they did in the mansion below! What better thing can happen to you, dear old saints, than to get Home to your Father's House? Here you are, as it were, left out in the cold for a while, but the great Door will soon open and the angel will come to beckon you in. Some who have gone before have been watching for you at the gate and you will have a joyous welcome! Therefore, when your aches and pains are upon you, and all the ensigns of old age are flying, "let Jerusalem come into your mind."

Do the same in times of sickness. And if your sickness should be unto death, then all the more, "let Jerusalem come into your mind." I was thinking of the little son of a Duke of Hamilton, a long way back, when there was graciousness in that family. This lad would, in a short time, at his father's decease, have become a duke. He was a very gracious child and he was taken away very early. When he was near his end, he called his next brother to him and he said to him, "Douglas, in a little while you will be a duke, but I shall be a king!" Oh, that is blessed for you when you are sure of such glory as that! You might well give up a dukedom and go to Heaven in any boat that God might choose to send! I would not have any choice about that matter. Some people are always dreading sudden death, but, for a Christian, what can be better than to die all of a sudden and to go Home when all is right and ready? But, anyway, whichever way we go, whether in the swift gondolas of sudden death, or in the slower barges of lingering sickness, we shall get to port all right—and that is the chief matter, to sail into the Fair Havens where we shall abide forever! So, in times of sickness, "let Jerusalem come into your mind."

Now I have to conclude with *a word to those who have, at present, no part or lot in the New Jerusalem*. I should like to be the medium through which the still small voice should reach some of you who do not yet know the Lord.

Listen. What if you should never enter the New Jerusalem? Then, say, "Farewell," to all the saints, for you will be divided from them forever! Say, "Farewell," in your heart to all those blessed ones you loved on earth and who, in their death, exhorted you to follow them. Take leave of them, for you shall never sit down with them, or see them again unless it is from such a distance that there will be no communion between you and them, for between them and you there will be a great gulf! O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, must I never see your pearly gates and ruby walls, and never see the King except to hear Him say, "Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire"? "Let Jerusalem come into your mind." Do not be any longer halting between two opinions! If you do not enter the New Jerusalem, where else can you go? There is but one other place, though even some so-called Protestants, nowadays, seem to be seeking to revive a belief in "purgatory"—yet there is no such place!

I heard of one, the other day, who said to the preacher, after he had been preaching according to Christ's Word, the doctrine of everlasting punishment, "Sir, I believe that I shall go to Hell for a season, but afterwards get round to Heaven." "Man," said the preacher, "even if what you say is true, when there is a straightforward road to Heaven, what a fool you must be to want to go round by way of Hell!" Yet there are still some such foolish folk—they think that they must go round about when there is set before them an open door on which is inscribed, "Believe and live." There are some who will have no Hell whatever and, as I think of them, I am reminded of a story that I heard of a little boy, whose uncle had imbibed this false doctrine. The uncle had been telling the child the story about the babes in the woods. "Uncle," said the boy, "where did the little babies go to after the robins had covered their bodies with leaves?" "They went to Heaven, Johnny." "And where did their wicked uncle go to?" "Oh, to Heaven, Johnny!" Johnny's looked in utter disbelief. "Why, Uncle!" he said, "then he will kill the babies again!" Just so, if their natures are not renewed, wicked men would do in Heaven the same as they did here! And that cannot be. Do you see the folly of such teaching? Christ's message is, "You must be born again." You must be renewed in nature. You must come to Christ and put your trust in Him, or else, into the New Jerusalem it is not possible for you to enter!

Now, in closing, I want each one of you to ask these two or three questions of yourself. "How is my life today in reference to Heaven? Am I living so that it would be safe to let me into Heaven? Am I so living that it would be possible for God to be righteous and to let me be perfectly happy?" Listen to that question and honestly answer it, for God will do no unrighteous thing! Neither will He ever marry Heaven and sin together. There is an eternal division between those two! Mark the next question—"What objection can I possibly have to being saved tonight? What reason can there be against my believing in Jesus Christ while He bids me do so? It will not make me miserable to have my soul saved—it cannot make me unhappy to be made holy! The right way must be the best way and the best way must be the happiest way. Christ will not refuse me if I go to Him tonight. I have no reason to think that He will, but I have every reason to know that He will not, for He has said, 'Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.'" So may it be! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
REVELATION 21:9-27.

Verses 9-22. *And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come here, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of Heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; and had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written*

thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lies foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple of it. The less there is of true religion, the more there usually is of outward ritualism. When true religion shall fill every heart and God shall be the supreme joy of His people, they will need no temple.

23. *And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.* Outward means are abolished when their mission is accomplished.

24. *And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it.* The Church shall be the metropolis of the world. It shall be honored and esteemed among the nations of mankind. When men are godly, then will they reverence the abode of God, namely, the living Church, built up of living stones, upon the one foundation, Jesus Christ!

25. *And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.* There will be no need to shut out enemies at night, for the day shall last right on. The Church's most intimate communion with God, her constant commerce with the skies, will have then begun.

26, 27. *And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defiles, neither whatever works abomination, or makes a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.* Into this holy city, the graceless, the Christless, the faithless shall never come. Here we have a mixture of light and darkness, but, in those better days, it shall be all light and the darkness shall have fled far away forever.

—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.

GIRDED FOR THE WORK
NO. 2649

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 19, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 18, 1882.

"Therefore gird up the loins of your mind."
1 Peter 1:13.

WE noticed, in reading the chapter from which our text is taken, that the Apostle Peter first mentioned the glorious Doctrines of Grace and the marvelous benefits bestowed by God upon Believers and he, afterwards, drew from them a practical inference. "Therefore," he said, "gird up the loins of your mind." A Doctrine of God may become dangerous if it is not reduced to practice—and all the Doctrines of God's Word may readily be turned to good and practical account if we are willing to so employ them. Those who regard a Doctrine of God simply as a subject for debate or an opportunity for displaying one's argumentative powers, miss the mark altogether, for we are taught the Truths of God in order that they may lead us to holiness of life. This is the object of God in giving us more of His Light—that, by that Light, we may become more full of the Light of God and be the means of conveying His Light to others. Therefore, when your mind is instructed concerning some grand Truth of God, after you have sucked the honey and joy out of it, always say to yourself, "But what are the bearings of this Doctrine upon my life? How should it influence me? What would God have me do as the result of receiving such teaching as this?" From what Peter had already said, like a true logician, he draws a wise inference and says, "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the Grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

We shall only have time to consider the first few words of the Apostle's exhortation, "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind." And, concerning them, we will ask three questions, First, *What are we to do?* Secondly, *Why are we to do it?* And, thirdly, *How are we to do it?*

I. First, let us enquire, WHAT ARE WE TO DO? "Gird up the loins of your mind."

The metaphor used by Peter is a very simple one. The garments of the Easterns, as you know, are not like ours, but are long flowing robes and, unless the raiment is well gird about the wearer, there is little or nothing that he can do in the way of active exercise. In a spiritual sense, the injunction, "Gird up the loins of your mind," is a very proper one to be addressed to those of us who have various loose and flowing things which are almost as natural to us as garments are to the body. They must be

gird about us very tightly or else they will become an encumbrance and a hindrance.

We may possibly understand what is meant by our text if we, first, *consider the opposite condition*. Some persons are notorious for their laxity—whatever they have about them is very loosely attached to them. I am grieved to say that there are some professing Christians who are very lax even in matters of morality. It is a great shame that it should be so with any of them and we feel that there must be hypocrisy at the bottom of such a state of things as that. Others are very lax in their beliefs—they are ready to believe anything or nothing according to whatever is said by the last speaker to whom they have listened. Some are very lax in their observance of Gospel ordinances. They act as though Christ had given them commands which they might obey or disregard according to their own pleasure. Nothing connected with them seems to be really fastened to them so as to hold them and, for their part, they hold nothing firmly—everything is loose and slipping away from them.

Now, I take it that the Apostle exhorts all professing Christians of that character to get out of such a state of heart! And I would urge you, dear Friends, to do the same. Gird up the loins of your mind as to your personal conduct. Be strict about it, not lax! Never fear incurring the opprobrium of being too precise. If the name of Puritan is appended to you, accept it joyfully as a badge of honor and wish that you were more of a Puritan than your assailants suspect! Whoever else is lax, you remember that you serve a jealous God and, therefore, be very jealous of the honor of His Word, and jealous of the observance of His commands, and jealous concerning your whole life. In this sense, "gird up the loins of your mind."

Some professors are ready enough to believe, but they have no intensity in their beliefs. They are orthodox as far as they go, but they do not go far enough. They have no great concern about religion—they are merely tattooed with Christianity. It is only skin deep with them, it never gets into their hearts or affects their souls. There are many preachers, nowadays, who hold various views of the Truth of God, but they hold nothing tenaciously. I have often wished to ask some Broad Churchmen if they did not think that the martyrs were great fools in laying down their lives in defense of the Truth, for I am sure that, according to the teaching of many whom I know, they must regard those who were faithful unto death as little better than madmen! I think that some of the teachers of the modern school believe that there is no Truth of God that is worth a man's dying for. They say that something is white, but they add that white is a very, very light shade of black if you look at it from a certain standpoint. Another thing is undoubtedly black, but that is merely a somewhat darker shade of white! Here is a certain Truth which they say they believe, but there are some circumstances or conditions in which they do *not* believe it, so practically it is not a matter of faith to them at all. If ever you press them too closely upon any point, they always have a back way of escape open—in fact, they do not really believe anything at all with their heart and soul!

Now, when religion is held in that fashion, it is tantamount to irreligion. If I held doctrines which did not hold me, I should stammer in the declaration of them and I could not suppose that anyone else would accept them from my halfhearted advocacy. He who has not a fixed fulcrum for his lever, whatever machinery he may have, will never move the world—and nothing will be accomplished *by* you, my Friend, or accomplished *in* you, unless there are certain Truths of God which you no more question than you question your own existence—certain munitions of rocks behind which you make your soul's dwelling place and find yourself at ease. "The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks," and they thus prove their wisdom! And when a man, whatever his feebleness may be, has certain rocky fundamental Truths into which he tunnels so as to hide himself, then he is well protected. But all that looseness of which I have been speaking is a throwing away of strength. Laxity is the helper of unbelief and tempts to all manner of evil the souls of those who are under its malign influence.

Therefore, dear Friends, do not be lax in your belief, but believe what you believe. Hold what you hold and know what you know. Do you ask, "How can that be?" Well, by being taught of God, for God teaches Infallible Truth. What a man teaches himself, or learns from his fellow men, may all have to be laid aside, for it is liable to be erroneous. But that which God the Holy Spirit burns into his heart and conscience, as with a hot iron, shall never be taken from him! You may kill him, but you will not take the Truth of God from him. You may cut him in pieces, but the man is so joined to the Truth that he cannot be separated from it. "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind." Get your mental straps tightened up. Bind the blessed Truth of the Gospel more closely than ever to your soul!

Further, this condition of mind to which Peter refers is not only the opposite of laxity and looseness, but it is also opposed to that effluence, or lack of grip, lack of unity, lack of concentration which runs away with the usefulness and force of so many professors. These men love God after a fashion and hold His Truth in a way, but, then, there are many other things which they love and hold quite as much! Their energies run—no, I should say, *trickle* into a hundred channels—but there is no force in them. If they could all be made to flow in one channel, they might rush onward like a torrent and bear everything before them, yet it is not so with them, but quite the opposite! They are all in pieces. They never get to be one entire man. The prayer of David has never been fulfilled in their experience, "Unite my heart to fear Your name." They cannot cry with the sweet Psalmist of Israel, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise."

And not being fixed to one point, neither are they united as one person. Their condition is exactly described by the Prophet Hosea, "Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty." It is a blessed thing for a Christian to be strapped up in one bundle and not to be divided into a number of separate parcels. "Set your affections on things above," is a misquotation that I have heard many times, but there is not such a text as that in the Bible. Paul wrote to the Colossians, "Set your *affection* on

things above," that is, have all your affections bound up into one supreme, all-embracing affection, and then fix it all upon Christ. When the many men within the man become all one man and he is, as we say, "all there," and you *know* that he is "all there," then he has, indeed, girded up the loins of his mind. May we all obey this Apostolic command and earnestly avoid the opposite!

In trying further to show what our text means, I would say that I think the short way of putting it is this, "Pull yourself together." We often say, in some great crisis or emergency, "I must, someway or other, pull myself together." That is just the meaning of the Apostle here. Do you not sometimes find yourself very listless, languid and limp? You hope the life of God is within you, but you almost question whether it is or not, for it is not vigorous or joyous. You do not seem to take an interest in the things of God as you once did. You say, with Cowper—

"Your saints are comforted, I know,
And love Your House of Prayer!
I sometimes go where others go,
But find no comfort there."

Somehow or other you appear to have fallen to pieces—there is no cohesion about you and you are sure that you are not in a right condition. Well, then, our text is the very message you need, as it means, first, concentrate all your powers and faculties to the service of God and the worship of God. Let this be your song—

"O bless the Lord, my Soul!
Let all within me join,
And aid my tongue to bless His name,
Whose favors are Divine."

"Gird up the loins of your mind," that is, let the Truth of God go right around you, so that no part of you is left out of the hallowed circle. Be completely contained within the belt of pure and precious Truth. Nobody knows what he can really do when he is "all there." The capacities of manhood are something terrible when they are turned into the wrong channel. Look at a man who goes insane. Insanity is, in some senses, a weakness, yet, sometimes, when a man has become insane, he has possessed the strength of five or six ordinary men! Now, if we could have just the opposite of that—a sanity which nevertheless concentrated and increased all the powers of our entire being—what is there that we might not be able to do? This is what the Apostle means when he urges us to gird up the loins of our mind.

This expression further signifies not only concentration, but full awakening. We are not half-awake, Brothers and Sisters, as a rule. Sometimes we are, but when God the Holy Spirit gives us the new Life in all its fullness, there is then within us ecstatic joy, firmness of resolution, strength of will and a bravery of holy faith that can risk everything upon the faintest word of the unseen God. But, oftentimes, we need to cry as David did, "Quicken me, O Lord, for Your name's sake." In the 119th Psalm, how very frequently that prayer occurs, "Quicken You me." The Psalmist was a living man, or he could not have prayed to be made alive, but, being alive, he wanted to be made *more alive*. I have told you before of a strange picture which I saw at Brussels, in which the artist has repre-

sented the Resurrection in a very remarkable fashion, showing the people as partly alive. There is one man with his head restored to life, but his arms remain as skeletons. There is another alive down to his breast, but his legs and the rest of his body are still under the dominion of death. It is an extraordinary idea, yet I am afraid that there are many so-called Christians who are just like that. They have just enough life in them for the salvation of their souls, but scarcely enough to make them earnest and diligent in the cause of God. Now, Brothers and Sisters, if this is the case with you, wake yourself up, pull yourself together, "gird up the loins of your mind."

If you do so, in addition to this concentration and awakening, there will be a holy resoluteness about you, an intensifying of any resolve that you have made to serve the Lord. Sometimes, you feel, "This is the proper time for me to draw near to God, but I really do not feel in the spirit for it." Now, pull yourself together and determine that you will not allow any of this nonsense! We must pray—and when we feel that we cannot pray, then is the time when we must pray more earnestly than ever! We are never so much in need of prayer as when we have the least inclination to the holy exercise. I delight in preaching the Gospel when I am conscious that the Lord is with me, but there are times when I have to say, "I do not feel fit for this great task." Whenever that is true of any of us, we must hear Peter saying to us, "Gird up the loins of your mind." Brother, it is the devil who wants to keep you from serving the Savior! He expects that God is going to be with you and to bless you, so he tries to unfit you for the service. Then say, "By the Grace of God, I mean to do it, and if ever in my life I poured out my very soul, it shall be now. Instead of running away from the task, I will run to it! Into the very center of the enemy will I rush, like David when he said, 'By You I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall.'" Oh, for that firm putting down of the foot, that steadfast determination that the duty of the hour shall be performed and the privilege of the hour shall be enjoyed! We will not be drifted from it, or driven from it, or bribed from it! What have you and I to do with going to sleep? Those who are children of darkness may sleep in the night, but we are children of the day, the Sun of Righteousness has risen upon us! So, "let us not sleep as do others," but let us gird up the loins of our mind and, in the name of the Most High God, let us resolve not to be found half-hearted and lukewarm, but to be wide awake and all-alive in the service of our Lord!

Still further to explain our text, let me say that it must also mean, "*Get rid of hindrances*." The Oriental girds up his loins that he may not be tripped up by his long flowing garments—and this is the kind of thing that acts as a hindrance to a Christian's progress. Not hindrances from Satan and the world, alone, but from himself—from things about himself that cling as much to him and seem as necessary for him as garments are for our bodies. These things will often get in the way and trip us up when we are running, or hinder us when we are walking.

When does this happen? Sometimes there creeps over the mind of the Believer the thought of security and, consequently, of there being little need of watchfulness. There is true security in Christ and that sets the

mind on its watch-tower. But there is a false security in which Satan says, "All is well with you. You are not like these young people who have lately joined the Church—you are an old experienced Christian—so there is no fear of your falling into temptation. You are an old fox, you cannot be caught in the traps of which they will have to beware. You may go a great deal further than those young people may, and do a great many things which would be dangerous for them, for you are all right." When you are deceived by the tempter, you sit down and say to yourself, "My mountain stands firm; I shall never be moved." You fold your hands and smile with a delusive happiness—under the notion that all must go well with you!

O dear Friends, there is nothing that will lead to stumbling and falling sooner than this fancied security! This is, indeed, having loose garments! You have special need to watch and pray. Always be afraid of that experience which Satan tells you exempts you from the necessity of being on your guard, for you are in an enemy's country and there is a foe lurking behind every bush! And he alone is safe who cries to God, "Hold You me up and I shall be safe." But they who are carnally secure are in the very midst of danger. Let us not get into that lax and loose condition, but let us gird up the loins of our mind.

Some are all ungirt and have their garments hanging so loosely about them that they are unable to do anything effectively because they are continually perplexed with a thousand wandering thoughts. They do not think rightly about anything because they think in a loose fashion about everything. They never act as do the bees which I have often watched. These busy little creatures find the bell of a flower and plunge right in till you cannot see them. What are they doing? They are getting all the honey that is stored at the bottom of the flower! Meanwhile, what has the butterfly done? He has flitted lightly over half the flowers of the garden and he laughs at the bee for wasting so much time in one flower, yet, at night, the butterfly has nothing to do but die, while the bee has been storing her house with sweet nutriment. It is a blessed thing when we get right into the bell of the flower of the Gospel and are determined to penetrate its secret places to extract the delicious essence of the Word, that we may feed thereon and grow thereby. It is no use having a brain that is taken up with 50 different subjects and yet does not master any one of them.

There was a class of men called the Encyclopedists, who endeavored to gain universal knowledge and, certainly, some of them were prodigious scholars. But with you and with me, Beloved, it will be well to call in all these wandering thoughts and make the Lord Jesus Christ our Encyclopedia, and to determine not to know anything among men save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. When you act thus, you have secured the choicest honey in all the world, while those who attempt to learn a thousand other things may really gather nothing that is worth preserving. A man of one book is, after all, the man of power. And the man who has but one objective in life—who lives only for Christ and lives alone upon Him—is the gracious man whom God will use for blessed ends!

Another loose garment that is likely to trip us up is too much care about the things of this world. I think that a man needs, sometimes, to hesitate as to whether he should enlarge his business. He may have just enough to do to keep going what he already has in hand—and he will be able to steal out to the weeknight services and to take his place in the Sunday school. But it may be that if he undertakes more responsibilities, he will be unable to spare any time for his Lord's service. His capital is small, though it has sufficed him up to now—but if he tries to make it serve in his larger undertakings, he will always be worrying about how he shall be able to meet his obligations—and he will be running from pillar to post with a thousand anxieties as to how he is to get over his difficulties. Is it not amazing that people should be so anxious to get more anxieties? The path of wisdom is to try to escape them and, especially as age increases, to feel that the last part of our life ought to be Sabbatic—it should be a period of rest. Surely, the last seventh of our lives, at least, should be a preparation for the everlasting Sabbath when we hope to dwell with our Lord forever! It is well for a man when he can make it so, but too much to do, too much to think of, too much care and too much trouble are very apt to trip up a Christian. "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind." Strap yourselves up a bit. You know riches take to themselves wings and fly away. One of the best things you can do is to clip their wings every now and then—and send the feathers round to the College, or the Orphanage, or the Colportage Society, or some other good work! In that way you are more likely to keep what you now possess and to have a blessing with it.

Frequently, too, men who do not gird up the loins of their minds are tripped up by mental troubles. They are troubled about this and worried about that. Things are not according to their mind and, instead of doing their best, and then leaving the matter with God, they are constantly fretting and fuming. I know some good women who make their home utterly miserable by being always in a worry. Often, it is only about whether such-and-such a room has been dusted, or whether something has been washed. And there are plenty of husbands who go on in the same foolish way, for we are all of one race and we are all far too anxious to borrow trouble when we have none of our own. Yes, and some are very adept at manufacturing troubles! They have a little trouble factory at the top of the house and they like to get up there and try to make something to be disquieted about. A trouble that God sends, He will take away, but if you make it yourself, you may take it away yourself. Homemade troubles are just like homemade clothes—they do not often fit very well, but they last longer than any others. So I warn you against them—the troubles, I mean—pray put them aside! Obey Peter's injunction, "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind," and let these fancied troubles go to the winds!

There are others whose loins are not gird up because they are fearful, despondent, discouraged in their work for the Lord. Have you not heard them moaning in this style—"I do not think I shall ever take my class any more." "I do not feel that I can stand up and preach at the corner of the streets again." "I do not see how I can give another tract to that man—he

swore so dreadfully." Come, Brother, "gird up the loins of your mind." You need to pull that strap more tightly around you and to get your garments well secured. I see that they are beginning to fly about in the wind and, if you are not careful, one by one they will blow away from you. Be not discouraged! Fear not! Do not despair of success! The God whom you serve will not let His Word fall to the ground, but you shall see that though you went forth weeping, bearing precious Seed, you shall come back rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you!

I need not go over all the many ways in which a Christian man's garments may impede his labors, but our text applies to them all. One other meaning of Peter's words, "Gird up the loins of your mind" is, *be ready*, as a man who has his coat buttoned up is prepared to face the storm. Be ready for troubles. Be ready for evil tidings. Be ready for service. Be ready for suffering, be ready to live, be ready to die. Take for your motto the sailors' cry, "Ready, yes, ready," and say, "Whatever my Lord's will may be, I, His servant, with my loins gird and my staff in my hand, am ready for it." As old Master Trapp says, "Be handy with your loins gird about." Have your robes all well fastened so that you will not be tripped up by them. Being handy, in this sense, is also to be handsome—no man looks better than when his garments are well gird about him. When they became loose, they spoil the appearance of his figure, but when he keeps himself well prepared for his service, then is he beautiful in the sight of his Master who loves to see His servant ready for fighting, ready for journeying, ready for whatever may happen to him, or be required of him. Therefore, pull yourselves together and so "gird up the loins of your mind."

II. Now, secondly, WHY ARE WE TO DO THIS?

First, *the fourfold character of the Christian life requires it.* A Christian ought to be at least four things, as well as many others which I have not time to mention now. First, he is a pilgrim. He is on a journey—he is passing through this world to a better one. How can a man travel swiftly and safely unless his garments are properly prepared for the journey? And the pilgrims to Zion must gird up the loins of their mind if they are to reach their destination.

A Christian is, next, a racer. He is running in a race and he needs to win the crown. He has started for the goal and the prize of his high calling is glittering before his eyes. He is the man who must heed the command, "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind." How can you run with endurance the race set before you if you do not "lay aside every weight and the sin which does so easily beset you"? If entanglements are to be avoided, the garments of the racer must be tightly gird about him.

Moreover, the Christian is a warrior. How can he overcome his foe if he has not put on his armor and is not well clad for the struggle! How shall he fight while his movements are impeded by loose garments? You know what the old soldier said to the Duke of Wellington when he was asked whether he had been at Waterloo. He said that he had and then the Duke enquired of him, "Suppose that battle had to be fought again, how would you like to be dressed?" The man answered, "If I had to take part in that fight again, I should like to be in my shirtsleeves." There was

great commonsense in that reply and it may teach us a useful lesson. A Christian man does not fight well for his Master unless he gets, as it were, into his shirtsleeves and takes off all his dignity and everything which hinders him from rendering effective service and doing the most he can do for Christ.

Beside being a pilgrim, a runner and a warrior, a Christian is a laborer—he is called to work in his Master's vineyard. Now, if a man does not gird up the loins of his mind, he will be a very poor laborer and will show a very bad day's work when the sun goes down. So again I say to you, dear Friends, pull yourselves together! With such holy work to do, endeavor to do it at your very best.

Remember, also, *the greatness of your task.* That should make you "gird up the loins of your mind." The Christian life is no child's play. To bear testimony for Christ is no trifle and if you wish to win souls, as I hope you do, Brothers and Sisters, you cannot do it unless your spirit is braced up to the very highest point by the Grace of God. Your work is such as might have filled an angel's heart! And it *did* fill your Savior's hands, so see to it that it is done in the best possible style.

The next reason why you should "gird up the loins of your mind" is *because of the slenderness of your strength.* You have so little power that you cannot afford to waste an ounce of it! If you are ever to thresh the mountains, there must be no wasting or throwing away, even inadvertently, of any of the little force which you have. If you would be mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds, you must look well to your spiritual strength and never waste an atom of it.

Besides that, *remember the readiness of your foes.* If they can trip you up by laying hold upon a garment which is trailing behind you, they will do so. If it is possible for you to be vanquished, you will be vanquished, for you have enemies who watch you with eyes full of venom and malice because you belong to Christ. Therefore, "gird up the loins of your mind" and see that you put not any advantage in their way, or they will be quick to avail themselves of it!

Remember, also, *the misery you endure when you are not in a right condition.* If your minds are not girded up and you feel as I do, you must be very wretched. Whenever I feel that I cannot pray as I wish, I am very unhappy. When I come here and cannot join heartily in the song—well, I have to groan in the chorus someway or other—but I am not satisfied with doing that. When I feel at all wandering from God and my heart is getting astray from Him, I am not happy, I cannot be! Oh, no, blessed be God, when He made us the second time, He made us so that we could not rest anywhere but in Himself. Even our first creation necessitated our coming to God if we would be blessed, but our second creation makes it even more so! If the Lord is with us, we are merry all the day long and can praise and bless His holy name. There is no fasting for us while the Bridegroom is with us! But if He is once withdrawn, then shall the children, even of the bride chamber, fast. You know that it is so. Therefore, Brothers and Sisters, do not be content to be in this sad, loose, lax condition, but, "gird up the loins of your mind." May the Lord, in His mercy, enable you to do so!

III. So I finish with just a few words upon the last question, which is, HOW ARE WE TO DO THIS?

One way is, when you are out of sorts, and out of order, *go and confess it.* Go and tell the Lord all about it. Search and see how you got into such a condition. Confess the sins that brought you into such a plight, then hate them with a perfect hatred. Feel that you cannot continue to live in such a state. Cry unto God, "O Lord, do not let me find any kind of happiness until I have it from Your own right hand and, until I am right with You, give me misery, brokenness of spirit and true godly sorrow for sin!" That confession will naturally melt into prayer for quickening. While you are mourning your misery, God will help you to pray yourself out of it! Never listen to the voice of the tempter who says, "Do not pray because you cannot pray," but say within yourself, "Now I must pray more than ever. Now I will pray and, however poor and broken my prayer may be, such as it is, it shall be presented to God."

Then, next, while you are on your knees, *resolve with energy that the evil shall not continue*. To make your resolution effective, cry to Him who first took you out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay—and set your feet upon a rock and established your goings—and ask Him to do that over again in another sense. He will as readily lift you up again as He did at the first. If you are willing to be half-dead, you may be wholly dead before long. If you are willing to be idle and sleepy, the spirit of slumber will steal over you just as if all the drugs that poison men had been poured into your soul! If it has been so with you to any degree, resolve, with hearty shamefacedness, that it shall not be so any longer.

And then, to help you carry out this resolution, *sit down and meditate much upon the love of God to you*—the eternal love, the boundless love, the love that chose you, the love that bought you, the love that sought you, the love that fought for you, the love that has worked in you all the good things there are in you! And, as you meditate upon that wondrous love of God, His Holy Spirit will work upon you. You will feel your heart beginning to thaw and the streams commencing to flow as the brooks do in the springtime when the icy grasp of winter has been relaxed. Therefore, give your heart up to such meditations as are likely to stir your spirit and to change its sad condition.

Then, also try to *let your understanding be convinced concerning your position and condition*. Think much about what the Lord's requirements really are. I like to see some passion in religion, but I am much more fond of *principle*. A man may be moved to great zeal and earnestness at certain revival meetings—and it is well if he has made the great decision—but I am glad if another man has sat down by himself and has calmly considered the whole question and, acting upon principle, has yielded himself to the Savior. He knows what is true. He knows what he is and where he is. He knows what God has done for him and what God expects from him and, without any passion or excitement, he steadily plods on and continues firmly confident in the Lord.

One translation of our text is, "Gird up the loins of your understanding." Get your understanding tightly strapped up, for, in proportion as you know the Truth of God, the Truth shall make you free. When you can

give to everyone who asks you for it, a reason for the hope that is in you, it is better than when you simply say, "I believe that I am saved because I am so happy," for, perhaps tomorrow you may not be happy—and then you may fancy that you are not saved! That is simply going by your feelings and is a most unsatisfactory method. Rather say, "I understand, from the Scriptures, that the sinner is bid to believe in Jesus. And when he does so, God, Himself, assures him that he is saved." Let your religious convictions be founded on good sound arguments! Get some "wherefores" and "therefores," so that you may have something solid to stand upon. This is the meaning of the words, "gird up the loins of your understanding."

I wish that all who profess to be converted knew what they were converted *from* and what they were converted *to*—and what being converted really means. I am afraid that a great many jump into what they call religion and then jump out of it again. If they only act according to the energy of the flesh, they will jump out of it before long. He who is converted only by eloquence will be unconverted when that eloquence is over. He who is converted merely by excitement is likely to be unconverted when that excitement has died away. But he who is *taught of God* and knows the solid Doctrines of God upon which we are grounded and settled, will steadfastly abide in the Truth of God.

I know that I have spoken all of this for nothing, so far as some of you are concerned, because you have nothing for which to gird up your mind and nothing with which to gird it. For you, as you now are, there is no inheritance. For you there is no place of joy, no hope of peace. O poor Soul, first remember that you must be born again, for it is no use to gird up the natural man that is unsaved! It is the new man that is to be gird about. Your first business is with God and with His Christ, and with the eternal Spirit. The first necessity for you is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to accept that Gospel which says, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." That being done, then you have something to gird up! God grant it to every one of you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—660, 632, 659.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 PETER 1:13-20.

Verse 13. *Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the Grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.* This is Peter's practical application of the great Truths of which he had been writing. "Look ahead and expect great things. Live in the future. Project your thoughts beyond the centuries that are passing away into the ages which will never die."

14, 15. *As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as He who has called you is holy, so be you holy in all manner of conversation.* Remember that you can never be really whole till you are holy, for holiness is spiritual sanity—it is the car-

ing of the mind and heart from the disease which sin brought upon them.

16. *Because it is written, Be you holy; for I am holy.* Children of God, be like your Father! Prove that you are His true children by manifesting His Character. Let His lineaments be seen in your countenance—"Be you holy; for I am holy." The Revised Version is, "You shall be holy; for I am holy."

17. *And if you call on the Father, who without respect of persons judges according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.* Be not presumptuous. Always remember that as there is a God who is to judge every man, you are to be judged and oh, that you might, through His Grace, be in such a condition of heart that you shall stand the last test and be found to be full weight when you are put into the balances of the sanctuary which God shall hold with steadfast hands!

18, 19. *Forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.* You have seen the Character of your Father who is in Heaven. This should urge and help you to be like He—holy. Now you see the Character of your Redeemer, "a lamb without blemish and without spot." Let this influence you to be holy, also.

20, 21. *Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead and gave Him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God.* It is no use to place them anywhere else! All other vessels are too frail to bear such a heavy burden, but, if your faith and hope are in God, then you have a security which none can destroy.

22-25. *Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that you love one another fervently with a pure heart: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers and the flower thereof falls away: but the Word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.* Blessed be God for an everlasting Gospel, founded on the Everlasting Covenant, which brings with it everlasting life to all those who believe in Christ Jesus the Lord!

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

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

CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRIST'S DISCIPLES
NO. 2650

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, NOVEMBER 26, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 16, 1882.

"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life, also, he cannot be My disciple."
Luke 14:26.

"Then said Jesus to those Jews who believed Him, If you continue in My word, you are My disciples indeed."
John 8:31.

"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."
John 13:35.

"By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples."
John 15:8.

This morning, [Sermon #1669, Volume 28—*Teaching for the Outer and Inner Circles*—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org] I preached upon one of the privileges of the disciples of Christ—"When they were alone, He expounded all things to His disciples." They formed the inner circle and they had the privilege of hearing the expositions and explanations which our Lord gave only to His disciples. As I was speaking, I think the question must have arisen in the hearts of many of my hearers, "What is a disciple of Chris?" and also the further enquiry, "Am I one of His disciples?" It is very important for us who are preachers to know what a disciple is, for we are bidden to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. What is involved in the making of a disciple? We cannot fully answer that question until we know what a disciple is!

In order to help you, dear Friends, to ascertain whether you are truly disciples of Christ, I am going to call your attention to four texts in which the Lord Jesus mentions some of the things which are essential to true discipleship—and without which a man cannot be His disciple. I pray the Holy Spirit to make those who are disciples to rejoice in their discipleship and to count it the highest honor of their lives to have the Son of God for their Teacher and Leader. And I also pray that those who fear that they are not His disciples may be brought to Him even while I am speaking. May they, by His Grace, resolve that they, also, will be His disciples, and

may the Divine Spirit conduct them into the School of Christ, that they may sit at His feet and receive His Word from this time forth!

I. The first mark of discipleship to which I am going to call your attention is mentioned in the Gospel according to Luke, the 14th Chapter, and the 26th verse. "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life, also, he cannot be My disciple" These words prove that the first requisite of a disciple of Christ is WHOLEHEARTEDNESS.

The meaning of this passage is that Christ's disciple must so love his Lord that, in comparison with the love he bears to Christ, all other love shall burn but dimly and be scarcely worthy of even being named! This verse has puzzled a great many people because they have supposed that Christ really wished them to hate their father, mother, wife and so on. The slightest possible thought ought to have convinced them that He could *never* have wished them to do anything of the kind! If you take Christ's Words without seeking to find their meaning, you can make mischief out of them, for, sometimes, He speaks very boldly—I might almost have said, with the utmost reverence, very *baldly*—in order to make His point clear. He speaks in a manner which, in others, would be foolishness. He goes beyond what He means us to understand literally, because He knows that this is the only way in which He can bring His teaching home to some minds. There was really no reason why anybody should have made such a mistake and understood these words just as they stand in our version. It is not possible for a man to be a disciple of Christ if he hates *anybody*, for the religion of Christ is a religion of love—and hatred must be expelled from the bosom of those who receive it. It is utterly inconceivable that anybody who hated his father could be a disciple of Christ—that would be a violation of the First Commandment with promise, which bids us honor our father and mother. Certainly Jesus never taught anything contrary to the Commandments of His Father! He who hated his own mother would be a monster—not a disciple of the meek and lowly Jesus who cared for His mother amid His agony on the Cross. Does not nature, itself, teach us that our love should certainly flow out to those who were the authors of our being and who so kindly cared for us when we were unable to take care of ourselves? I am not afraid that any of you, dear Friends, will err in that respect and then fancy that you have the warrant of Christ for hating your father and mother!

Then, should not a man love his wife? Yes, that he should, for the Apostle says, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church." I have heard of one who was said to love his wife too much, but I did not believe it, because the model for a husband's love is, "even as Christ also loved the church," and who could go beyond *that*? A man may be excessively submissive or devoted which, in some cases, may have been carried to such excess as to become folly and idolatry, but from this evil I hope that we have escaped. But a man could *not* be a disciple of Christ if he *literally* hated his wife. He would be unworthy of the society even of the moral, much more of the society of the gracious, if he so

acted. Neither can we imagine Christ bidding anybody hate his own children. Nature itself dictates that we should love them and we do—we cannot help it, nor do we wish to help it. We should be traitors to Christ if we tried to expel an affection which He, Himself, has implanted within us. No man can hate his children and yet be a Christian! It would be a clear proof that he had nothing of Christianity about him, just as the Apostle says, of another matter, "if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel." So, we are not to hate our children—nor are we to hate our brothers and sisters. It is only in a comparative sense and not *literally*, that the term can possibly be used. And to make this very clear, Christ said that we are to *hate our own life*. The next step to that would be suicide and the Savior could never have meant any of His followers to commit that terrible sin! What He did mean was that He is to have the first place in our hearts and all who are dear to us are to be second. Yes, and we ourselves are to be second, too, and are to be prepared to break every earthly tie rather than the tie which binds us to Christ Jesus our Lord.

The teaching of the text is that *Christ is to be loved more than all our relations.* It may be that we shall never have to endure the test of choosing between Christ and our loved ones, but some have had to do that. You have, perhaps, heard the story of the martyr who was going out to be burned for Christ. And as his enemies had failed to move him from his steadfastness, they made one more attempt to do so as the good man was on his way to the stake. They brought out his wife and his 11 children to meet him and they were all weeping and kneeling down before him, begging him to recant. His wife pleaded, "My Husband, be not so willful! Do not go to the stake," and each of the children had been taught to lay hold of the father and to say to him, "Father, live for my sake," "and for mine, Father." This was a trial which the good man had not expected and as he stood there, surrounded by his loved ones, he said, "God knows how dearly I love you all, and how gladly, for your sakes, I would do anything that I may do, with a clear conscience, to make you happy. But, compared with Christ and His Gospel, which I love with all my heart and soul, I must give you all up and treat you as if I had no love for you. I must go and yield up my body to be burned for the Truth of Christ. Therefore, do not weep and break my heart." It was grandly done on his part and you can probably get a better idea of the meaning of my text from that incident than I could possibly convey to you by any words that I might use.

Well, dear Friends, though your faith may never be subjected to that supreme test, a matter of life or death, yet you may have to be tested to see whether you love Christ more than you love your relatives. There was a certain godly bishop who had a brother who came and asked him to ordain him and to give him a living, for his trade did not prosper as he wished. The good bishop loved his brother and he would have done anything that was right to help him. But he said, "My dear Brother, you are not called of God to undertake such work, so I cannot ordain you, or give

you a living. I will gladly give you money to help you in your business, but I cannot make use of my position in the church to put you into a place for which you are not qualified. Had you been a fit and proper person for this holy service, I would have been delighted to carry out your wish. But as you are not, I cannot use my influence on your behalf in this way." I wish that every bishop would act in the same way—they have not always done so. Yet there was the crucial point in which the good man felt that he must rather regard the welfare of the church than the benefit of his relative and he must treat him just as though he had been a stranger. That is how we should deal with anyone who comes to us for a similar purpose—if he is a suitable person, let him be encouraged to enter upon the work for which he is qualified. But if he is not, let him go back to his forge, or to his plow, or to his awl, or to his plane, or let him engage in some business in which he will be earning a livelihood and doing no mischief to his fellow men, as he would do if he were put to work for which he is not fitted.

Have not some of you, dear Friends, met with cases in which the same difficulty has arisen? You must either do a wrong to Christ and to His people, or else you must appear to be hard and unkind towards some relative or friend. Well, you cannot be Christ's disciple if you hesitate a minute about what course you shall adopt! Brothers, sisters, wife, children, father, mother must never be allowed for a moment to be put in competition with Christ! I remember one who, when quite a youth, felt that he must be baptized on profession of his faith in Christ, but those who were nearest and dearest to him did not agree with him upon that matter. He had not one relative who thought as he did concerning it. He laid his case before them and, being so young, he asked that he might have permission to carry out his conscientious convictions, but, at the same time, he said, "If the permission does not come, I shall obey My Lord's command, for, in this case, I acknowledge no father or mother, but simply do as my Savior bids me." In matters of religion, Christ alone is our Leader—and our conscience can never obey any supremacy but that of our Lord Jesus Christ. This decision is to be announced very gently, without any bitterness of spirit, with much humility—and prayer for wisdom and guidance—but there must be no question about your action! You are to put your foot down, and say, "In everything which concerns Christ and my soul, I call no man, 'father,' upon earth, but, at all costs, I must follow my Lord wherever He leads me." I think you can now see the drift of the Savior's Words. The rule for you who are His disciples must be—Christ first and everybody else as far down as you like. Everybody treated with kindness and due consideration, but *nobody* permitted to usurp the Throne of the great King. So, in the first place, we must love Christ more than all our relatives.

And, next, *we must love Christ more than life.* You know that there have been many who have not loved their lives as much as they have loved their Lord, for they have freely yielded them up for the sake of Him who laid down His life for them. Christians, in past ages, have known what was involved in being faithful to Christ. You may have read that let-

ter which Pliny wrote, concerning the early Christians, in which he said that he knew not what to do with them, for they were men of good character, but they had this one peculiarity that they must in everything follow Christ. They actually came with calm confidence, even to the Roman judgment seat, well knowing that if they were convicted of being Christians, they would be put to death—and they seemed as if they were eager to die—so anxious were they to put their love to Christ before any thought of freedom from pain or escape from death! What the torments were, to which they were put, under their many persecutors, I scarcely dare to tell you. Think of one of them forced to sit in a red-hot iron chair. And of others dragged at the heels of wild horses, or tossed to and fro by bulls, or torn in pieces by savage beasts. Everything that could add ignominy and pain to death was invented in those times—but did the martyrs flinch or turn back? No. They stood fast for Christ's sake and threw their lives away as if they were worth nothing at all, rather than be found traitors to Jesus Christ their Lord and Savior!

We are to be prepared to do the same as they did, if necessary. Only, in our case, probably it will never come to that point in this country where, thank God, we have so much civil and religious liberty. Yet, often, a similar test may be applied to us in a modified way. There may be, for instance, some loss of business through doing what we know to be right! There are some persons who have been in the habit of carrying on their trade on the Sabbath—but when they have become Christ's disciples, they have shut up their shop on that day, and people have said to them, "You will be ruined, you will never earn a living. You know, we must live." I have often heard that last little sentence, but I do not believe it. I do not see any necessity for us to live. There *is* a necessity for us to be true to Christ, but not for us to continue to live! It is a great deal better that we should die than that we should do a wrong thing. And we should be prepared at any time to say, "If necessary, we will let our trade go and we will be poor. But we will keep a clear conscience." And he who has that little bird in his bosom will never lack for music! And though he has scarcely a penny in his pocket, yet if he wears the flower called heartsense in his buttonhole, he need never envy the richest man in the world!

It may happen to you, in your business, that there will be an opportunity of getting money by being thieves in a respectable kind of way—there are plenty of such thieves about. But if you are a Christian, you will say, "No, money gained by dishonesty will carry a curse with it. I cannot touch it any more than I would handle blood-money. If it comes by any wrong method, I must leave it alone, for pelf and wealth shall not come to me if they cannot come honestly. I must and will serve the Lord Jesus Christ first and foremost."

Sometimes you know that for Christ's sake, our Brothers and Sisters go as missionaries to India or China, and some go to the Congo or to other stations in Africa where it is almost certain that, in a short time, they will be cut down by the fever. But how brave it is on their part! How truly a disciple of Christ is such a man or such a woman, who, knowing all that may be expected, nevertheless says, "My Lord calls me to serve

Him in Africa. And if He sends me to a mangrove swamp and to a fever, I will as readily go there for Him as if He summoned me to sit upon a throne."

To sum up the teaching of this first text, it means that *Christ is to be loved more than anything*. If this were the choice set before us—the whole world, or Christ—thank God there are many of us who would not wait a minute for the decision! And if this were the choice—shame in the eyes of men, or else the far greater shame of deserting the Savior, oh, I hope we would not hesitate even for an instant! "No," says the Christian, "Christ is my All-in-All. If I have all things, I will try to find Him in them and if I have nothing, I will find all things in Him." So the meaning of this text is that Christ must have wholehearted servants and if you come to Him to be His disciples, you must bring your whole being with you. Christ will never be King over a divided manhood. There was a time when this island was a heptarch and seven little kings ruled over it. But now we have but one sovereign and in this united realm we never shall have but one supreme ruler. So should it be in man's heart. The devil is quite willing to share the kingdom with Christ. "Oh," he says, "let Christ reign and let *me* reign, too! We shall make an excellent pair to rule over men." But Christ will not have it so. If we are to be His subjects, He will rule over us from the crown of our head to the soles of our feet, and He will not permit Satan to have a single stronghold within us that he can call his own. Out you must go, you vile usurper, for He has come who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords! The crown sits upon His brow, nor will He allow a rival even for an hour! Come, then, Beloved, what do you say? Are you wholehearted for Christ? If not, you are not His disciples. Listen while I read our first text again, and as I do, you read into it the true and full meaning of the words and feel their force. "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, and brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life, also, he cannot be My disciple."

II. The second requisite for being a disciple of Christ is found in the 8th Chapter of the Gospel according to John, at the 31st verse—"Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, If you continue in My word, you are My disciples indeed." So CONTINUANCE is the next trait in the character of a true disciple of Christ.

There are a great many persons who, like those Jews, profess to believe in Jesus Christ for a time. When opposition and persecution came, they deserted Him and so proved that they were not really His disciples. I do not know much about the merits of the question, which is often discussed in the papers, with regard to enlistment for a short or a long term of service in the Queen's army, but I know that my Lord and Master will not accept any of you unless you enter His army for life—no, more—for all eternity! In Christ's true Church there is no profession of faith merely for a time. Once you have made it, you have made it *forever*. The very way of confessing Christ, which is by Baptism, signifies this, for the man who is rightly immersed into the name of the Sacred Trinity is first buried and then he rises again—and that burial, having once taken place, can never be cancelled—whatever happens, it is an accomplished fact.

Then, again, the act of immersion can never cease to be a fact. Marks made in the flesh may be removed, but when the watermark has been put upon the whole body, it can never be removed. He who has been buried with Christ may have been a hypocrite and a deceiver, but, notwithstanding his hypocrisy and deception, he has passed through the outward form of the ordinance and he can never clear himself from the responsibility of it. It will be to his everlasting disgrace if he is a baptized reprobate! At the Day of Judgment it shall be conclusive evidence of his guilt that he either tried to deceive himself, or deceived God's people and made a mockery of the ordinances of Christ. But in the case of a true believer in Christ, continuance in the right road proves him to be a Christian.

First, we are to *continue believing Christ's words.* Whatever new doctrinal errors may spring up, we are to take no notice of them, but just continue in the faith of Christ. Then shall we be His disciples indeed! In these evil days, some new heresy appears nearly every week. There are some people who seem to spend all their time in inventing lies and these, joined to the old errors that are continually being vamped up, puzzle those who are not well established in the faith so that they scarcely know what is orthodox doctrine and what is heterodox. But he who keeps close to his Master, sits at His feet and learns of Him—when he is taught of the Spirit—and holds fast what he has received. Mr. Whitefield used to say that in his day there were some persons for whom it was impossible to make a creed. He said, "You might as well try to make a suit of clothes for the moon, for they change as frequently as she does." And we have many people of the same sort in our day! They are "everything by starts, and nothing long." But that is not a characteristic of Christian discipleship! A man is not Christ's disciple if he is "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine," allowing anybody to put an oar into his boat and turn and twist him wherever the intruder pleases. No, the Master's message to His followers is, "If you continue in My word, you are My disciples indeed."

But we must *also continue in obedience.* It is the part of a true disciple of Christ to do his Lord's will in the teeth of every temptation that may assail him. You will not be obedient to Him very long without being pulled by the coat, first this way, and then that. But the true disciple of Christ says, "If all the kingdoms of this world were to be given me on condition that I would fall down and worship the god of this world, I would not, for an instant, *think* of doing so, for I am enlisted in the army of the Cross. I serve the Lord Christ and Him alone."

And we are also to continue in Christ's word *when we are in affliction.* There are, alas, some who, if God seems to treat them roughly, grow mightily offended with Him. A dear child is taken away from their family circle and they say that they will never forgive God. They have trouble upon trouble and straightway they complain that God behaves evilly to them—and they are ready to turn back at the first crossroad that they come to in their pilgrimage. But this will not do for those who would be "disciples indeed." We must hold on, come fair or come foul, and this

must be our motto, one that I have often quoted to you and one that I love to think of myself—"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." We have committed ourselves to Him as unto a faithful Creator. We have lifted our hand in token of our allegiance to Him, and we cannot go back!

Dear Friends who have just lately been converted to Christ, let me exhort you to be steadfast and immovable! You cannot be Christ's disciples unless you are firm and decided. A Christian soldier who had to sleep in a tent with some ungodly comrades, knelt down at night to pray and every time he did so, he was assailed by all sorts of missiles. He consulted the chaplain as to what he had better do and that time-serving individual said he thought, perhaps, it was not necessary for the soldier to kneel down publicly before he retired to rest. The soldier tried the cowardly plan for one night, but he was very unhappy and his conscience was troubled about it. He had failed to bear testimony for Christ, so, the next night, he knelt down as he had done before and it pleased God that, by degrees, the opposition ceased and, more than that, the influence of his brave example and the words he spoke at different times, brought *all the other men in the tent* to kneel down, too, before they went to rest! Whether they were all converted or not, I cannot tell, but, at any rate, there was at least the form of prayer in that way. When the soldier saw the chaplain, again, and told him what had happened, the chaplain commended him, and then the soldier asked him, "Don't you think it is better for us always to keep our colors flying?"

That is a good watchword for you, Beloved—Always keep your colors flying! There are some professors who say, "We can carry our flag wrapped up in a waterproof case and when there is a favorable opportunity, we can let it fly in the breeze." No, no! It is best to keep your colors always flying. There may be danger and difficulty through flying the flag, but a hundred times worse danger comes from rolling it up and putting it away out of sight. Never be ashamed of what there is no reason to be ashamed of! If any man is ashamed of being a Christian, surely Christ has cause to be ashamed of him! Let it not be so with you, dear Friend, but rather let each one say—

"Ashamed of Jesus? That dear Friend
On whom my hopes of Heaven depend?
No! When I blush, be this my shame—
That I no more revere His name."

But, as to blushing when I acknowledge that I am His servant, may never such a crimson token of shame come onto my cheek! So stand fast in the faith, Beloved, for thus shall you prove that you are, indeed, Christ's disciples.

III. I must now pass on to a third mark of a genuine disciple of Christ, that is, BROTHERLY LOVE. Kindly look at the 13th Chapter of John's Gospel, and the 35th verse—"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

This is to be a mark of discipleship which all men can see. Whenever there is genuine love among Christian people, everybody knows at once that they are Christ's disciples. Good men and bad men—the most ignorant and the most foolish men cannot help seeing that love is, as it were,

a sign hung out as a mark of the business done within. That disciple whom Jesus loved, wrote, "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and everyone that loves is born of God, and knows God. He that loves not knows not God, for God is love."

Now, Brothers and Sisters, how are we to love our brethren so as to let all men know that we are Christ's disciples? One ready way is *by considering their needs and doing the best that we can to help them out of their difficulties*. If we say to the cold and the hungry, "Be you warmed and be you filled," and yet do nothing practically to help them, how dwells the love of God in us? What kind of Christianity is that which is liberal only in *words*? Dear Friends, there are many poor people among us who are struggling to get a livelihood and, alas, there are many others who cannot find any employment at all. And it is incumbent upon any who are being prospered by God to help their poor brothers as far as they can. Very often a man can truly help his fellow, even though he has no money to spare. I read a pretty story of a Cornish miner who was getting rather old and the captain of the mine said, "John, I think that I can put you into an easier berth than the one you now hold. You will get more money and you will have to be an overseer of others rather than to do much yourself. I know that I can confide in you, so I will put you into that place next month." The miner said, in reply, "Captain, do you know our brother Tregony?" "Yes," answered the captain. "You know that he is older than I am," said the miner. "He cannot do a day's work, now, and I am afraid that he will have to give up altogether. I wish you would let him have that berth because, though I am getting old, I think that I can keep on for another year or two. So let old Tregony have the overseer's position."

The captain did so and that is true Christian love when a man is willing to make a sacrifice because he feels that he is not quite as much in need as another. I remember saying to a poor widow who came one morning to the Orphanage with her child, "There is another woman outside. You have been talking to her, have you not, while you were waiting to come in?" "Yes, Sir," she answered. I said, "She has nine children and we can only take one. How many have you?" "Three," replied the woman. "Well, now," I asked, "which of those three shall we take?" "Oh, Sir!" she said, "there is not a minute needed to deliberate about it! You take one of that other poor woman's children. I will try to do the best I can, though it is a hard pinch for me, but that woman has a heavier burden to carry than I have, poor thing." I was pleased to see such a spirit of self-sacrifice and I am always glad when Christian people feel that kind of sympathy and love for one another. How often might rough roads be made more smooth if all acted like that! This is just what we must be constantly doing, for we cannot be Christ's disciples unless we have love for one another.

Beside that, we can show our love to our brethren *by bearing their faults*. It is a grand thing to be able to put up with a good deal. There are some people who seem to think that they have come into the world that other people may put up with them—and they certainly do play their

part, for they give other people plenty to put up with! And if anybody should in the least resent it, they say, "So-and-So is out of temper with me." I was going to say that an angel might be out of temper with some people, but I do not suppose that he would. Still, I wish that these people would remember the provocations they often give as well as the sharp retorts they sometimes get. "Oh," says one, "I do not believe that there is any love among Christians." Brother, you are measuring *our* corn with *your* bushel! You see that you have not any love in your heart, for, if you had, there would be some love in your eyes and you would perceive some, also, in others. But when it is clean gone out of your own soul, you suppose it must also have departed from others.

Of course, you do not admit that it has gone out of you and you imagine that you see outside of you what is really inside, so, when you say that there is no love anywhere, it is because you are looking at yourself in the mirror, that is all. But we who love the Lord can, I trust, bear with one another. I sometimes try to think which is the greater wonder—that you, dear Friends, have put up with me so long, or that I have put up with you! There are some of you who are the best people in the whole world and there are others of you who are not the best, but rather the reverse, and some of you do cause us trouble sometimes. Well, may God give all of us great patience and may we believe in one another! That is half the battle in all the difficulties that arise among Christians—that we should not impute wrong motives to our fellows, and not be ready to bring accusations against one another—but just believe that each of our fellow members is a child of God and if there is something which he has done, and which looks wrong, say, "It must have been misrepresented or misreported. I am sure it must—he cannot have done such a thing. I will stand up for him. He is my Brother-in-Christ, so I will defend him."

There is one other point in which some of you may exercise love for one another and that is, *in rejoicing in each other's happiness.* This is a point which is far too often forgotten. You know the tendency among men—here is a man who is rising in the world, so there are many who say, "Ah, humph!" They do not say anything more, but they shrug their shoulders and they look full of unutterable things. Or there is a Brother who has done well in the Church and he is referred to in terms of approbation. Then at once somebody begins to try to pull him down and says, "Ah, yes! I could have done what he has done." Then why did you not do it? "Oh, but he had such great advantages!" Yes, perhaps he had, and you also have had opportunities of doing something or other, but you have not made the best use of them. Now, instead of being jealous of our Brother's success, ought we not rather to be rejoicing in one another? If a man is poor, let him rejoice that everybody is not as poor as he is! If he is troubled about his worldly circumstances and he meets with a Brother who has no cause for such sorrow, let him say, "I am glad he is better off than I am. I do not want him to have anything to worry him as my troubles perplex me. I praise God for his prosperity, I bless the Lord for his happiness." Then when we see an especially gracious and gifted man coming into the Church and serving God, let us welcome him heartily

and say to one another, "Here is a true comrade for us and we are glad that God has sent us such a man to help us in His work."

I wish that we were all of the mind of that noble Spartan who wished to be a magistrate, but another man opposed him and received twice as many votes as he did. What did the Spartan say? "I am grateful that the country has better men than myself and I am glad to see that it knows where to find them when it needs them." So, dear Friends, be glad when God provides better men than you are to do His work. Let the preacher rejoice when another preacher excels him. That is the point to which we must all bring ourselves. Let the Sunday school teacher praise the Lord when she finds another teacher who altogether eclipses her. What a blessed thing it is for the Bible class teacher who has a large company around him, to find another Brother raised up who gets a better class than his has ever been! Bless God when it is so, dear Friends. This is one of those points that is often difficult, but it ought to be easy—and it *would be easy* if we had love for one another! And if we have not such love, we are not Christ's disciples.

IV. I must close now with just a few remarks about the last characteristic of a disciple of Christ. It is mentioned in the 15th Chapter of John's Gospel, at the 8th verse—"By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples." So the last mark of a disciple is that of FRUIT-BEARING.

What is bearing fruit in this sense? Well, first, it is *doing service for Christ.* He said to His disciples, "He that abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without Me you can do nothing," plainly implying that the fruit which is to come from abiding *in* Him will be seen by our doing something *for* Him. Christian men and women, the Lord Jesus Christ does not want to have any followers who never foil or fight for Him! He does not wish to have with Him shepherds who never feed His flock—merely nominal Christians who never do anything for Him. Does this touch any of you? Some of you come in here, Sunday after Sunday, and you sit and enjoy my ministry, but you do not help in the Sunday school, you do not distribute tracts, you do not preach, you do not do anything! How can you be Christ's disciples? I suppose you are like some officers of whom I have read, who draw large salaries because they are such distinguished ornaments to the service. It is a great honor to have these people in the army, though they never saw a sword drawn except on review days. So, no doubt, it is a very fine thing to have a number of Church members who are simply ornamental persons—they swell our numbers when they are counted with us and people say, "They are so very respectable that they help to make us all respectable."

Well, now, to tell you the truth, we do not care an atom about your respectability! We think that the most respectable person in the world—that is, the person who most deserves *to be respected*—is the one who is *doing something*! He who does nothing deserves to be starved, even as the Apostle Paul said, "This we commanded you, that if any will not work, neither shall he eat," which is much the same thing as letting him

starve. Let us try to be fruit-bearing disciples by doing all that we can for Christ, because, if we do not bear fruit, we cannot be His disciples.

Next, *fruit-bearing will be proved by our prayers.* Notice the words of our Lord—"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit." Prayer, then, is a blessed fruit of Divine Grace—prayer for others, prayer for Christ's Church, the prayer that brings down unnumbered blessings from above. Many a sick, bed-ridden saint who cannot speak and who can scarcely lift her hands, can lie there and do great things in prayer! Joan of Arc was not half so mighty as that poor invalid! She is the King's true warrior! While she lies there apparently helpless, she is commanding the legions of Heaven by her invincible petitions! See, then, dear Friends, that you bear much fruit in earnest, prevailing prayer!

Another method of fruit-bearing is by a holy character. O Beloved, I implore you to be holy men and women! Seek after close conformity to the likeness of Christ. Nothing does more good for a Church than for its members to live the Gospel in all their concerns at home and abroad.

But I think that we shall not bear fruit as we should unless we *endeavor to bring converts to Jesus.* Dear mistress, seek to win the soul of your little maid! Good master, employing so many hands, get them together, sometimes, and talk to them about your Savior—and pray that He may be *their* Savior, too. Can you do it? There ought not to be one barren member of this Church. Everyone ought to be able to feel that when he comes before God at the last, he shall be able to say, "Here am I and the children You have given me." For this let us live! For this let us labor! If we do not, we cannot be Christ's disciples.

I remember one who never did anything for Christ and when somebody spoke to him about his lack of fruit-bearing, he said that he bore *inside* fruit. I never heard that idea before, so I turned it over in my mind and, the next time I met him, I said to him, "Are you still bearing inside fruit?" He answered, "Yes." "Well," I said, "we shall never get at it till you are cut down." Fruit is evidently intended to be an *outside* thing that is borne for the benefit of others! So, in this respect, Brothers and Sisters, see to it that you are fruitful by rendering all possible service to our Lord and Master.

The real application of my four texts is this—Are you, dear Friends, Christ's disciples? Let that question be passed around and let these four marks help us to judge ourselves—are we distinguished from those who are not Christ's disciples by our wholeheartedness, continuance, brotherly love and fruit-bearing? May all these things be in us and abound. And if we have none of them, may we apply to Christ for them! Lie at His feet. Confess your sin and then look up, believe in Him and live forevermore! The Lord bless you, dear Friends, for Jesus' 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.

THE CHRISTIAN'S SERVICE AND HONOR
NO. 2651

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, DECEMBER 3, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING IN THE AUTUMN OF 1857.

"If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor."
John 12:26.

FEW men love service. Man prefers to be his own master, to do as he pleases according to "his own sweet will" and, like the winds, to be under no control whatever. But he who spurns the counsel of God, despises His Law and tramples on His commands, commits an act of suicide to his own liberty! Those who act thus, while they seek to be free, become the truest slaves, for, when they give a loose rein to their lusts, they find them like wild horses dragging them irresistibly along. Passions indulged turn into *habits*—and those habits hold them fast in their iron grip and they cease to be free any longer. He is the freeman who serves God and not the man who scorns the yoke of Jesus. He is the freeman whose shoulders bear the yoke of Christ. But he who refuses to serve Him is a slave. He who will not obey Jesus, obeys a tyrant master called Satan, or worse still, himself, for, after all, the greatest tyrant to a man is his own sinful self! There is no slavery harder to endure than the despotism of evil habits when they have grown strong upon a man and fixed their chains upon his neck. The service of Jesus is perfect liberty—those who wear the collar of Jesus find it to be a royal badge which makes them far more honorable than would the Order of the Garter, or the Bath. There is nothing that can so exalt a man as to make him a servant of Jesus! And the man who bends his neck willingly to serve Him, manifests the greatest wisdom.

What is it to serve Jesus? The text says, "If anyone serve Me, him My Father will honor." Well, we can serve Him *in the faith that we hold, in the sufferings we endure* and very much *in the acts we perform*.

First, we can serve Him in the faith that we hold. This is true service. I believe certain Doctrines of God because God says they are true—and the only authority I have for their truth is the Word of God. I receive such-and-such Doctrines, not because I can prove them to be compatible with reason—not because my judgment accepts them—but because God says they are true! Now this is one of the best services we can render to God—to submit ourselves to Him in our belief of what He has revealed and ask Him to fix His Truths in our hearts and make us obey them. There are some who have an idea that doctrinal belief is nothing, but I tell you again, one of the highest services we can render to God is to fully believe

in the Doctrines of His Word. So far from doctrinal error being a thing of no moment, it is a great *sin* because the Word of God is plain—and he who does not, by searching, discover the Truth—sins against God in the proportion in which he errs from His Word. But he who manfully proclaims the whole Truth of God and he who heartily receives it, alike, obey God and perform one of the highest services that can be rendered to the Most High!

Secondly, we honor Him, also, *when we suffer for His name's sake*. When, with patience, we bear the fires of persecution. When, with calmness and resignation, we listen to the lies and calumnies that fly abroad. When we continue in well-doing though all manner of evil is said against us on account of our devotion to Jesus, then we serve Him and God is thereby honored and glorified. Our Lord Jesus bids us, in that day, rejoice and leap for joy, for great is our reward in Heaven, for so persecuted they the Prophets who were before us. And, moreover, when our suffering does not spring from our enemies, but when God, Himself, lays us on the bed of affliction, we honor Him when, worn with pain and tossed from side to side, we are calm and patient under the sickness and say—

"Father, I wait Your daily will—
You shall divide my portion still.
Grant me on earth what seems to You best,
Till death and Heaven reveal the rest."

The patient bearing of poverty is a service to God. The calm endurance of pain is honoring the Father—submission to His will in all the proceedings of His Providence is the very essence of devotion.

Thirdly, *we can serve God in the outward acts we perform.* And that is the highest form of service. Indeed, if we do not serve God thus, we do not really serve Him at all. "If anyone serve Me, him My Father will honor," says Christ. And, in proportion as a Christian man serves God in his outward life and conversation, shall he receive honor of God. There are two or three ways of doing that. Some may serve God by the performance of *ecclesiastical duties*, as they are called. Others, *by the more private duties of religion.* But others, and more frequently, by the acts of daily life. Those who preach the Gospel from love to God and for His Glory, serve Him, and shall be honored in their labor. The deacon who toils for the Church of God is serving Him, and shall be blessed in what he does. The Sunday school teacher serves God. And each of you who have been preaching in the open air, or have, in smaller places of worship, been testifying to the Truth of God and now have come here to take the rest which all tired soldiers need—each of you who have been engaged in humbler work, teaching a little class, or giving away a tract—you have each and all, in some measure, served God!

But if you have not served God in this way, today, you can serve God tomorrow in your shop, or in your family. The servant can honor God even when she sets the things out for the daily meal and when she clears them away. The nurse can serve God when, with tender hands, she binds up the wounds of the distressed and suffering. And the merchant, also, when he makes honesty the law of his dealings and afterwards, with a liberal hand, dispenses some of his goods to feed the poor. Do not think

it is necessary to be a clergyman and wear a gown in order to serve God—you may serve Him behind the counter, at the plow, or driving your horses! Whatever your hand finds to do may be done to the Glory of God! Common actions reveal the essence of true piety. Those things which we call common, God does not think so. When they are done with a right motive and in a right spirit, they become as great, in God's sight, as the sermons of the minister who preaches to the largest audience! And I take it that there will be people before the Throne of God, who, for acts which they have done in private, will be stationed nearer to the Savior than some of those who occupied very high positions in the Church! They went foremost in the day of battle and received great applause from men, yet, God knows that they were not one-half so faithful to their Savior as the poorest cottager, or the meanest peasant who, for the good of souls, and the Glory of God, bent his knees before the Lord in earnest and believing supplication.

I cannot enlarge upon these points. You must think over them when you get home. You may serve God in the belief of His Doctrines, in suffering the dispensations of His Providence and in obeying all His Commandments, not forgetting the Commandment concerning Believers' Baptism. Now I come to the subject of my discourse, in our Savior's declaration—"If anyone serve Me, him My Father will honor," from which I learn that *God will honor him in this world, in the future and intermediate state, at the Day of Judgment and throughout eternity!*

I. GOD THE FATHER WILL, EVEN IN THIS WORLD, HONOR THE MAN WHO SERVES THE SAVIOR!

Some of you look at me with astonishment and are ready to say, "That is not true! God does not, as a rule, honor His servants in this world. It is a notorious fact that those who serve God best receive the most dishonor in this world, that those who are the most valiant for the Truth of God are called upon to endure the largest share of ignominy! Instead of the greatest honor, they have the most of the world's hisses, derision and scorn." Yes, I know that "the friendship of the world is enmity with God" and that if any man will be a friend of God, he will generally be an enemy to this world. But yet, for all that, the servants of Christ *do receive respect and reverence even in this time-state*.

I remark, first, that *Christ's servants receive honor in the Church*. Any man who serves God faithfully will be sure to be honored by the Lord's true servants. Let him preach the Truth fearlessly, fully, earnestly and heartily, and he need not be afraid that he shall not be honored by his Brothers of the Church, for the good will assuredly rally round him and not be backward in showing respect to him. Nor, if he toils in the Sunday school, shall he be without honor. Nor will he lack it, if he is but a humble member of the Church, if he is only seeking to glorify his Lord. Just in proportion as each one serves God will he be honored!

I deny the statement which is made, sometimes, that honor is not given to those members of Churches who do not happen to occupy what is called a "respectable position in society." I believe that if an examination were to be made into the conduct of the affairs of this Church, for

example, it would be proved that the greatest honor is given to those who work most for God. There are, I am sure, some of our members to whom we all look up with respect and reverence, though they are not men of position or wealth. But they have something more and something better—they have the love of God in their hearts and they manifest the effect of that love in their lives—and that makes them most honorable! And putting this Church as the representative of all Christian Churches in this matter, I may say that the poor man, in his efforts to do good, will be honored equally with the rich! No distinction is made by God on account of rank or estate, but each one is honored according as he loves and serves the Savior. If respect is shown to the rich as well as to the poor—and why should the poor be honored and the rich despised?—it is not because of his worldly wealth, but because he is also rich in faith! A rich man's soul is as good as the poor man's, and the poor man's soul is as good as that of the rich—and when the poor man labors for Jesus as well as the rich man, they will alike receive honor!

I believe it is so among us here and trust that it will continue to be so in all time to come. At any rate, as long as this arm can strike a blow against the spirit of social bigotry, it shall be driven from our midst! We do not admit any thought of caste among us and I am constrained to believe that the general practice, in all our Churches, is to reverence men according to their *usefulness*. Do not imagine, then, that you are debarred from any position in the Church, or from any of the honors of your Brethren because you do not happen to be rich. The Church will honor those who serve the Lord and so will God, Himself, for Jesus said, "If anyone serve Me, him My Father will honor."

But, next, *those who serve Christ will also receive honor from the world*. The world itself honors the Christian. You say, "How can that be? I am the subject of the laughs, the jeers and the ridicule from morning to night! I am called 'a canting Methodist,' or something of that sort. And I can't think, therefore, that I am honored by the world! I feel rather that I am dishonored." But you *are* honored, after all, though it may be you do not know it. You are honored in the consciences of those very men who thus speak evil of you. Whatever they may say, in their hearts they reverence you. They may call you evil names, but they know they do not belong to you. They may call you a dog, but they believe you an angel. They may call you black, but they believe you white. Here is a proof of it—if they were to see you fall into sin, they would say directly, "He is one of your members!" Why would they say that? Because they really expect you to be holy and consistent! And it is not till they have proof of the fact that you are not so, that they can deny the respect and honor of their own consciences. An ungodly man is not to be found whose conscience would not force him, inwardly, to do you honor. Even Satan himself was obliged to admit the majesty of holiness, if, as Milton tells us—

"Abashed the devil stood,
And felt how amazing goodness is."

Goodness is an amazing thing to a wicked man! He sees you bear with patience what he says against you—it surprises him that you forgive injuries and it vexes his heart—he cannot understand it. There is a power

about Christianity which makes the enemy fall back, and a majesty in righteousness before which he must tremble. You need not concern yourselves about taking care of your own character before the eyes of men, but you must see that it is right before the eyes of God—if you serve Him, He will honor you!

Again, *the most wicked men will honor the Christian when they come to die*. I have known some few hardened wretches who passed out of the world as they had lived—in open rebellion against God and who, to the last, therefore, despised religion. But, generally, I have found that the scoffer changes his tone when death approaches. "Send for someone to visit me," is his cry then! "For whom shall we send? Shall it be John, the swearer?" "Oh, no, send for John, the praying man. I should like him to pray over me. Or send for the minister." "But why don't you ask for your old companions? You used to say that they were the jolliest fellows, they were the merriest men you ever met? You know there is no such place as Heaven or Hell, for you often said so when in their company. Many a glass have you drunk with them—why not have another before you die?" Ah, such companions as these will not do for him now! And that fact proves the honor which such a man, at last, puts upon the Christian. His language then is, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." The ungodly scorn their own comrades' society and run to our camp then! They think there is something in religion when they come to die! The voice of the last enemy speaks with a tongue of iron and a sound of thunder—and makes even the most hardened conscience honor the Christian.

Once more, *the Christian man is honored after he is dead*. If you want to be thought well of and spoken of with high honor, you must die. All of us who are alive must be slandered and criticized. But when we have been a while in our graves, it may be that we shall, in our turn, be the masters! Many men are stars to the world now who were but glowworms when they were alive! While playing their part among men, they were run down, scoffed at and spoken of as everything that was bad. But they descended to the grave, a few years passed away and now, looked at from a distance, they bear a very different aspect to the general eye! Looking upon them now is like gazing at the sun—you see their brightness far more than their spots! The world misses the Christian when he is gone. Perhaps one member of a family is godly and the rest are not, and they say, "Oh, we don't care for him, he is too religious for us!" But they will feel a sad gap when he is gone—and one which they will not be able to fill. The neighborhood, too, in which he lived, will miss him because his words of kindness and deeds of mercy will be seen no more. They will say, "Well, after all, he was a good fellow." How often have I heard that, "Ah, well, he was not so bad, after all. There are not many left so good as he was." You don't know why this change has been worked in people's minds, but so it often is. Death embalms the poorest Believer and lays him in the sepulcher of the kings! He who was but a common Christian becomes a brilliant light when God hangs him up, like a lamp with a silver chain, to glitter from the skies!

II. GOD WILL HONOR HIM IN THE INTERMEDIATE STATE.

When a Christian dies, his soul at once ascends to Heaven. Not so his body—that continues in the grave until the Resurrection morning and, sometimes, we are anxious to know what will be our lot while our souls are separated from our bodies. Let me say then, for a certainty, according to God's Word, that before our bodies rise, we shall be in Paradise, for Jesus said to the penitent thief, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." There is no "purgatory" into which souls are dragged in order to be prepared and made fit for Heaven! But although they go at once to the Heaven of God, and rest in His Presence, it is not the full consummation of their bliss. They will not be satisfied till they wake up in the likeness of Christ—when body and soul will be reunited.

What are the honors which the pure spirit will receive when, freed from this tabernacle of clay, it comes before its God? The Almighty will then say, "I see My son," or, "I behold My daughter. Your spirit I loved with an everlasting love. Your name I wrote in the Covenant of Election. I sent My Son to die for you. I called you by My Grace. I led you through all the desert. I fed you by My hand. I guided you through dangers and snares into the right way and I will keep you forever. Thrice-honored servant, you have done well—enter and take your place among the spirits of the redeemed." Angels, too, are ready to attend upon the saints. A saint in Heaven will receive all the service which an angel can perform. If the archangel Michael, himself, could do the meanest service for a child of God, he would consider himself thrice honored! "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" We cannot tell what glory the saints have, even now, while their bodies are yet in the house of death and under the cold slab. Yet we know that their souls are more glorious than the angels—and more honored than the cherubim that sing incessantly before the Throne of Jehovah!

III. If any man serves the Lord Jesus Christ, HE SHALL BE HONORED IN THE GREAT DAY OF JUDGMENT.

That day is approaching. I will not attempt to describe the scene which shall be witnessed when the heavens and the earth shall flee away—and when the quick and the dead, the righteous and the ungodly shall stand before God. In the Day of Judgment, God will honor His servants from the mouths of the wicked, from the mouths of devils, from the lips of angels and from His own lips!

At the Day of Judgment, *God will honor the righteous before even the wicked themselves*. You proud monarchs, who put to death the servant of God, sending him in a fiery chariot to Heaven, how confounded will you be when the lowly martyr, on whom you wreaked your vengeance, shall stand before you and say, "Tyrant, I suffered for the Truth's sake at your hands." And what shall the lordly cardinal say, then, and the wicked priest who put to death, when they had the power, the men who would not forsake the Truth of God and do violence to their consciences, even though fire and torture had to be endured in consequence of their loyalty to their Savior? And how will the ungodly look the righteous in

the face? How will the hardened sinner feel when he has to confront that man of God whom he stretched upon the rack? How will *he* tremble who was the unjust judge who signed his death warrant? The Christian will then be able to point out his persecutors and the entire universe will regard them with disdain. "That is the man," he will say, "who stretched me on the rack! That is the man who cast me into prison! Yon wretched men chained me to the stake and that man brought forth the fire and firewood which consumed me."

But how honored is the martyr now! He is arrayed in robes more glorious, though not more white, than others can wear—garments more studded with jewels, though not more the workmanship of the Savior—and on his head is a crown heavy with brilliance! While the monarch who persecuted him and all who aided him shall be cowed into silence and shrink away in despair, calling upon the mountains and the hills to cover them, how will the Prophets be honored? I think I see Jeremiah standing before those kings who laughed at his predictions and with his fellow heroes exclaiming, in triumph, "O king, was not my prophecy fulfilled? Is not Babylon cast down? Is not Nineveh become as a heap? Where is Petra, the city of Edom? Where are the houses of Baal and the temples of the gods? Are they not fallen, fallen, fallen, even as I prophesied?" How great will be the triumphs of those grand old Prophets when they stand before those who scoffed at and ridiculed them—who then shall be obliged to confess that not one of their words has failed, but that every threat that came from the mouth of God has been fulfilled!

And I think there will also be great honor put upon the ministers of the Gospel, the men whom God has, Himself, chosen. The men who, by a sacred impulse within their souls, were forced to speak—not the man-made minister, made so by the imposition of the hands of the bishop, or of the presbyters—who shall then be confronted with those who despised their message. Unto such will Jehovah say, in the presence of the men whom He chose to proclaim His Gospel, "Inasmuch as you scoffed at the words of these, My servants, you did it unto Me. It would have been better for you that a millstone had been hanged about your neck and that you had been cast into the midst of the sea! Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire."

And every member of Christ's Church shall receive honor in that day. I am sometimes doubtful whether the sins of the elect will be read out before the world, but, if so, I am certain it will not be for the purpose of casting upon them any reproach, but only to make the judgment an impartial one. But of this I *am* sure, *that their righteous acts will be proclaimed*. This man was called a liar and he shall be proved to be truthful. Another was styled a hypocrite, but it shall be found that he was perfectly sincere and his false accusers shall be confounded. The biographies of the saints, written with the pen of God, shall be read out from the lips of the Eternal, that the universe may confer honor upon them! And, wicked men, whatever you have done in darkness, shall be declared in the light! Your midnight sins shall be exposed before the sun. Your most private acts shall be exhibited to the gaze of the entire universe and

all your petty acts of cheating and fraud shall be read out to the world so that men and angels shall hear! And while you are dishonored, the righteous shall be honored, even from *your lips*. They shall be honored by words that shall be forced from you in that day, when God shall make His people stand forth clear as the sun, fair as the moon and terrible as an army with banners!

Again, *the saints shall be honored even from the devil himself*. Do you not know that the saints are to judge the world? Nor are they to judge only men, for the great foe of God and man, Satan, himself, shall lift his brazen front, scarred with thunder, and receive his final sentence and begin his Hell anew! I think I hear God asking His saints, "Will you ratify the sentence that I have pronounced upon Satan?" I hear one loud, "Amen!" proceed from the entire host of the redeemed and I, for one, will say, "Amen," with all the voice I have, in favor of his condemnation! Full often have I fought with him and sometimes he has seemed as if about to triumph over me. And hurling his fiery darts, he has cried, "Now I will make a full end of you." But again and again have I been able to return to the attack and to exclaim, "Rejoice not against me, O my enemy! When I fall, I shall rise!" And soon he has been once more put to flight.

And I believe, in that Last Great Day, the Lord will allow His saints to put their feet upon the neck of this Agag and I think I see the feeblest saint—Little-Faith himself—putting his foot upon the neck of the devil. And I know that if I may but once get my foot upon him, he shall not receive a heartier crush from anyone than he shall receive from me! I owe him no thanks, I can assure you. Full often has he cast me down, but, *then*, I will tread upon him—that will be a day of triumph, indeed, when the old dragon shall be laid prostrate, to be assaulted by every child of God, and to be the scoff and jeer of the universe! And thus—

"The weakest saint shall win the day,
Though death and Hell obstruct the way!"

So the saints shall be honored by the wicked and even by the old serpent himself. But *angels, also, will mention your names in their songs*. Angels are the poets of Heaven and do you think that the heroes of earth shall have their praise sung in this world and that your deeds will not be sung in Glory? In the battle odes of the angels, there are names more celebrated than Alexander, or Hannibal, or Napoleon, and songs more melodious and seraphic than were uttered in honor of the battlefields of Blenheim and Waterloo! No praise shall be so great as that which angels shall give to the saints, except that which they ascribe to the Savior!

The Church of Christ shall be honored then. Many a time has she had to sit as an outcast amid the ruins of the Temple, with locks broken and tears trickling down her cheeks, enduring the disdain of the world. With the voice of lamentation, we have heard her cry, "My Lord is gone," and we have seen her tear her garments in grief and woe. But the heart of the Church is still true to her Lord, whom, seeing not, she loves and, at times, notwithstanding her desolation, she is the possessor of unspeakable joy and full of glory! As the proud ones of the earth pass her by, they call her hypocrite and laugh at her pretensions to be the Bride of King Jesus, saying, "Her Husband has cast her off and will not acknowledge

her! Is she not a despised woman?" Thus the poor Church sits and exclaims, "Behold, and see if there are any sorrow like unto my sorrow." But, in due time comes the Day of Judgment! Jesus steps from His Throne and, like Ahasuerus of old, stretches out the scepter and says, "My queen, my spouse, touch this emblem of mercy and live." Leading her up the steps of His high Throne, He places her beside Him and shows her to the assembled universe as the Bride, the Lamb's Wife. Then he will take the crown of universal sovereignty and will place it upon His own head, none other being worthy of the honor, while another regal diadem shall be placed by Him on the head of His elect Queen. Then, turning to the Church, He will say, "I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you." Her mourning shall then be turned into singing and she shall be clothed with the garments of praise—instead of the spirit of heaviness—while all her enemies shall be covered with confusion of face and be ashamed.

IV. Lastly, GOD WILL HONOR THE RIGHTEOUS THROUGHOUT ETERNITY.

The honors of the godly are not fleeting things—not the gewgaws of an hour that shall pass away. Last Thursday, when I was at Windsor Castle, I saw a man who was painting up the escutcheon of the last new-made knight, to be added to a long series of similar emblems which had their places in the hall. I said to him, "Are the escutcheons of all the knights here?" And I think he replied that they could be traced back to the very origin of the order. I thought to myself, "A fine honor this, to have conferred upon one a few stripes and stars, representations of rampant lions, beasts, tigers with two heads and such like! Wonderfully glorious these things make a man, to be sure!" A little paint can make it all, and the painter's brush can erase it! Yet there are men who will face death upon the battlefield to be thus honored, or to have their image cut in stone and placed upon a pedestal for men to gaze at! Wonderful glory is it not for a man to die for? It is such an honor, I imagine, as very few of us would care for, for this sort of glory will pass away.

But the honor which the Christian shall receive will never fade! When a million years shall have elapsed, it shall be as fresh as ever, for Christ's promise shall always stand, "If anyone serve Me, him My Father will honor." Christian, the hour of your honor is coming, when your name shall be pronounced by the great Judge and Arbiter of all, and you shall be acknowledged by Him as one among the followers of the Lamb! You shall receive more enduring honors than the men of this world can bestow! You may not receive the reward of an earthly coronet, but you shall be a priest and a king unto God, and shall reign with Christ forever and ever! Blush not, Christian, to look the whole world in the face, for in God's sight you are a king! Walk, therefore, with humility before God, and wait patiently till the Master shall remove you to your kingdom—there you shall be clothed with glory and become the possessor of everything which the heart can wish—honor, wealth, happiness, dignity and unspeakable joy shall be yours, and that forever. "If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor."

Now, what shall I say, in conclusion, to those who do not serve God? Well, I have but little to say to you tonight. I have often found that when preaching on these subjects, I have said little to sinners. God has said a great deal more to them than I have, for all that has been spoken respecting the bliss of the righteous has set them wishing it were their lot! It is not infrequently the case that sermons which seem to be more especially adapted to comfort saints, prove especially powerful to the conversion of sinners because they have been led to say to themselves, "All these promises are not intended for us." Let me ask you, then, my Brother and my Sister, if this is the case at present with you—when will you appropriate these things to yourself? I have told you that the righteous shall be honored. Now, what were the righteous more than you are? You are ungodly, but the righteous would have continued the same had not Divine Grace interposed and made them new creatures in Christ Jesus. You are a great sinner, but such were some of us. Whatever may have been the form of your iniquity, there are those now among the family of God who were as bad as yourselves.

I will ask you a question. Can you find, anywhere in the Bible, the declaration that you cannot be saved? Is it anywhere stated that it is possible for the man who comes to Jesus Christ to be lost? If you find that, then you may despair, but till then, you need never do so. But perhaps you say, "I know not how to come to Christ aright." I will tell you—*coming to Christ at all is coming aright*, for He has said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." It matters not whether a man comes running, limping, or creeping—so long as he gets to Christ, he has come the right way! You must not say, "I am too bad to be saved." That, in the hymn we sang just now, we are taught that nothing so much grieves the heart of Jesus—

"As that unkind, injurious thought
That He's unwilling to forgive."

I do think, poor Sinner, He would forgive you anything sooner than this wicked unbelief! If Christ were once more upon this earth and could suffer again in the flesh as He did 1,800 years ago, I believe that you might spit upon Him, buffet Him, and crucify Him again, and yet not see a single frown upon His face. But when you stand up and say, "I do not believe that Christ has love enough to forgive *me*. I do not think He is willing to pardon *my* sins." I see the heart of the blessed Lord almost broken by such cruel words! "What? Poor Sinner," Christ might well exclaim, "have I not love enough to remove your guilt when I purchased you with My blood? Look at My hands and My feet and see the wounds which were inflicted for you." I think I see Him looking you in the face and saying, in words of the utmost tenderness and compassion, "Poor Soul, speak not so, nothing grieves My heart like that—not to be trusted by one I love is the most harrowing thing I can experience. I could almost as soon drink some drops of the cup of bitterness which I tasted in the Garden, as to hear you say that I cannot forgive you. I *can*, I WILL, I DO! This very hour I say unto you, 'I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake!'" Remember that, Sinner—not for your sake, not to glorify you, but to honor Jesus Christ—"'and will not remember

your sins.'" Take heart, therefore, poor Soul! If you will go to Him, there is Grace for you, and you shall be saved.

But know, you Pharisees, that He came not to call the righteous! Sinners, only, Jesus came to save!

And now, saints of God, let me urge you to despise the scorn and the contempt of men. Think of the glories you shall soon inherit and the honors that your soul and body shall receive at the Judgment Day. By filling our minds with thoughts of the glories of Heaven, the Word of God, the blessings that are eternal and full of glory, the love of Jesus and the mercies of Jehovah, we shall be graciously strengthened and enabled to conquer in the fight and keep the road to Heaven. In the strength of the Lord we cry, "*Nil desperandum!*" We still believe that Christ is our Shield, and Christ our Sun, and doubt not that we shall hear it said at the last, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter you into the joy of your Lord."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 15:9-27.

This chapter contains some of the choicest of the utterances of the Lord Jesus to His disciples. On His way from the upper room in Jerusalem, where He had instituted the Supper, to the Garden of Gethsemane, where He was about to be betrayed, He spoke these wondrous words of cheer and counsel. He had been speaking to His followers concerning fruit-bearing. Now He turns to another subject.

Verse 9. *As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you: continue in My love.* Oh, what love for Christ's disciples to continue in—a love which finds no parallel except the love of the Father to His well-beloved Son! A love, therefore, without beginning, without end, without measure, without limit, without change! Oh, to be fully possessed by this love! I will read this verse again. It is such s sweet silver bell that we cannot hear it ring too often. "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you: continue you in My love." That is, live in it, abide in it, make it your home and your continual dwelling place.

10. *If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love.* Obedience will enable you to live in this love as the fish live in the sea. You shall always enjoy it if, by Grace, you are enabled always to be obedient to your Lord's commands.

10-12. *Even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love. These things have I spoken onto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is My commandment, That you love one another, as I have loved you.* Oh, you who profess to be the disciples of Christ, take heed to this new commandment which He has given and do not violate it! Let your very nature be love. Let your very spirit be love and then let your whole life be transmuted into the pure gold of love!

13, 14. *Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are My friend if you do whatever I command you.* Obedience to Christ's commands leads us into the banqueting house of

friendship. We never understand how friendly Christ is to us, nor do we become His familiar companions until we are obedient to Him.

15. *Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his lord does.* Things that he is told to do are not explained to him. It is enough for him to obey the orders that are given to him by his master.

15. *But I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you.* Christ has told all to His own chosen ones. There are no secrets which we would keep from Him, or which He keeps from us. Oh, what hallowed communion! This blessed result comes of obedience to our Lord. May God enable us to enjoy it richly!

16. *You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatever you shall ask of the Father in My name He may give it to you.* God's servants are all ordained. I sometimes hear remarks which remind me that there still lingers among as the superstition about ordained ministers. There is no ordination of a minister except the descent of the Spirit of God upon him, and the choice of the Church which calls him to his special sphere of work. All the saints are partakers of the Divine Ordination—they are all ordained to minister before the Lord. "I have chosen you and ordained you." For what purpose? "That you should go and bring forth fruit." Oh, that we may prove the reality of our ordination to this blessed work by bringing forth fruit—fruit that shall remain!

17-27. *These things I command you, that you love one another. If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the words that I said to you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My sayings, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for My name's sake, because they know not Him that sent Me. If I had not come and spoken onto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hates Me hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now they have both seen and hated both Me and My Father. But this came to pass that the Word might be fulfilled that is written in their Law, They hated Me without a cause. But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceeds from the Father, He shall testify of Me, and you also shall bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.*

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

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

SEEING CHRIST'S DAY
NO. 2652

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 10, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 23, 1882.

"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it, and was glad." John 8:56.

THESE Jews had claimed to be of the seed of Abraham and the Lord Jesus Christ admitted their claim as far as it was a valid one. It is always best, in argument, to concede as much as you can fairly grant to your opponent. Sometimes we take a few steps backward in order to get a firmer footing, that we may leap forward with greater sureness. In the case of these Jews, since they said Abraham was their father, the Lord Jesus admitted that they were his seed according to the flesh and therefore He said, "Your father Abraham."

Very much might be spoken in honor and commendation of Abraham. He was a princely man, well worthy to be called "the father of the faithful," for, though all Believers have a certain beauty about them because of their faith, yet Abraham stands head and shoulders above the rest of them—at least, above those who lived before the Incarnation of Christ. Much, therefore, might be said in his favor, but there is no word of commendation which could possibly exceed this utterance of Jesus, our Lord, to the quibbling Jews in Jerusalem, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it, and was glad." Let this stand as the very crown jewel among all the gems that make up Abraham's crown, that he saw the day of Christ through the mist of 2,000 years or thereabouts, and so saw it that his heart was gladdened at the sight! There may be many good things that might be truly said of you, dear Friends, but the best thing that ever can be said of you is, "They saw Christ's day, and were glad." Whatever else you do not see, if you see this, all is well with you! Blessed, indeed, are your eyes if you can, by faith, behold the Lamb slain for sinners and so behold Him as to be saved by His death. I do not think that anything better than this could be said of Abraham and nothing better will be said of any of you than this testimony from the lips of Christ, Himself, "He saw My day, and was glad."

Yet we must learn, from our text, a sad lesson before we go fully into its teaching concerning Abraham. It reminds us that however good a man may be, personally, he cannot possibly ensure that his descendants will be like he was. It was to the carping, unbelieving Jews that our Lord said, "Your father Abraham." What a contrast there was between the princely father and those who boasted that they were his children! There they stood, howling like so many wolves around the Lamb of God, all ea-

ger to devour Him! Their fingers were itching to pick up stones with which they might put to death the Lord of Life and Glory, yet they were the descendants of Abraham! The children of "the friend of God" were seeking to slay God's only-begotten and well-beloved Son! And, a little later, those who were descended lineally from the loins of the great Patriarch gathered in the street about Pilate's palace and cried, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"—that, "Him," being the Son of the Highest who was One with the ever-blessed Father and Spirit, and who had come to earth upon an errand of mercy and love. Yet the men who were the first and loudest to clamor for His death were those who said, "Abraham is our father."

It is almost enough to make some good men come out of their graves to see what their children or their grandchildren are doing. It is a sad thing that Divine Grace seems to quit some families. It never does run in the blood—that cannot be, for all God's children are born, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." And of God alone. Yet is it a very blessed fact that, often, if Grace does not run in the blood, it runs side by side with it, and godly fathers joyfully live to see their children treading in their footsteps. In some families, they have this highest of all honors—that they are a household of saints. Generation after generation, this is the testimony concerning them, that they are a company of people whom God has blessed. But, alas, it is not always so and as it was not so with Abraham's seed in Christ's day, as the Jews had, to a very large extent, apostatized so far that they even sought to slay the Christ of God!

You and I must not be staggered when we see the same thing occurring in other families, the heads of which were renowned for Grace. With holy diligence we should seek to bring up our children in the fear of the Lord so that if they do wander, it may not be through our fault, for if we have to blame our guilty neglect, or our evil example for their going astray, it will, indeed, be sad for us. But if we are satisfied, in the sight of God, that we have done all that we could to bring them to Jesus, then, if they should dishonor our name, yet at least there will not be this wormwood mingled with the gall that we helped them to tread the downward road. O Brothers and Sisters, with all your hearts cry mightily unto God that your household, to as many generations as yet shall come, shall never lack a man to stand before the Lord God of Israel, and to be a faithful witness for Him and for His Truth in the midst of the wicked and perverse people by whom they may be surrounded!

This Truth of God is manifest on the very surface of our text—Abraham was a great saint, a mighty saint, a clear-eyed saint whose gaze pierced through those 20 centuries and beheld his Lord! Yet, after the flesh, he was the father of a bleary-eyed generation that could not see the Eternal Light, even when it flashed directly upon their eyes! I think there is nothing that is more full of warning than this to those of you who are descended from godly parents. I charge you, before the living God, put no confidence in your descent. "*You* must be born again." Even if you are the best of all who have ever been born of woman, "*you must be born again*." Wisely did Job speak when he said, "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." No mother can bring into this world a per-

fect being, for the whole human race is fallen—we are the degenerate children of a father who, himself, was unfaithful to the allegiance which he owed to his God. The stain from that first sin of Adam is upon us all, so let us not say, "We are Abraham's seed." Let us not talk about being descended from a line of saints, but rather, let us take to ourselves what Christ said to the Jews on another occasion, "Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." However gracious our genealogy may be, unless our family tree begins in Christ and we, ourselves, are personally grafted into Him, we shall die in our sins and perish forever. God help us, who have been so highly privileged as to be born of godly parents, to lay that Truth of God to heart and to seek the Lord *now*, that we, also, may be numbered among those who are saved!

With these observations by way of preface, let us now come directly to the text. And we shall notice, first, *in what respects Abraham saw Christ's day.* Secondly, *the effect it had upon him.* That will lead us, in the third place, *to think of the respects in which we, also, may see Christ's day,* and to notice, in closing, *the effect which such a sight will have upon us.* If we see His day, we shall also rejoice and be glad.

I. First, then, let us enquire, IN WHAT RESPECTS DID ABRAHAM SEE CHRIST'S DAY?

I understand the term, "Christ's day," to mean, first, His day of humiliation here upon earth. Christ had a certain "day" when He lived here in this world. What if I were to call His whole natural life on earth one long Lord's-Day? Had the Jews known the things which would have made for their peace, our Lord's sojourn here would have been to that nation one long Sabbath! Had they understood the rest which Christ brings to believing, obedient souls, it would have been the true Jubilee to them! But there is another "day" yet to come, which, in the highest sense, our Lord will call, "My day." Know you not that He is to come a second time, without a sin-offering unto salvation? This was foretold by the angels who said to His disciples, after His Ascension, "This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven." Arrayed in the vesture of His Humanity—for He still wears it at the right hand of the Father—He will come again, but not as He came the first time—

"The Lord shall come! A dreadful form
With rainbow wreath and robes of storm!
On cherub wings and wings of wind,
Appointed Judge of all mankind!"

He shall come to gloriously reign on earth among His ancients! He shall come to gather to Himself His own, those that have made a covenant with Him by sacrifice. He shall come to set the sheep on His right hand and the goats on the left—and to make a severance between them that fear the Lord and them that fear Him not. This will be His Second Day, the great day of His appearing, the day for which all other days were made, after which there shall be no day that can be ended with a night, but the Ancient of Days shall reign forever and ever, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords! This is also His day and, without drawing fine distinctions, I have no doubt that Abraham saw Christ's day in this double sense—

and that he knew Him both as the Lamb slain, and as the King who is to reign forever and ever!

How did he see Christ's day? I answer, first, by a *far-seeing, clear-sighted faith*. I do not know what Revelation, which is not recorded, God may have made to Abraham—whether he had, in night visions, as Daniel did, beheld the King sitting upon His Throne. But, whatever he did know, he turned to practical use by *believing* it. He believed that the Lord would come in the fullness of time. He believed that there would be a Seed of the woman that would bruise the serpent's head according to the promise at the gates of Paradise. He believed, most assuredly, that a Man would come who would give rest unto His flock, that Man being his own Seed, in connection with whom God had expressly said that He would bless Abraham, and make him a blessing. "Your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies and in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because you have obeyed My voice." So Abraham's faith often realized what it saw. We have no record of the subject of his morning meditations when he rose early that he might spend some time alone with the Lord before the world became dim with smoke, or the business or ordinary occupation of the day had commenced. At such seasons I have no doubt that Abraham was in his chosen place of prayer, waiting and watching—looking into the far-distant future and seeing with gladdened heart that day of the Lord which now has come—and that other day of the Lord which is yet to arrive. He believed it and therefore he saw it!

Brothers and Sisters, there is no seeing unless there is believing! I have heard that seeing is believing, but it is not—it is the very opposite! Seeing and believing do not run this way—to see first and then to believe. They run the other way—believe and then see! And that is just what Abraham did. He believed God and then he saw Christ's day afar off and was glad. See as much as you like after you have believed, but remember our Lord's words to Thomas, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed"—that is, those who did not need to see first, but believed first, and then their eyes were so opened that they saw the salvation of God.

When once you get faith, there are many windows through which that faith can look. And no doubt Abraham saw Christ's day *through the windows of special promises*. There were not so many made to him as we have now with our larger Revelation in the entire Bible, but, still, there were sufficient promises to be used by his faith and especially that one which I quoted to you just now, "In your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." That promise, alone, was enough to make him know that God would, in due time, give him a Seed through whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed. If you want to see Christ, dear Friends, borrow the telescope of promise. Faith is very fond of that optic glass and it is amazing what she can see when she puts it to her eye. Ten thousand blessings, not seen by our natural vision, become visible to the eye of faith when we look at them through the medium of the promises of God.

Next, Abraham saw Christ with the eye of faith *in the types that came before him.* There were at least two very remarkable ones, or I might call them three. The first was Melchizedek. I cannot help believing that when Abraham met Melchizedek, the Priest of the most high God, first King of Righteousness and then King of Peace—and when he gave Him tithes of all and received His blessing—he recognized in Melchizedek One who was greater than himself. Neither can I help believing that after he had partaken of the bread and wine which Melchizedek brought to him, and had gone back to his own quiet oratory once more, he must—or at least he may have had some clear intimation, to his own mind, that this was one of the grandest types of that Seed which was to bless all nations of the earth! And, Beloved, have not we seen Jesus as our Melchizedek? When we have been battling with the kings. When we have come back weary from the conflict, has not Jesus met us and refreshed us with His bread and wine? Has He not blessed us and have we not then adored Him and felt that we must say to Him, concerning all that we have, "Take not merely a tithe, but take it all"? Blessed are the men and women who, with eyes of Abraham, have spied out Christ beneath the robes of Melchizedek! And I cannot help thinking that if we, the children, can do so, he, the father of the faithful, must have also done it! Paul could clearly see Christ in Melchizedek—and surely Abraham, also, must have seen Christ in Him!

But especially did Abraham see Christ's day in the type that was given him in Isaac—I cannot help thinking that when Isaac was born, not after the flesh, but according to the promise—for the seed according to the flesh was sent about his business, and his mother with him. And when Abraham made a great feast at the weaning of that child whose very name was laughter—and the promise of whose birth had made the venerable Patriarch, close upon his 100th year, fall down upon his face and laugh at the very thought. And whenever, afterwards, he looked upon that son of joy, given to him, not by the strength of nature, but by the visitation of God—I say he saw, there, a picture of Him who is not born to us after the energy of manhood, but by the power of the Holy Spirit, and who has come among us to bless and cheer us till our very heart laughs again as we think of Jesus, the Son of the promise. He is our true Isaac! Now is our mouth filled with laughter and our tongue is full of praises as we think of Him.

But chiefly, Abraham saw Christ in type and figure on that memorable day when he took Isaac up to the top of Mount Moriah and, at the command of God, unsheathed his knife to slay his son! Abraham must then have seen the Everlasting Father about to act in the same fashion towards His only-begotten Son. He saw, in Isaac, the victim bound and laid upon the altar and then, in the ram caught in the thicket, he saw the very symbol of the Lamb of God, who, in the fullness of time, would be offered upon the altar of Calvary for our sakes, that He might die as our Substitute and Representative. There could never have been, I think, a more plain parallel than in this case—and in all these types Abraham saw Jesus Christ's day, and was glad.

Once more, Abraham did actually see Christ's day, not by faith only, but in the disembodied state, after he was dead and buried. There he slept, with Sarah, in the cave of Machpelah, but his spirit was neither dead nor buried—it was in the place of souls separated from their bodies and it is remarkable that, in the account of the death of Lazarus, our Lord says that he was taken to Abraham's bosom, as if the Patriarch had given a name to that very world in which the gracious dwell when they quit this house of clay. From that place of bliss, he looked down upon all the wondrous Life that began at Bethlehem and closed at Calvary. He was seeing Christ's day even while Jesus was speaking to these Jews, and from the celestial seats he must have gazed with wonder that God should thus assume the nature of man!

II. That is enough concerning Abraham, except that we have to dwell, in the second place, for just a minute or two, upon THE EFFECT OF THIS VISION UPON ABRAHAM.

It made him glad. He rejoiced at the very thought of seeing Christ's day. It is a very strong word which is used here for rejoicing—"he leaped forward"—that would be the correct expression. At the thought of seeing Christ's day and when he did see it, he was glad. It is a curious thing that the second word should be a softer one than the other. There is no idea of leaping or jumping about the second, but in the first, there is. Master Trapp renders it, "His good old heart danced *levaltos* within him, as children use to dance about a bonfire—with an exuberance of joy"—at the very thought that Jesus Christ would come in the flesh and that he would see Him. But when he did see Him, that kind of rejoicing seemed to subside and he appeared to rise into a calm state of intense gladness.

You know that when Christ first makes us glad in Him, we do not know how to contain ourselves. But afterwards our capacity increases and we are able to hold more. There may be far less excitement, but there is more real joy after all. You remember how it is put in Isaiah 40:31—"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles." That is, when they are young and light. "They shall run, and not be weary"—that is, when they are getting a little stronger they do not take to flying. They know better, so they are content to run. But what comes next? "They shall walk, and not faint." The pace gradually gets less—from flying to running and from running to walking. Is that a growth? Certainly! It is always better to walk than to run.

Some young folk, when they are first converted, are very eager to fly. Fly away, Brothers, while you can, and you who can run, run as fast as you are able! But, mark you, it is the steady pace that does not kill, which enables us to live down death itself! I do not read that Enoch flew with God, or ran with God, but he, "walked with God." And he kept that pace up for 300 years! And he could have kept it up even longer. Let a man fly while he may. Let him run when he can, but walking is the best pace, after all. So, from our text we learn that Abraham rejoiced and leaped forward to see Christ's day. And when he saw it, he sobered down, and was glad. And that is the best condition in which the spirit can remain. I cannot help thinking that it was this inward joy—this intense but

calm gladness—that made Abraham such a noble man throughout all his life.

Isaac is a very little man compared with his father Abraham. Where there is a high mountain, there generally is a low valley, so it was with Abraham and Isaac, and, as to Jacob, though he was a great man in some respects and especially great at driving bargains, yet, someway, he had nothing of the nobility of Abraham who walked along in the dignity of a true prince among men. What a grand reply Abraham gave to the king of Sodom who had said to him, "Give me the persons, and take the goods to yourself." Though all the spoil was his by the laws of war, yet he answered, "I have lifted up my hands unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of Heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, and that I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, I have made Abram rich."

No, no, Abraham was too great a man to stoop at the foot of the king of Sodom, even to take what was his by right. He had fought for him and brought him back the spoil—and he handed it over to him without any exception but that which had been eaten by the young men, or taken by the others who had gone with him—his neighbors and friends who had a right to their share, although Abraham refused to take his portion of the plunder.

The Patriarch had many troubles but before his history is closed, it was recorded that "the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things." He had believed God in all things and God had blessed him in all things! His was a happy, calm, noble, dignified life almost throughout the whole of it. Oh, that you and I might drink in deep draughts of Abraham's faith and that our eyes might see Christ's day even more clearly than Abraham saw it—that we might have rejoicing and gladness like his! Nothing can so surely bring this joy to our souls as faith like that which he possessed.

III. So much for Abraham. Now we come to ourselves and enquire, IN WHAT RESPECTS DO WE SEE CHRIST'S DAY?

We stand, as it were, on a narrow neck of land between two seas of glory. Look back—there is Christ's day of mercy—salvation, reconciliation, death, conflict, victory. Now look forward and see, by faith, that sight which the Apostle describes, "For the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God"—in splendor such as never was seen before and which shall make the sun, itself, to be ashamed because of the greater glory of Christ—the Sun of Righteousness!

Now let us ask ourselves, *have we really seen Christ in His first day?* Search your hearts, dear Friends, and see. Have you looked to Christ as living and working out a robe of spotless righteousness? And then, as dying, that He might dye that robe crimson and make it fit for His chosen princes to wear? Have you seen Jesus on the Cross bearing your sins? This is a sight that is indeed worth living for! Heaven itself cannot match that sight and there is nothing that can excel it! When we are in sin's densest darkness, that sight brings more light than the rising sun. And when we are cast out, like the dry bones of the Valley of Vision, it is this sight that makes us live again and stand upon our feet, a part of the ex-

ceeding great army of God! Say, dear Friend, have you looked to Christ by faith? Are you looking to Him? Are you seeing His first day *every day*?

And then, *have you learned to look forward to His second coming?* It is not a subject for curiosity, as some make it. It is not a subject for speculation, as others make it. But it *is* a subject for reverent expectation! I know not when He will come, but I know that He will come. He may come at any moment and the sooner the better for me, for let Him come when He may, He will be welcome. And if I am dead before He comes, I shall see His day all the same, "for I know that my Redeemer lives and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." Fix your eyes upon the coming King, for it will make you strong! You are not fighting for a vanquished leader! He has won the victory and He will come back to wear the crown before long. There is no question about who is to win the great fight—Christ has already won it and He shall come back to divide the spoil with the strong. God has given it to Him and He shall have it!

Listen to the trumpets that proclaim His appearing! Your faith may almost hear them sound, "Lo, He comes! Lo, He comes!" It is getting towards midnight in the history of the world. Both the wise and the foolish virgins are all too apt to go to sleep, but the cry may be heard even now by the ears of faith—and it will awaken us into supreme energy of action for our Lord, "Behold the Bridegroom comes; go you out to meet Him!" How little there is of that going out to meet Him! Let us have something of it tonight as we go out, in imagination and in faith, to meet Him who comes quickly. What countless trumpets shall then sound to wake the sleeping dead! Glory, glory, glory, to Him that once was despised and rejected of men! Welcome, welcome, Son of God! All Your saints delight in You! Came quickly, come quickly! Make no tarrying, O our God!

IV. Now, lastly, we are to consider THE EFFECT OF THESE SIGHTS UPON US. If we really see them, they will do for us what they did for Abraham—they will make us glad—

"Are you weary? Are you languid?
Are you sorely distressed?"

Come, then, get a sight of the weary and languid One who died for you upon the Cross! There is no gladness so easy to obtain as this. Is it not strange that when the mourner's heart is heavy, we never hear that he looks to the place where the star of Bethlehem burns, though there is joy there. But he looks where human woe culminated in the death of the Well-Beloved. To the Cross the mourner turns his eyes, for there is no light that can come into the darkened heart except from the pierced side and broken heart of Him whom we call Master and Lord. Do you want true joy? Then learn that joy was born where Christ died and that joy lives because Jesus lives—it flourishes because He is risen! Keep your eyes on Him and they shall know no tears save those which shall bless both eyes and hearts.

Then, when you have found joy through looking on Christ's first coming, look forward to His second coming and get joy out of it, also. I cannot speak fully of that glorious event tonight, but, certainly, it is a well of

joy. If you have seen Christ in His shame, it is a fountain of delight to expect to see Him in His honor and glory. You are nobody now—the world knows you not, for it knew Him not—but when He shall appear, then will be the time of *your* manifestation also. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Now it is often heartache and headache, weariness and toilsome pilgrimage, but when He comes, it will be the marriage feast and all the merriment of which human hearts are capable! Oh, what a thrill of joy will go through this poor groaning world when He comes! Creation is in bondage and continually groans and, "we groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." But when He comes, creation itself shall shake off its heavy weights and shall get rid of its night dreams. Swathed in mist today, our poor planet scarcely gives forth a ray of light, but then, with all mists removed, when Jesus comes, surely she shall shine more brightly than the morning star!

And if every Believer is to be as the sun, what will this world be, filled with Believers, each one shining like the sun in its strength? Oh, clap your hands, Beloved, clap your hands, for He comes who is your Lord and Savior! "Let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad! Let the sea roar and the fullness thereof. Let the fields be joyful and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the forests rejoice before the Lord: for He comes, for He comes to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness and the people with His Truth."

Children of the morning, the morning comes! What a day yours shall be, then, when your sun shall go down no more forever, for your Lord's coming shall be as a morning without clouds! Blessed and happy are they who, by faith, can see it! They can say good-bye to sin and good-bye to sorrow! They can say to all discouragements, to all baffling, to all defeats, "Farewell, for He comes, our Champion who will lead us forward to the everlasting victory, in whose name we set up our banners and in whose name, even now, our spirit rejoices with exceeding gladness that shall never end!"

God give to each of you a portion in these glorious things, by a simple faith in Jesus, for His name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 8:31-59.

Verse 31. *Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If you continue in My word, you are My disciples indeed.* For there were many, in Christ's day, coming to Him for a while and then going away from Him—professing to believe and then stumbling when Christ proclaimed some Doctrine of God which struck them as being strange and hard to receive. Our Lord Jesus tells them that constancy is necessary to true discipleship. It is of no use to start running in the race unless we continue in the course till the prize is won. We are not true pilgrims to Heaven merely because we cross the threshold of our door—we must keep on, and on, and on till we reach the golden streets of the New Jerusalem!

32. *And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.* That is the result of being a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. With Christ, who is the Truth of God, to be our Teacher, and the Holy Spirit to bless His Words, we come to know the Truth—and the operation of the Truth upon the heart is to deliver us from the bondage of sin and of error.

33. *They answered Him, We are Abraham's seed and were never in bondage to any man: how can You say, You shall be made free?* What a lie this was! They were at *that very time* in bondage to the Romans! They had been subdued and conquered and, a little while after, they, themselves, confessed that they had no king but Caesar. Men are not very selective about telling lies when they wish to resist Christ—they will do anything rather than believe on Him.

34. *Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whoever commits sin is the servant of sin.* The man who habitually lives in sin is not a free man, for he is still a slave to sin. If he finds pleasure and delight in disobeying God, he has no right to talk about being a free man. His chains are rattling on his wrists—what can he know about freedom?

35. *And the servant abides not in the house forever; but the son abides always.* A servant may be dismissed from the household, but a son may not. If we were only servants of God, we might fall from Grace and perish. But if we are the sons of God, we never shall. If we ever did, in truth, call God, "Father," we shall always be able to use that blessed title, for the relationship of fatherhood is not a temporary one and cannot come to an end.

36. *If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, you shall be free, indeed.* If you have the freedom of sonship, you are free, indeed. There are none so free in our Father's house as His children!

37-39. *I 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. 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.* The real descendants of "the father of the faithful" are, themselves, faithful—that is, Believers. The father of Believers has Believers for his children. "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham." Our Lord had admitted that these Jews were Abraham's seed according to the flesh, but He proved that they were not Abraham's Seed in the high and spiritual sense, since they were not like he whom they claimed for a father.

40, 41. *But now you seek to kill Me, a Man that has told you the truth, which I have heard of God. Abraham did not do this. You do the deeds of your father.* He had not told them who that father was, but as it is a standing rule that men do the deeds of their father, the genuineness of the descent which they claimed could be tested by their likeness to their father.

41, 42. *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.* Any man who is born of God must love Jesus Christ. The

purity of His motives, the loveliness of His Character, the charms of His Person would all be sure to win the heart of a man who was truly born of God.

42, 43. *For I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand My speech? Even because you cannot hear My word.* "You are dull of comprehension. You are hardened in heart. You are proud in spirit. You are just the opposite of everything that is good and, therefore, you cannot hear My word," said Christ. "And this is proof positive that you do not love God and that you are not the children of God."

44. *You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do.* Remember from whose lips these words fell, even from the lips of the gentle Jesus! Honest speech is the surest token of a loving heart, but, nowadays, if a man preaches the Truth of God plainly and faithfully, men say that he is hard and unkind. But if a man glosses over the Truth of God and alters it according to his own idea of what will please men, then they say, "He is a kindly-disposed and large-hearted man." I would be disposed to doubt whether he has any heart at all, if he will sooner see sinners damned than offend them by proclaiming the Truth! I thank God that some of us care little about offending those who offend God! If men will not yield themselves to the Lord, we want not their friendship, but we will strive to make them uneasy in their rebellion—and if they resolve to be lost, we will at least be clear of their blood.

44. *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.* Falsehood is his natural element. When Satan deceives, he only acts according to his nature which is blackened through and through with lies.

45, 46. *And because I tell you the truth, you believe Me not. Which of you convicts Me of sin?* What a grand challenge! None of us can speak like that except in a very modified sense—but Christ, standing before His enemies, who gnashed their teeth at Him and would have given their eyes to be able to fix some fault upon Him—boldly says to them, "Which of you convicts Me of sin?"

46-51. *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. Then answered the Jews, and said unto Him, Say we not well that you are a Samaritan, and have a devil? Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. And I seek not My own glory: there is One who seeks and judges. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If anyone keeps My sayings, he shall never see death.* This statement quite staggered them! Yet it is true. To Believers—

"It is not death to die,"

they simply pass out of this world into a larger and yet more glorious life! They descend not to death, but they rise to immortality!

52, 53. *Then said the Jews to Him, Now we know that You have a devil. Abraham is dead and the Prophets; and You say, If anyone keeps My sayings, he shall never taste of death. Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the Prophets are dead. Who do You make*

Yourself out to be? "Who do You make Yourself out to be? Someone greater than Abraham and the Prophets?"

54-56. *Jesus answered, If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing: it is My Father that honors Me; of whom you say, that He is our God: yet you have not known Him; but I know Him: and if I should say, I know Him not, I shall be a liar like you: but I know Him and keep His saying. Your father Abraham*—"As you call him."

56, 57. *Rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it and was glad. Then said the Jews unto Him, you are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?* They allowed a wide margin in speaking of our Savior's age, for He was only 33 years old. It may be true that the sorrows of His life had so marred His Countenance that He looked more like a man of 50 than one of thirty-three. I cannot tell, nor do I know whether that is what they meant. But it is amazing that they should have said to Him, "You are not yet 50 years old."

58. *Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM.* They had asked Him, "Who do You make Yourself out to be?" And now they have His answer! "Before Abraham was, I AM," said Christ. It is the very name by which God revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush, "I AM." Yet Jesus takes this title to Himself! "Before Abraham was"—not, "I was." Notice that. But, "I AM," as if His life was one continued present existence, as indeed it is, for with God there is no past or future, but all things are ever-present to His infinite mind! When Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I AM," He claimed the Godhead—He declared that He was certainly God, self-existent from all eternity!

59. *Then took they up stones to cast at Him.* They counted Him a blasphemer and so He was if He was not all He claimed to be. I have heard of some who reverence Christ, but do not believe Him to be God—but how can that be? He evidently made Himself out to be God and this was the great charge the Jews brought against Him. For this, indeed, they put Him to death, because He made Himself equal with God. If He were *not* equal with God—if He were not *really* God—He led men to *think* that He was. And if this were false, it was a great sin not consistent with the holy Character of Christ. If He was not God, He was the grossest impostor who ever visited this world! But He *is* God and nothing less! Yet because He claimed this, the Jews took up stones to cast at Him.

59. *But Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the Temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.* Glory be to His holy name forever and ever!

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

THE HEAD AND THE BODY
NO. 2653

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 17, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 6, 1882.

"The head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."
Ephesians 4:15, 16.

IF I had to preach fully and accurately upon all that is taught in this text, I would certainly need to deliver a course of sermons, say five or six at least! There is such a wonderful depth of meaning in these Inspired Words that I might keep on expounding them and all the while be as one who takes water out of the sea—always wondering that there is so much more left than I can possibly draw from it. One writer says that the sense of this passage is as "compacted" as the joints of which it speaks, and that remark is a very true one, for here we have thought compressed as by hydraulic pressure! There is any quantity of it packed into the smallest possible space.

Our translation of the words here used by the Apostle is not, in every point, absolutely accurate. I wonder whether one could be made that would be so? We would need a paraphrase rather than an exact rendering of the original, for such is the fullness of meaning that no one translation into our poor tongue could really convey all that the Holy Spirit intended to teach by the Greek words. They seem to totter and tremble beneath the burden of the massive thought they are meant to carry. I am, therefore, only going to preach a plain, simple sermon upon the passage as it appears in our Authorized Version, which, though it is not strictly and literally correct in this case, is, at any rate, quite according to the analogy of the faith—and can be abundantly supported by other passages of Scripture of similar import.

Turning to the text, we find that the Apostle was very anxious that the saints at Ephesus should be knit together, like the different parts of one body. Unity is not an easy thing to attain. Have you found it so in your own family? In many large families and even in small ones, there are sometimes most unfortunate jars and disagreements—and it is a happy household, indeed, that is wholly joined together as one body. Look at the world in general, in its various corporations, societies and associations, and see what disunion and discord are manifested everywhere! Half the newspapers are occupied with reports of the squabbles in the different vestries, or in the big vestry that meets in the House of Com-

mons—or the other one that assembles in the House of Lords. I suppose we would scarcely be men if we always agreed on all points. Certainly, there is plenty of division among us. We seem to remember the Tower of Babel and the dispersion, for our tongues are still confounded and we misunderstand one another! And what is more criminal, we often misrepresent one another and we are all too apt to forget our Lord's Words, "It must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!"

Paul was most anxious to have the Ephesian Church thoroughly knit together. And the chapter from which our text is taken is all about unity and how to maintain it. With his manacled hands, the prisoner of the Lord writes to beseech them to be truly one—to walk worthy of the vocation by which they were all called by the one Spirit of God. He entreats them, with all lowliness, meekness and long-suffering, to bear and to forbear with one another in love. He most touchingly and tenderly pleads his own imprisonment as an argument with them to endeavor "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." "By the remembrance of my bonds," he seems to say, "put yourselves into the blessed bonds of brotherly love." And then he adds, "There is one body and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism." Both in the inward creed and the outward confession of it they were all one—they were not divided on these points—so he begged them to be divided in nothing, especially as he was able to assure them that they had one God and Father, above all, through all and in all—and one Christ, the Savior of all!

When he reminded them that He who ascended up on high is the same Jesus who descended first into the lower parts of the earth, I think he intended to remind them of the continuity of the work of Christ—that it was the same Christ who both descended and ascended. There was no change in the Worker, for the one work was worked by the one Person, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Why, then, should we split up, divide and hold a hundred opinions as if Christ were divided? Paul tells us that when He ascended on high, He gave all sorts of officers that were necessary for His Church—Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists and so on—all for this purpose—"for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." It is this that the Apostle aimed at—that the saints should be one in Christ Jesus and then, remembering that one very frequent cause of division is the instability of many minds, he urged them to "be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine."

But that they might know what they believed and not be driven away from it with every puff of wind. That they might not be misled and deceived by the sleight of men, by cleverness, by magicians who spirit the Truth of God away—as so many religious tricksters are continually doing nowadays, establishing lies and overthrowing the Truth by their magical deception—Paul seems to allude to the casting of dice when he speaks of "the sleight of men." And I am afraid that there are many people whose religion comes to them according to what they call, "luck." They hap-

pened to be born on a certain street and their parents attended a particular place of worship, so they believed what was taught there. But if the dice had fallen in some other way, they might have been Muslims, or Mormons, or Roman Catholics, or God knows what, for they have not any solid reasons for believing what they are supposed to believe! They hold it, as it were, by a kind of chance and they are quite ready to let it go if "chance" should so arrange.

The Apostle beseeches us to guard against this evil and to hold fast the faith, to be established in it and to know why we believe it, so that, "speaking the truth in love," we may grow up in all things into Christ, who is the one and only Head of the Church and to whom every living member is vitally joined. Every man who is indeed, saved, is a part of Christ's mystical body and he is to develop in harmony with the growth of the entire body until he and every other one joined with him in the living structure shall attain to the stature of a perfect man—the whole Church with its Head, Christ Jesus, becoming God's mystic, "perfect man" to be glorified forever and ever!

You see, dear Friends, that even when I am only trying to introduce this great subject to you, I am overwhelmed with the vastness of it! There is a mint of meaning. There are masses of un-coined bullion in the heavenly treasury to which the Apostle brings us! It is impossible for me to set forth all the spiritual wealth which is revealed here, but I shall endeavor to point out four things which are brought to our notice in the text. First, *our union to Christ the Head.* Secondly, *our individuality*—"every joint"—"every part." Thirdly, *our relationship to each other*—"joined together"—"that which every joint supplies." And, lastly, our compact unity in the one Church of Jesus Christ "makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

I. First, then, Beloved, I have to speak to you concerning OUR UNION TO CHRIST. We cannot do better than begin with this great Truth of God—that Christ is the Head of His Church.

Hence, we learn, first, that union with Christ is essential to the life of His Church. Men sometimes lose a foot, or a leg, or an arm, or an eye, or an ear. It is very remarkable how a man may continue to exist after he has lost several of his limbs, but he cannot live if his *head* is taken away. Cut that off and the decapitated body is dead in an instant! So, Brothers and Sisters, the Church of God lives because Christ lives and its life is entirely derived from Him. If there were no Christ, there would be no Church. And if there is, anywhere, a body of professors without vital union to Christ, they are *not* a church! They may have the name of a church, but they are assuredly dead! The Spirit of God flows through Christ into the whole of His true Church, permeating every part of His wonderful mystical body. But the Spirit of God is first on the Head and in the Head—and then from Him the gracious unction of the Holy One descends to the entire body. Ask yourselves, dear Friends, whether you are joined to Christ. Do you belong to that Church which is really one in Christ—the true Catholic and Apostolic Church? By *Catholic*, of course, I mean *universal*—the one and only Church of the living God! All who are in Christ belong to His Church, but those who are out of Christ are outside the pale of His Church and if there is a church that is not in Him, it

is not Christ's Church at all! So you see that union with Christ is essential to the life of His Church.

Next, *union with Christ is essential to the growth of His Church.* Christ's Church must grow. We, as a Church, must seek continually to increase. A living Church is not like the building in which it meets—the material structure may never be enlarged—but if the Church is a living one, it keeps on growing. The true Church of Christ in the world is always advancing and multiplying. As the Apostle says, in our text, it "makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." But, Beloved, there is no edification except that which comes from Christ! He is the Church's true Teacher. He is the great Master Builder and it is by Him that the whole spiritual building is fitly joined together. We try to preach those Truths of God which are the nutriment of men's souls, but they do not nourish them because they come from us—they only nourish them as they come from Christ! If you want to grow in Divine Grace, you must get from Christ all that is necessary for your growth. Do not think that Christ begins the great work and then leaves you to finish it. Oh, no! He makes us alive and He *keeps* us alive. He strengthens and develops the life that He has given—all its force and power must come from Him. Need I remind you of this? Yes, for I find it necessary to remind *myself* and, therefore, I judge that I must also stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance. Not a step heavenward, not in the least likeness to God, not to the smallest degree of holiness can you proceed apart from Jesus Christ your Head! Never forget this fact, simple though it is.

Further, *union to Christ our Head is also essential to our perfection.* Will a time ever come when a saint will be perfect in himself, apart from Christ? Never, for we are only perfect in Christ Jesus, or, as the Apostle puts it, "You are complete in Him." Shall I ever get to be so holy that I can stand before God without my Mediator? Shall I ever have a spiritual beauty of my own which shall render the imputed righteousness of Christ unnecessary for me? Never! For even in our highest estate in Heaven, we shall still need to have our vital union with Christ perpetually maintained. He is the Head of the Church triumphant as well as of the Church militant! He will forever be the Head of the Church made perfect as surely as He is the Head of His poor, weak, feeble, but ever-growing Church on earth!

Remember one more point, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, and that is that union to *Christ the Head is essential to every member of His Church*—not only is it essential to the body as a whole, but to every member of that body in detail. It is no use for my little finger to have unity with my hand and my arm if that arm is not united to my body, and my body is not united to my head. So each Believer must be personally joined to Christ. Whether he is only comparable to a little finger, or is like the strong bone of the leg, he must equally be joined to the Head—the smallest member of the mystical body of Christ cannot live apart from the Head, nor can the largest member. All alike, both great and small, comely and uncomely, manifest or concealed, must draw their life from Christ the Head! You must do so, my Brother or my Sister in Jesus, and so must I—let us always keep this great Truth of God in memory—a

church that is only united in itself, but not united to Christ, is no living church at all.

You may attain to the unity of the frost-bound earth in which men and women are frozen together with the cold proprieties of aristocracy, but it is not the unity of life! Or you may get the union of mere worldly enthusiasm in which men are fused together like molten metal, but the fire, if it is not of God, though it creates a certain sort of unity, creates not that *living union which God designs and effects*. The one all-important question for each of us is, Do I love the Lord Jesus Christ? If so, there is between my soul and my Savior a living, loving, lasting union. And if we all love Him, then Christ loves all of us, and we are living in Christ and Christ is living in us—and this is that marvelous miracle of union between the Divine and the human which, when men see it, are astonished! They cannot see the union itself, but they can behold its effects, as our Lord said, "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love, one to another." This was Christ's prayer for us, for in that great intercessory supplication of His, He pleaded, first, for His immediate followers and then He added, "Neither pray I for these, alone, but for them, also, who shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they, also, may be one in Us; that the world may believe that You have sent Me."

That is the first point in the text, and a very essential one, *our union to Christ the Head*.

II. From that I want to lead you, Beloved, as best I can, to the consideration of the second point, which is OUR INDIVIDUALITY.

The Apostle speaks of "every joint" and "every part." We are many as well as one and it is a great Grace of God when men and women merge their individuality in the community of which they form a part. Remember, dear Friends, that you, by yourselves, are not the Church and you must not always keep on saying, "we," if you are not doing anything at all in connection with it! You are yourself and you must look upon yourself as a distinct individual—your first care, in the sight of God—must be concerning yourself. The body is made up of many bones, sinews, muscles, veins, arteries and so on, and each one has its special place and function. And each of you has a particular position and office in the corporate body which is called by the name of the Church.

Think of your individuality and think of it thus. *See that you are really united to the body*. It does not matter how beautiful a member may be if it is not in the body, for it is not where it ought to be—and it is not where it will be of any service. There is an eye which has just been taken from a dead body. It lies on the operating table—what will you give for it? It is worth nothing and it must be put out of sight, for it is of no use. There is a finely-formed ankle, but it is useless apart from the rest of the body. How beautiful that leg is! Yes, but as it is not joined to a body, you must bury it out of sight. Now mark particularly what I am going to say and if any of you are wicked enough to misrepresent my words, on you will be the responsibility. This is what I say—*Nobody can possibly have spiritual life unless he is joined to the Church*. "Oh," somebody says, "Mr. Spurgeon said that people had no spiritual life unless they were members of his church." He did *not* say anything of the kind and he never

thought anything of the sort! "But he means that they must be members of the Baptist Church." He does not mean anything of the sort! "Oh, but he means that they must be members of some visible church!" Well, we would have to talk a little while about *that* matter, but I did *not* say that and I did not mean it!

I believe that every Christian ought to be joined to some visible Church—that is his plain duty according to the Scriptures. God's people are not dogs, otherwise they might go about one by one. They are *sheep* and, therefore, they should be in flocks. If I meet a man all by himself, snapping at everybody—I may be called uncharitable, but, I should hardly think that he was a sheep—I would be afraid that he was a dog. But when I see a man who consorts with his fellow men, feeds with them, takes delight in their company and with them draws near to the Great Shepherd of Souls, I say to myself, "I think he must be one of the sheep, for that is the way in which that animal always acts." So, Beloved, you should go in flocks or companies—that is to say, you should be joined to some Christian Church.

But I was speaking just now of *the Church*. There is a Church which is the Church of Christ. I see it not, but it is visible to Him who bought it with His precious blood. The members of *that* Church are scattered up and down throughout all the world. Some are in this Church, some are in other churches, but Christ is causing that Church to grow up for Himself from the girlhood state, in which she now is, till she shall come to the measure of the perfect stature of what God designs her to be when she is ready to become "the bride, the Lamb's wife." This Church, chosen before all worlds, redeemed upon the Cross, quickened, fashioned and called out by degrees by the Holy Spirit and united to Christ, is the one of which you and I must be members, or else we shall be lost forever! See to it, then, dear Friends, that you are vitally joined to Christ's Church and specially that you are united to Him who is the Head of it.

Next, *we must be careful to find and keep our true position in that body*. I call your attention to a point which may not seem to be as important as it really is. A body owes its beauty, comfort, healthfulness, happiness—perhaps its very life—to the position of the different members of which it is composed. Any book on anatomy will teach you that this is the case. There is no other place where our eyes could be but just where God has fixed them. Try whether you can find another position where your eyes could be so fitted for their work as where they now are. Our feet, with which we walk, are the best members to walk with and they are put in the proper place for that purpose. Suppose they were attached to our shoulders and we had to walk with them? I do not know how we would manage it. And if our hands were where our feet now are, it would be exceedingly awkward and difficult for us to use them. We would, indeed, be monstrosities rather than men if any part of us should be shifted from its present position! When men write romances about mythical beings, they describe hideous creatures whose heads are under their arms, or like the fabled Cyclops, with one eye in the middle of his forehead—but Christ's Church is not a monstrosity! Mind that you do not act as though you thought that she was.

Try, dear Friends, to be in the body of Christ what you were meant to be. I have known some men who were very eager to preach. They have had wonderful gifts of dispersion, but no power to gather or hold a congregation together. They have fomented a quarrel within a month and split up the church into fragments in order to purge it from some fancied evil—and they have purged it till there is nobody left in it! They think that it is the wickedness of men which makes hearers unwilling to listen to them, whereas it is only their own folly. They, who might have been useful as ears, listening to somebody else, are altogether useless as a tongue! Do not get out of your position, Brother, if you are already in it. But if not, get into your right place as soon as you can and do there what the Lord would have you do. Some persons have a very great gift of finding fault with other people, but I do not know any place that God has arranged in the body for *that* particular faculty! It is a kind of disease or, rather, an evil spirit which needs to be cast out! If you who are thus afflicted would try to do something, yourselves, you would perhaps discover that while it is exceedingly easy to complain of others, it is more difficult to do your own work in such a way that people cannot justly find fault with you! Do, dear Friends, seek to have every joint and every part in their right place. Let every ligament and tendon of the body be just where it should be. If we were to put the doors of our houses where the windows now are—and to put the roof where the foundation stones are, we should have very strange houses—and you will not find a true Church of Christ unless every part of it is in its right place according to God's order and arrangement.

A third thing about our individuality is that *every part of the body should be careful of its own health*. If I happen to be only like a little finger in the body of the Church, it is a great pity that I should be ill, for the whole body will be affected. If my little finger is full of some evil complaint, it may cause great inconvenience to my whole system. Did you ever have a splinter in your hand and yet the rest of your body did not know that anything was the matter? Instead of that being the case, your finger has been of greater consequence to you than all the other parts of your body when it has once begun to smart and to be full of pain—and to swell and fester! Now, you little members, you can do any quantity of mischief if you like. It is possible for a Christian to have so little Grace, and so much sin, that he may cause pain to the entire Church of God. for people will point to the most obscure of you if you do wrong! They will say, "That is one of the people that go to the Tabernacle and no doubt they are all alike."

It is very unjust to say that we are all like the worst person we have among us. If we have one especially godly and gracious member, the world never says, "They are all like he." No, no! They say, "Ah, he is quite an exception! If they were all like he, then we would go there, too." But they take as their standard and test the most sickly and unhealthy in the whole flock. Therefore, I pray you, dear members of this Church, ask God to make each one of you healthy in spiritual things. Do not think you are of no importance. Never belittle yourself by saying, "It does not matter whether I pray, or whether I live near to God." It *does* matter, Brothers and Sisters, for it may give some of us the greatest pain if we see you be-

having unworthily or living inconsistently with your profession. Therefore let your individuality lead you to see, first, that you are in the Church. Next, that you are in your right position in the Church. And then, that you are a healthy member of the Church, which is Christ's body.

And, once more, *be careful of your growth for the sake of the whole body*. "Oh," you say, "I do not know that I need to *grow*! I have believed in Christ and I am saved—that is enough for me." But, my dear Friend, you *must* grow because the whole Church of Christ is to grow! Suppose that, when I was a lad, one of the bones of my arm had persisted in not growing. If all the rest of my body had been properly developed—what would happen if that particular bone did not grow? Why, I would have a short arm! Suppose that one of the bones of your leg had said to itself, "I am in the body and that is enough for me! I do not mean to grow any more." You would have had to go hopping through the world with one short leg all your life—and that would have been a very uncomfortable thing for you—you would probably have had great pain as well as inconvenience. So, if one Christian in the Church does not grow, he will give trouble to others, for the next Brother to him is growing and it makes matters very awkward when some advance and others do not. I would like to have a Church composed of effective soldiers—but I suppose that I shall never have that. Usually we have a certain number of lame folk among us.

We cannot leave them behind, yet they cannot fight in our ranks. We cannot do as Gideon did with his followers—send the faint-hearted ones home. No, they will stay with us and their inefficiency cuts off a certain number of those who would be good for fighting, for they are so ill that they need somebody to wait upon them and, perhaps, a third of the Church has to be employed in driving the ambulances and attending to the invalids. Then, when the battle begins to get hot and we need all our regiments to the front, there is a certain number of soldiers who cannot stand fire—they turn their backs and so bring shame upon the Church. I wish it were not so, yet it often is because all are not of one heart and one soul—there is not the living unity that there ought to be, for then all would grow at the same rate and the body, growing harmoniously, would be strong and beautiful—and in the day of conflict it would be able to vanquish the foe. Look, then, to this matter, each one of you. Laggards, come on! You that have been slothful, quicken your pace! You that have been sick and weary, may God restore and refresh you, so that the whole body may be healthy and vigorous. So much, then, about our union to Christ and our individuality.

III. Now for a few words about OUR RELATIONSHIP TO EACH OTHER.

The Apostle says a good deal here about joints—"That which every joint supplies." That expression conveys the idea of relationship and teaches us that *we are, in our desire and spirit, to be fitted to work with others.* This bone is so wisely constructed at this end that it fits into the next one and thus both work together. Our joints are very amazing things. This wrist joint is, perhaps, the most wonderful piece of mechanism in the world! The bones fit into each other so beautifully and work together so harmoniously. I know some Brothers who would make splendid men if all the rest of the people were dead, for they are very loving

and amiable to themselves. They would be just the sort of folk to become hermits—shut them up in a cave with a bucket of water and a loaf of bread—and all their virtues would shine out! They have taken the motto which our Scotch friends link with the thistle and which I might freely translate—"Nobody shall touch me without catching it." Whoever comes near them, they are always upon their guard. They are sure that person means them no good, so they repel his advances at once.

When we get such people as that into a Christian Church, it is very awkward for the rest of the members. It is as if we had bones in our body without any joints to them—they grate against each other and constantly wear each other away when they come into contact. Now, dear Friend, if you are in a Church, try to make yourself a bearable person as far as you can. Keep your own peculiarities, if they are worth retaining, yet do not display them so as to make yourself obnoxious! And do not let everybody, or even *anybody*, if you can help it, be obnoxious to you. Perhaps you have some bone joints outside of you—if so, then pray God to make those joints fit into the persons that happen to be near you. In this wondrously complex body of Christ, we need to be jointed all over so that we may, in our various relationships, be to others just what Christ would have us to be!

Next, notice that the Apostle says that there is something "which every joint supplies." So there is. Every joint supplies oil and if there were not any, it might be very awkward for the rest of the system. *In the Church of Christ, which is His body, we need the joint oil of love.* If you are traveling by railway, you will see, when an express train pulls up, that a man goes round and puts fresh grease into the box to keep the wheels from firing. What a wonderful machine our body is, for it puts the grease into its own box and keeps all the joints right without friction by supplying them with its own oil! There are some Brothers and Sisters, with whom I come in contact, who expect me to find all the joint oil for them, but even then they are often very trying. Yet I must not lose my temper, or be at all hard with them! Well, I can supply the oil for my own joints, but you must put the oil into yours, or else we cannot work well together.

Perhaps someone says that there is no love in the Church. Quite right, Brother. You mean that there is none in *you!* Your bones have no joint oil. But if you had your own measure of holy, hearty love to your Brothers and Sisters, I believe that you would find that some oil would exude out of them, for there are none of the bones of Christ's body that are quite dry. There is some oil in them all, although you may not know how to get at it. And some bodies that are called strange are so reckoned because, perhaps, they are better than we are. But if we could get at them in the right way, we would find them to be full of love and we would rejoice that we knew them. Do let every joint, therefore, take care to supply its oil when it comes into contact with the next bone.

In this way, *we would aid the compactness of the body.* That is the expression in our text—"compacted by that which every joint supplies." When all the bones work well together, they greatly assist the compactness of the body, for the muscles, tendons and so forth bind the whole together. The bones of the body are its strength and give it compactness—and so strengthen certain other parts of the system that are soft

and would give way if left to themselves. So, in every Church, when there is bad doctrine preached, there are certain pieces of flesh that seem to give way under the heretical touch. Yes, but you who are like the sturdy, stiff old bones that do not give way, you must just stand firm and steadfast in the faith, whatever is preached! Stand fast by the Truth of God under all opposition, for so you will give compactness and stability to the entire Church! I pray that we may always have, in this Christian community, a number of godly men and matrons who know what they know, so that when the younger sort are a little perplexed, they may go to them and say, "Tell us, dear Brothers and Sisters, are we right or wrong on these matters?" And they will say, "We have tasted and handled the good old Doctrines of Grace and we are afraid that you will go quite off the right lines if you accept these new notions. Therefore, cleave to the Truth which you have received." That is the way that the Church is made strong, by all the joints ministering the oil which holds it together, or helps to the harmonious working of all—the bones being themselves confirmed while strengthening others.

Besides that, *let every member offer his own services to the Church.* Let each one be doing what he or she can. No one minister, no 20 ministers, no elders, if there were a hundred, no deacons, if there were a thousand, could ever fulfill all the ministries of the Church! God has given Apostles, Evangelists, pastors, teachers and so forth to bring the Bread of Life to us. That is the outward feeding of the flock, but, then, each living person must take the food into himself—the Church must edify itself. There must go on, within the Church, the proper processes of digestion and assimilation of the Truth of God, the reception of and yielding to the Spirit of God by which the Church is built up by itself, as well as by all the external influences which God has prepared for its strengthening and increase.

IV. Now I must close, for our time has gone, by only a few sentences concerning OUR COMPACT UNITY AS A CHURCH.

The Church of God should be one, but not piled into one heap. It should be one in Christ Jesus by a living union. May I ask each one of you whether it is so? Is the life of God in you, dear Brother, dear Sister? If it is and you feel that it is the same life which is in the other members, then you have a unity of the most indestructible kind—one which never can be broken! This union must be a *growing* union. We ought so to grow continually as to love each other better and bear with each other more and more. It is often my prayer for this Church, when I am anxiously thinking of the great work here, that nothing may ever arise to divide us in spirit and in love to each other. It is, to my mind, a standing miracle that all these years [Almost 30 years.—EO.] we have been bound together in the unity of the Spirit and in the bonds of peace. But, for the years that are yet to come, shall we quarrel with one another? Shall there be a root of bitterness to spring up and trouble us? I see no trace or sign of it at present, but before it does appear, I beg of you, by the years in which we have worked together, by the blessings we have been made to see, by the benefits which God has given to thousands of souls by this Church, let us not tear this garment of Christ, let us not do anything in any way

by which our union may be marred. But let us be "compacted by that which every joint supplies."

I may be speaking to some friends who are a little out of temper with a Brother or Sister. Go and settle the difficulty at once. Resolve in your heart that you will settle it tonight if possible. If you have any disagreements, if there is any coldness at all between you, before you come to this Table, bury it all! Get closer to Christ and then get closer to one another—and may our blessed Lord, when He comes, find us all one in Him! We ask it for His dear name's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 PETER 1:1-12.

Verses 1, 2. *Peter, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied.* How sweetly the Apostle is obeying his Master's command, "When you are converted, strengthen your brethren." This is the same Peter who once began to sink beneath the waves, yet now he is helping others to stand! This is the very Peter who denied his Master, but he begins his Epistle by acknowledging himself to be "an Apostle of Jesus Christ." What wonders the Lord Jesus had worked for Peter by His Grace! It is no marvel, therefore, that he should say to others, "Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied."

3. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.* And, truly, this is a blessing beyond all comparison or imagination, that we have been begotten again by the Divine Father unto a "living" hope, for that is a better rendering than, "lively." Our first birth brought us into sin and sorrow, but our second birth brings us into purity and joy. We were born to die—now are we born never to die, "begotten again" unto a life that shall remain in us forevermore—a life which shall even penetrate these mortal bodies and make them immortal, "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

4, 5. *To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in Heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.* Joy, my Brothers and Sisters, in the glorious inheritance which is prepared for you—unstained, uncorrupted, perfectly pure and, therefore, to last forever because the elements which produce decay are not in it! It is without sin and, therefore, it shall be without end. What a mercy it is to be "kept by the power of God"! See, Heaven is kept for us and we are kept for Heaven! Heaven is prepared for us and we are prepared for Heaven! There is a double action of God's Grace thus working in us and working for us unto eternal bliss!

6. *Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations.* Or "trials." Some people cannot comprehend how a man can greatly rejoice and yet be in heavi-

ness at the same time. But there are many things, in a Christian's experience, that cannot be understood except by those who experience them! And even they find many a mystery which can only be expressed by a paradox. There are some who think that God's people should never be heavy in spirit, but the Apostle says, "Now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness." He does not say, "If need be, you are in manifold trials," but, "If need be, you are in heaviness *through* manifold trials," for the "need be" is as much for the depressed spirit as for the trials themselves.

7, 8. *That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it is tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: whom having not seen, we love; in whom, though now you see Him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.* And does not the joy agree well with the Object of it? Paul said, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift." And Peter, speaking of the same Savior, says, "In whom, though now you see Him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

9-11. *Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the Prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: 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, and the glory that should follow.* Do you wonder if, sometimes, you find in the Bible a Truth which you cannot quite comprehend? You ought not to marvel, for even the Prophets, who prophesied of the Grace which has come to us, did not always fully understand their own messages! I am sure that their Inspiration was verbal because the Inspired men frequently did not, themselves, know the meaning of what they were moved to write.

12. *Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you which the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.* See the kind of preaching that we should all desire to hear and that all God's ministers should aim at? "Them that have preached the Gospel unto you which the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven." Nothing but a Gospel full of the energy of the Holy Spirit and set on fire by Him can effect the eternal purposes of God! And this is the kind of preaching that will live and that will also make men live! God send it to every Church and congregation throughout the world! 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.

WAKEFUL AND WATCHFUL EYES
NO. 2654

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 24, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 13, 1882.

"Behold, He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."
Psalm 121:4.

"Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hands of their masters,
and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hands of her mistress;
so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until He has mercy on us."
Psalm 123:2.

NOTICE, dear Friends, that both these texts begin with the word, "Behold." That word is meant to attract the readers' attention. In some books, which are intended to be sensational, you are asked to behold—and when you look, there is nothing to see! But when God's Word bids you behold what it has to say, you may be sure that the exclamation is not superfluous or misleading! It would be a marring of the Word of God to leave out even one of its smallest expressions and, therefore, when we see this word, "Behold," placed at the beginning of each of these texts, we may rest assured that there is, in both of them, something worth noting, worth examining and considering—and worth remembering and carrying away!

A very useful series of discourses might be preached upon the "Beholds" of the Old and New Testaments which culminate in John the Baptist's, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world," and Pilate's, "Behold the Man." And still more in our Lord's own message to John, "Behold, I come quickly." But two Old Testament, "Beholds," are to furnish us with a theme of meditation at this time. It is somewhat singular that they both relate to eyes. The first tells us about *God's* eyes—"Behold, He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." His eyes are never closed. No feeling of weariness or need of slumber ever causes them to be heavy and to shut. And the second text tells us about *our* eyes—"Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until He has mercy on us."

See, Brothers and Sisters, both our texts speak about eyes, and they ask for the use of our eyes by saying, "Behold," which is as though God said to us, "I am going to tell you about My eyes which never slumber. Therefore, look and see, for you shall find them always open and always watching over you." Then the next text tells us about our eyes and reminds us how God gives to His people clear and quick eyesight, so that

they observe all the motions of their Master's hands and are glad to note them—and prompt to do as He directs. I have put these two texts together because I hoped that when you saw with joy how the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and His ears open to their cries, you would then feel that it was a fit return that your eyes should be unto the Lord your God, and that your ears should be open to receive His teaching and to learn His commands. God grant that this may be the result of the sermon upon these two texts!

I. First, then, I am to speak to you concerning THE WAKEFUL EYES OF THE LORD OUR GOD. We are told, in our first text, that the Lord, who keeps Israel, shall neither slumber nor sleep.

We learn from these words, first, *that the Lord keeps Israel*. Read the 121st Psalm through and you will find the word, "preserve," or, "keep," or, "keeper," repeated many times. God has Himself undertaken the work of keeping His people—it is His high office to preserve those who are His chosen ones!

"He that keeps Israel." By this expression we understand that the Lord keeps His people as a shepherd keeps his flock. There is a great depth of meaning in that word, "keep," as it is thus used, for a shepherd keeps the sheep by feeding them, by supplying all their needs and also by guarding them from all their adversaries. He keeps the flock with vigilance so that it is not diminished either by the ravaging wolf or by the straying of the sheep. Even an ordinary shepherd takes great pains and the utmost care to preserve his sheep both by night and by day—while, "our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep," who was brought again from the dead, uses His Omnipotence, His Omniscience and all His Divine Attributes in the keeping of His sheep! O Beloved, if you are, indeed, His people and the sheep of His pasture, rest assured that He will preserve you! You are in good keeping, for He is the Good Shepherd, and the Great Shepherd, and the Chief Shepherd and He will perform all the duties of His office well and faithfully, that He may securely keep all whom His Father has committed unto Him!

Another figure may equally well illustrate the meaning of this expression. The Lord keeps His people, not only as a shepherd keeps his sheep, but as a king keeps his jewels. These are rare and precious things which are his peculiar treasure and he will not lose them if he can help it. He will go to war sooner than be deprived of them. He will put them in the most secure case that he has in his strong room—and set his most faithful servants to guard the place wherein they are stored. He will charge those who have the custody of his crown jewels to take a full and accurate account of them—and to be careful to examine them, from time to time, to see that they are all there, for he greatly prizes them and is not willing for one of them to be lost. They probably cost him a great price, or, if not, they are part of his royal heritage and of the glory and honor of his kingdom, so he desires to keep them all. Even so does the Lord Jesus keep His people, for they are His jewels. He delights in them—they are His honor and His glory! They cost Him a greater price than they can ever realize. He hides them away in the case of His power and protects them with all His wisdom and strength. Concerning those who feared the Lord and thought upon His name, it is written, "They shall be Mine, says

the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels." It is God's work to keep His own jewels. He does not commit them even to the custody of the tall archangel who stands nearest to His Throne, but the Lord, Himself, keeps them—and *no one* shall be able to pluck them out of His hands!

This is not all, for we might multiply figures to almost any extent and still not exhaust the meaning of the text. The Lord keeps His people as a governor keeps the city committed to his charge. He places his guards around the walls, he has his cannon on the battlements to defend the place against those who besiege it. And he is constantly on the watch. Early in the morning and late at night he is on the walls—and through the night, the watchmen keep their continual rounds, for the city must be preserved from scaling ladders and from assaults of every sort. The Lord will not let even the suburbs of the New Jerusalem be conquered by the foe! He will preserve the holy city, His own Church, until the day when His Son shall come to reign in her forever.

I find that in all probability, the figure here used is an allusion to the common custom of having guards to watch the tents of travelers passing through the desert. At this very time, if you were journeying through the Holy Land, you would find that when you came to your camping ground, and nightfall drew on, there would be certain persons employed to watch over the different tents, for, otherwise, the wandering robbers of the desert would soon enter and take away your valuables, or even your life. I have noticed in the books of two or three travelers, this observation, "We found it exceedingly difficult to obtain a tent-keeper who could stay awake all night." One gentleman speaks of discovering a thief in his tent and when he went outside to call the watchman, he found that the man had gone so soundly to sleep that he could only be awakened by one or two gentle kicks! When a man has been traveling with you all day, it is unreasonable to expect him to stay awake through the night to take care of you. Therefore, see the beauty of the expression used by the Psalmist, "Behold, He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." There shall be no deep sleep falling upon Him! No, there shall not even be a brief period of slumber, not even a wink of sleep shall ever overcome Him! A man may say, "I am so tired that I cannot keep my eyes open," but God never says that.

Now turn to the second part of our first text—"Behold, He that keeps Israel *shall neither slumber nor sleep*," and think, first, of *God's eyes as never wearying of His people*. I suppose that the fondest mother is sometimes glad when she can put her children to bed and have a little quiet time by herself. She at last grows weary even of their pretty ways and she is willing to let them go out of her sight for a while. But the Lord never grows weary of His people. If some of you had such children as God has, you would never be able to endure their trying ways. None but the God of Infinite patience could bear with such a family as He has. Any one of us might exhaust the patience of a hundred Jobs rolled into one—yet, shout it out and let even the angels hear it—we have not exhausted the patience of God! He has never been so wearied and worried by us as to say, "I must go to sleep, My children, and leave you to take care of yourselves." Our Savior's eyes are never weary of looking on us—those eyes

that closed upon the Cross and then that opened, again, on the Resurrection morning, like bright stars. Those eyes that, from the heights of Heaven, have looked down upon the redeemed with ineffable delight of love—those eyes never grow weary of the chosen ones! Our Lord Jesus has such joy in His people as keeps Him from ever being weary of them. That is one meaning of His never slumbering or sleeping.

The next is, that *God is never forgetful of His people for a single moment.* You and I forget things which we most need to remember. Have you not, my Sister, often shifted your ring from one finger to another and then had to say to yourself, "How did it come to be here?" And then you remembered the reason why you removed it? Yes, I know you have done so and we have had a hundred ingenious inventions to keep us in mind of something that we wished not to forget—yet we have forgotten it, after all. The fondest human heart at times forgets, but that Divine heart, alone, never does. And those eyes which look down on us with Infinite love flashing forth from them are never sealed in the slumber of forgetfulness. We forget all things in our sleep and lie completely indifferent to all that is happening around us, but God never does so—He never forgets us and He is never indifferent to us. Oh, what a blessed Truth of God this is!

Sleep also throws us into a condition in which *we are incapable of helping ourselves*. But God is never in such a state as that. He is always awake to show Himself strong on the behalf of those who trust Him. You will never have to call to Him in vain, or get from Him the answer, "I cannot help you right now." Elijah, in his irony, said that perhaps Baal was sleeping, or on a journey, and the idol god was quite unable to deliver those that called upon him. But our God, who made the heavens, is quick to hear the faintest cry of any of His people! He is perpetually girt with all might and energy—if you do but appeal to Him, He will speedily fly to your relief! Yes, He will fly upon the wings of the wind, for He is prompt to deliver all those who put their case into His hands. God is never asleep in the sense that He is unable to help us.

And, moreover, *God is never asleep in the sense that He ceases to consider us*. I do not know whether you can catch the thought so as to lay hold of it by faith, but we have an instance of it in the 40th Psalm where David says, "I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinks upon me." When? Now? Yes. Tomorrow? Yes. And yesterday? Yes. He was *always* thinking of us and He is always thinking of us! The Infinite mind of God can think of all things at once. You and I, in thinking of one thing, often forget another—but it is not so with God. He is so great that His center is everywhere and His circumference is nowhere! And you, dear Brother or Sister, may be the very center of God's thoughts and so may I—and all His redeemed may at the same moment have His thoughts fixed upon each one of them! Can you realize the wondrous Truth of God that there is never a moment, night or day, in which the great mind of the Eternal ceases to think of you? Then, how safe you are with God always looking upon you! How happy you ought to be with God always thinking of you! Yes, how joyful you ought to be because, even if others forget you, He never does!

You remember how Cowper represents Alexander Selkirk, when far away an that island of Juan Fernandez, saying—

"My friends, do they now and then send
A wish or a thought after me?"

He could not bear, in his loneliness, to be altogether forgotten by everybody. And none of us would like to be in that condition, but even if we were in such a plight, we could still find comfort in that ancient promise, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget." It is rarely enough that mothers are so unnatural—still, "they may forget. Yet," says the LORD, "will I not forget you." Oh, drink that down! Is it not a sweet draught? Of all the luscious drinks that men ever delighted in, there can be none with such flavor as this choice wine of Covenant faithfulness!

So much, then, for our first text, "Behold, He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." I have only given you a few brief hints. Lay them up in your memories and come with me to consider our second text, "Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until He has mercy on us."

II. The lesson of these words is that THE WATCHFUL EYES OF THE SAINTS ARE FIXED UPON THEIR GOD.

Which is the more wonderful text of the two? Certainly, it is a great marvel that God should always fix His eyes upon us, but I think it is a greater marvel that you and I should ever be brought to fix our eyes on God! For God to look at His people is according to His own Nature, but for *us* to look upon God, is something superior to human nature—it is the *gift* of God and the work of Sovereign Grace! I think that both looks are to be regarded as miracles of mercy. For a child of God to be so sanctified that He always fixes His eyes upon God, as a servant does upon his master's hands—this is a very eminent degree of sanctification and is a thing worthy to be looked at, and worthy to have the word, "Behold," put before it! I wonder whether you and I have yet reached such a height of consecration to God as to be able to truly use the language of this text?

Alas, in many cases we cannot get men's eyes fixed upon God at all. There is this natural world, with all its wondrous beauty. God has painted every flower and tinged the clouds with the glory of the setting sun. He is everywhere and yet men walk through His great house of nature and—fools that they are—they say, "There is no God." It is hard to get men to see God. We put the Bible into their hands. They read it and are interested in its stories, but they see not God in it. Providence comes to their very doors with marvels, yet they say that they do not see God's hand in anything that happens to them! And even when we preach—and this is the woe of woes—we cannot get men to look to the Lord! God knows that I have never tried to speak that you would think of *me* for a single moment. I have sought to tell my tale as plainly as I could and to force it home on man's hearts and consciences as God might help me. And yet, at the end of the sermon, often the hearer's only remark is, "How did you like *him?*" It does not matter at all how you like me! Is that what we came here for—to fiddle to you, as men do in your orchestras, or speak before you as if we were mere actors playing for your amusement?

It is of no concern to us what you think of our style or manner—it is the Truth of God itself which we would drive home to you! It is that Truth of God which, if we could, we would make you feel as the ox feels the sharp goad! It is the blessed Doctrine of Christ Crucified which we would have you feed upon, as the hungry man devours the bread that is given to him and does not care whether he ever knows the baker's name, or not! Still, I must say again that it is a hard thing to get men to see God. They look around, above, beneath, everywhere—but to get them to fix their eyes upon God, "This is the work. This is the difficulty."

The man of God who wrote this 123rd Psalm had been taught to look to God in a very remarkable manner. And I call your attention to it in the hope that many of you will do likewise. First, *his eyes were reverentially fixed upon the Lord.* He looked to God's hands, wherever they were, with deep reverence—"as the eyes of servants look unto the hands of their masters." He was, of course, talking about Oriental servants—the Hebrew word bears the meaning of slaves—and travelers tell us that when they go into the house of a wealthy person in the East, the master will give certain signs to his slaves and refreshments are brought in. But, except when they are called, the servants stand at a distance, watching for the slightest motion of their master's hands—they do not have the liberties that we happily accord to our servants—they are nothing and nobody, mere tools for their master to use as he pleases. And, as to the maidens, I have heard that the women in the East have a harder time of it with their mistresses than the men do with their masters and that the lady of the house is a more severe taskmaster than her husband is. So the maidens watch their mistress' hands very carefully, for they are sorely afraid of them—and they look with great care and fear to see what "Madam" would have them do. Now, casting aside everything of human fear out of the figure, this is the way in which we ought to look to God—He is in Heaven—we are upon earth. He is great—we are nothing. He is good—we are lumps of sin. It is for us, therefore, with the utmost reverence, to seek to learn God's will in every point—in His Word and in His works—and at once, without question, reverently to do what He commands us.

The next point is that the truly sanctified man looks to God's hands *with obedience as well as with reverence.* Orientals, as a general rule, speak far less than we do, except when they sit around the fire at eventide and tell their tales. But an Eastern master seldom speaks. A gentleman went, some time ago, into an Eastern house and as soon as he entered, the master waved his hand and the servants brought in sherbet. He waved his hand again, and they brought dried fruits. Then he moved his hands in a different way and they began to spread the table and, all the time, not a word was spoken, but they perfectly understood the motion of his hands! They had to look sharply to see how the master moved his hands so that they might do what that motion meant. We have not very much of that dumb action among us, but, on board a steamboat you may see the captain moving his hands this way or that, and the call-boy is ready at once to pass the word down to those who are in charge of the engine.

That is just how the child of God should watch the hands of God in the Bible and in Providence, so as to do at once whatever we plainly perceive to be our Lord's will. Ah, me, I know some professing Christians who will not do God's will till they have had a good whipping, or not until they have been chastened again and again! Remember that ancient injunction, "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"? You know how the drivers have to pull at their reins. They say, "This creature is so hard in the mouth that we do not know how to manage him at all." And some of God's people are terribly hard in the mouth—they need very rough handling to make them move. Yet we ought to be different from horses and mules. We ought to be ready at once, at a beck, or a wink, or a nod, to know what God would have us do—and do it reverently and obediently.

Then, also, *our eyes should be absolutely fixed upon our Lord*. The eyes of servants ought to be so directed to their masters that they not only see the sign, but obey it, whatever it means. It may be a very little thing, but yet the little thing should not be neglected. I would again say what I sometimes feel ashamed of having to say. I sometimes meet with a person who says, with regard to the matter of Believers' Baptism, "Now, you know that Baptism will not save me." You evil, miserable soul! Will you do nothing but what is necessary for your salvation? Is that the spirit that drives you? Will you do only what is necessary to save your poor soul, which is hardly worth saving if you talk like that? It is too small a thing to be worth anything, but unless Baptism will save your soul, you will not attend to it? "Well," says another, "I have reversed the Scriptural order—I have put my baptism before my believing." Who gave you leave to alter the Lord's order? If servants were to act like that, what mischief we would have! Suppose they were to bring us in our dessert before they brought in our dinner—that would be a very small affair, yet it is important to observe the right order even in such matters! Or suppose we were to tell them to sweep the room and dust it—and they should dust the room and then sweep it? It is only altering the order, but you know what would happen! So is it with those who put Baptism first and believing afterwards—it spoils the whole transaction—and it violates the intention of God in the ordinance. You have no right to act like that!

I may remind you of a story which I think I told you some time ago. A poor youth earnestly wished to join the Church, but his friends thought he was somewhat deficient in brain power and that he had better not be baptized. He lay sick and was evidently dying. And he said to his mother, "Mother, I wish I had been baptized and joined the Church." She replied, "My dear boy, you know that being baptized would not have saved you. You will go to Heaven because you have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ." "Oh, yes," he said, "I know that! You do not think I am so stupid as to fancy that Baptism would save me, do you, Mother? I know that has nothing to do with going to Heaven! But when I get there, I shall see my Savior and, perhaps He will say to me, 'Isaac, why did you not join the Church?' If I should say, 'Lord, that was a very little thing,' He would say, 'Yes, then you might have done it to please Me.'" That story is just to the point—the smaller the matter is, the more careful we should be to at-

tend to it, if it would please the Lord Jesus Christ! Do not be so clever, you servants who fancy that you know better than your Master, for perhaps He may find somebody else to be His servant if you behave like that!

Suppose that I was starting on a journey, early in the morning, and I said to my servant, "I would like a cup of coffee before I start"? And suppose that when I came down, she brought me a glass of cold water? I would ask her, "Why did you do that?" If she should reply, "Oh, Sir, I thought that the water would be better for you than coffee!" I would say, "Well, I am very much obliged to you for thinking of me in that considerate way, but I shall have to engage another servant who does what she is told." So I advise you not to alter or judge God's Word, but to obey it! Do not begin to calculate as to whether what you read in His Word is right in your sight, or in the eyes of other people—the one question for you is—Has my Lord bid me do this? If so, then, as the eyes of the maiden are to her mistress, so let your eyes be unto the Lord your God!

Once more, *our eyes are to be turned ONLY to the Lord*. The Eastern servant is not allowed to think. It is no business of his to have his eyes upon his master's guests. They are to be fixed upon his master. And the maiden does not think it to be her business to watch the movements of the hands of the lady who calls to see her mistress—her eyes are to be on the hands of her mistress. She does not dare to take them off, for, perhaps, just when she is looking out of the window, or gazing in curiosity at some object, her mistress may be waving her hand and she may not see it. And then there will be a serious scolding and possibly something worse when the mistress gets her alone. So you and I must not take our eyes off our God at any time—His way and His will must be our only law—and for this we must live, that we may please Him whose servants we are, for has He not bought us with His precious blood? So we are not our own, we are "bought with a price."

"Ah," says one, "we have not come to that yet." No, I fear you have not, but you ought to. There is no peace for us till we do. He who, either by omission or commission, neglects to do or goes beyond His Lord's command will find sorrow in his soul. Depend upon it, the roots of our most bitter griefs strike into our sins and, if our sins were overcome, the major part of our sorrows would be removed! Oh that God would give us Grace to be very tender in conscience, to tremble before Him, as well as to rejoice before Him, for in very deed the man who does not tremble at His Word has not yet learned to truly love Him!

Now I must speak to some here who, perhaps, know nothing about what I have been saying, for they have lived without God. I will finish my sermon by just reminding you that this may do very well for *this world*—though it is a poor business at the best—but when you come to die, you will need God! Now, when I die and go to be with God, I know that Christ will not say to me, "I never knew you." I am sure He cannot because He has long known me. I was about to say that He has known me to His cost, for I have long been a beggar at His door every day and I cannot live without Him. I am naked, poor and miserable apart from Him. I have always some errand or other to make me go to Him—some sin to confess, or some need to be supplied. So He knows me well enough. You are sure

to know a beggar who is always at your door. Perhaps he says that he has not been there before, but you reply, "Why you have been here every morning for the last six weeks! I have always seen you begging here the first thing in the morning." You cannot say that you do not know him, yet that is what will happen to those of you who have never sought the Lord Jesus Christ and never prayed to Him. Christ will say to you, "I never knew you."

I feel that the spot I occupy just now is a very solemn one, for, like the captain of a ship, I can see all over this place. Often, when I come here on a Sunday, somebody says, "So-and-So has gone." There is one gone out of that seat which you occupy, my Friend. He was there last Sabbath, but he has gone. And I can point to many of you and say, "You are sitting in the seat where one used to sit whose face was vary familiar to me, but he has gone Home." And some go to my great surprise. I have thought to see them again many times, and when I have missed them, I have said, "Oh, she has gone to the seaside for a little holiday." But someone has said to me, "No, she is dead. She was suddenly taken away." Or, "He was called away only this last week." Ah, me! Ah, me! And what faces I may be looking into now that I shall never see again! Give me your hand, my Friend, for this is the last time I may ever speak to you. I beg you to get ready to go on that last long journey. Oh, do not die unsaved! I beseech you, do not attempt to enter the eternal world, with all its dread, without a Savior!

This is the way of salvation. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! Trust yourself with Him! Put your soul, as a sacred deposit, into the hands of that dear Banker whose bank has never failed—no, more—who has never lost a penny that was entrusted to Him! And before you sleep, just rest in Jesus. God help you to do so, for Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—194, 119 (SONG VI), 123, 538.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JEREMIAH 30:1-22.

Verses 1, 2. *The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Thus speaks the LORD God of Israel, saying, Write you all the words that I have spoken unto you in a book.* We believe in Verbal Inspiration and, though some people treat with contempt the very ides of words being Inspired, be you sure of this, if you have not Inspired Words, you are not likely to get Inspired men! Besides, words are to the thought what the shell is to the egg and if you break the shell, you have destroyed the egg. Somehow or other, the thought will ooze out unless it is conveyed in God's own Words. Observe that the Lord does not say to Jeremiah, "Write you all the *thought* that I have given you," but, "Write you all the *words* that I have spoken unto you in a book."

3. *For, lo, the days come, says the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of My people Israel and Judah, says the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.* And so they did, and so they shall in a yet fuller sense, for this is a promise that has fulfillments and fulfillments. Man's promises, once kept, are

ended, but God's promises are perpetual—they are springing wells which never run dry! That which He fulfilled once, He often takes the opportunity to fulfill again on a yet larger scale, as He will doubtless do to His ancient people in the latter days. You who are in spiritual captivity tonight may derive comfort from these words, "I will bring again the captivity of My people." It is the way of God to deliver the captives. What He does once is only an index of what He is in the habit of doing. It is God's delight to devise means by which He will bring back His banished ones. So, in due time, He will end your captivity and you shall enjoy the blessed liberty which is the portion of His people.

4, 5. *And these are the words that the LORD spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah. For thus says the LORD, We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace.* God hears His people's voices when they cry. He knows the tone and accent which they use and, sometimes, when He is listening to them, He hears "a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace." Possibly that may be the condition of some who are here tonight. If so, may the Lord, who hears their cry, bring them out of their trembling and fear—and fill their mouth with laughter and their tongue with singing!

6, 7. *Ask you now, and see whether a man does travail with child? Therefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.* This passage evidently alludes to a time of very great distress, when men's hearts were swollen within them as if they would burst for very grief. Not simply here and there one, but the great mass of the people seemed to be in sore trouble. Even the stout-hearted ones began to feel inward pangs of affliction, yet it was *then* that the Lord said, "It is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it."

8. *For it shall come to pass in that day, says the LORD of Hosts, that I will break his yoke from off your neck, and will burst your bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him.* Here is a word for you tried ones! God, who sometimes permits His child to wear the yoke of the oppressor, will take that yoke away! He will snap the bands that are around your neck and enable you to rise into the glorious liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free! O enslaved ones, be of good comfort and look for speedy deliverance through the power of the great Emancipator!

9, 10. *But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them. Therefore fear you not, O My servant Jacob, says the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid.* There are great things in reserve for God's ancient people Israel, but there are not less laid up for God's *spiritual Israel*, for by them shall the greatest fulfillment of the promise be realized! They shall indeed be quiet and none shall make them afraid. Note that these are the very men who had their hands upon their loins and whose faces were pale with fright! These are they who were ready to die of heartbreak! Yet even they shall, by the rich Grace of God, be in rest and quiet—and no one shall

make them afraid. I wish that we could all realize the fulfillment of that promise even now and that our gracious God would dwell with us as He is known to abide with those who bear His name and thus give us that blessed quiet and rest which we so much need.

11. *For I am with you, says the LORD, to save you: though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, yet will I not make a full end of you: but I will correct you in measure, and will not leave you altogether unpunished.* Look abroad and see what God has done to Israel. This is peculiarly the time of Israel's trouble and the Jewish people were, perhaps, never worse persecuted than they now are in certain parts of the world. Yet the Lord will not allow any nation to crush them and He will, Himself, avenge all wrongs that they suffer. He still says to them, "He that touches you touches the apple of My eye." And it is very noteworthy that whenever God has used any nation as a rod to chasten the Jews—and He has used many in that way—He has always broken that kingdom up when He is done with it. Think of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. Look at Spain and see how mean and despicable that nation has become because of its cruelty to the people of God. Now, if this is true of Israel after the flesh, depend upon it that it is also true concerning God's spiritual people! Though He will correct us when we deserve chastening, it will always be in measure and He will not make a full end of us. God has measureless wrath against the ungodly for their measureless sin, but as for His own people, He has cast their sin behind His back and only as a wise and faithful Father does He chasten them for that sin.

12-14. *For thus says the LORD, Your bruise is incurable, and your wound is grievous. There is none to plead your cause, that you may be bound up. You have no healing medicines. All your lovers have forgotten you; they seek you not; for I have wounded you with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of your iniquity; because your sins were increased.* God never gave His people leave to sin—and sin in *them* is worse than sin in any other people, for they sin against more light, more love and, therefore, it grieves the Lord more—and He smites all the more heavily and, mark you, when God smites, there is nobody who can comfort us! A quaint old writer, whose book I was reading the other day, commenting on that part of the parable where the friend, disturbed at midnight, said, "My children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you," wrote something like this, "When God is in bed, there are none of His children up to help us. If He does not open the door, there are none of His saints to give us a crust—all must come from Him." Therefore we must cry unto Him and say, "Awake for my help, O God; for all my lovers have forgotten me; they seek me not in the time of my distress." When God wounds us, men often desert us—and those that seemed to be most fond of us forsake us when God smites us.

15, 16. *Why do you cry for your affliction? Your sorrow is incurable for the multitude of your iniquity: because your sins were increased, I have done these things to you. Therefore all they that devour you shall be devoured.* How striking is this sentence! And what a surprise it gives us as we read it! We might have thought, after the Lord had spoken as He did, that He would have given His people up to their enemies, but, instead of doing so, He says, "Therefore all they that devour you shall be devoured;"

16, 17. *And all your adversaries, everyone of them, shall go into captivity; and they that spoil you shall be a spoil, and all that prey upon you will I give for a prey. For I will restore health unto you, and I will heal you of your wounds, says the LORD; because they called you an outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeks after.* Did you notice that word, "therefore," in the 16th verse? Can you see any, "therefore," in it—any logical conclusion that could be drawn from the Prophet's premises? The argument seems to be, "Because your disease is incurable, therefore will I restore health unto you. Because no one else can heal your wounds, therefore I will heal them." It is a blessed thing to feel that you are incurable, for then it is that God will cure you! When there is an end of you, then you shall begin with God! But as long as you are full of self or sin, that passage shall be fulfilled to you, "He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away empty."

18, 19. *Thus says the LORD; Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwelling places; and the city shall be built upon her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof. And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the choice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small.* Well might the Lord introduce such a promise as this with the word, "Behold"!

Again I remind you that these are the people who had their hands on their loins! These are they who were in sore trouble of soul! Yet now they are merry and full of gladness! And *we*, also, have learned to sing—

My mourning He to dancing turns,
For sackcloth, joy He gives,
A moment, Lord, Your anger burns,
But long your favor lives.

20, 21. *Their children also shall be as before, and their congregation shall be established before Me, and I will punish all that oppress them. And their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them; and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto Me: for who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto Me? says the LORD.* There is One, whom we call Master and Lord, who approaches the Throne of God on our behalf—One who fulfils that ancient Word of God, "I have exalted One chosen out of the people." Our glorious Savior, through His humanity, is one of us and He appears before God on our behalf, blessed be His holy name!

22. *And you shall be My people, and I will be your God.* Happy are we if we can rejoice in this precious Truth of God!

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

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 20, 1882.

"They have refused to return."
Jeremiah 5:3.

THERE is, in the heart of every one of us, the primary evil of sin. We have all transgressed against the Lord. So far, so bad, but that natural sin of ours may be greatly increased by a refusal to turn from it. It is bad enough to have violated God's righteous Law, but to refuse to repent and to continue presumptuously in our iniquity must greatly increase our guilt in the sight of God. This guilt may be still further increased if we refuse to return unto the Lord when we are earnestly and affectionately invited to yield submission to Him. If gracious terms of peace are presented to us and matchless promises of blessing are made to us on condition that we return—and if we are often warned, often entreated, often threatened and yet we still refuse to return, then we continue to pile sin upon sin, till we make our first transgression to be incredibly great.

If I were now to preach to men as simply sinners, it would be a weighty message for me to have to tell them that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." But, alas, I have to preach *to impenitent sinners*, to those who, as our text puts it, "have refused to return," yes, and to some who have given that refusal with great deliberation, after having been long entreated and persuaded to turn from the error of their ways. Some have been addressed in such tender, pleading language as this, "Turn you, turn you from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?" Or this—"Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." If we have heard such language as that and yet have persisted in refusing to return, we have heaped guilt upon guilt—and the wrath of God will be in proportion to our sin!

I. My first objective, at this time, is to try to find out who are the persons to whom our text refers. And, to do so, I ask this question, WHO HAVE REFUSED TO RETURN? Perhaps I am addressing some persons who say, "You speak of those who have refused to return, who are they? We have done no such thing." Listen and let conscience be at work while I am answering the question.

First, *there are some who have refused to return and who have said as much*. Perhaps not many of you, who are in this House of Prayer, have gone as far as that, but certainly many people in the great world have actually declared that they will not yield to God. Pharaoh said, "Who is Jehovah, that I should obey His voice?" And there are many who talk in the same fashion today. You may cry to them, "Turn you, turn you, for why will you die?" But they will not turn, they would rather die. They will sooner burn than turn! They will rather perish in their iniquities than be pardoned after repenting of their sins! And some even accompany their refusal with many a jest and gibe—they sneer at the majesty of Divine Mercy and ridicule that which is their only hope of safety! Concerning sinners of this type, the Lord says, "They have refused to return."

Others there are *who have promised to return, but they have spoken falsely*. They have uttered fair words and pretty speeches, but there the matter has ended. When the Lord has said, "Go work today in My vineyard," they have promptly answered, "Yes, we will go," but they have not gone. In a very emphatic sense, "they have refused to return," because they have promised to do so and then have not done it. He who says, "I will repent," and then does not turn from his evil ways, is certainly no better than the man who said that he would not repent! As a matter of fact, he is even worse, for there is an honesty of outspokenness about the other man who says, "I will not," while there is the falseness of gross hypocrisy in the one who says, "I go, Sir," but who does not go. I fear I have a large number of this order of persons in my congregation—they have never flatly refused the Gospel invitation, as some have openly done, yet they have practically refused it.

There is many a man who has said to the preacher, by his actions if not in words, what Felix said to Paul, "Go your way for this time. When I have a convenient season, I will call for you." But the convenient season has not yet arrived and, in all probability it never will, for they have no more idea of receiving the Gospel message today then they had 10 years ago! With all their friendly appearance and flattering words, they must be put down among those who "have refused to return." I am sure that when I say this, I do but speak the words of truth and justice.

There are some others who "have refused to return" and who have tried to palliate their offense, and quiet their conscience by *offering something else to God instead of really returning to Him*. They will not turn from sin, but they will "take the sacrament," as they call the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. They will not leave their lusts, but they will go to a place of worship. They will not cease from their wicked ways, but they will go on giving to various charities. They will not leave off lying, or committing other offenses against God, but they will assume a pious appearance, they will sing a hymn, they will spend half an hour in reading the Scriptures and a form of prayer, though such an occupation is a great burden to them—but all that is utterly useless! The Lord has said that He will have mercy—not sacrifice. He desires us to turn from our wicked ways and to return to Him. And if we will not, any sacrifices that we may bring to Him will be but vain oblations and God will put them away from Him as things that are abhorred and detestable in His sight.

Solomon tells us of three things that are an abomination unto the Lord, "the sacrifice of the wicked," "the way of the wicked" and even "the *thought*s of the wicked." We may do, or say, or give anything we like, but nothing will please God except our turning from our sin and trusting in the atoning Sacrifice of His dear Son. We may pray till our knees grow hard as iron and weep our eyes away till their sockets are empty, but we shall never obtain the great blessing of salvation while we link our arm with sin and go on delighting in iniquity! Alas, the Lord still has to say of many who make some sort of profession of being religious, "they have refused to return." They are willing to do almost anything except that. They will repeat the creed, be confirmed, "take the sacrament," go to chapel, go to church, go anywhere you like, but they will not leave their sin—they will not turn from their evil ways! They will be content to put upon themselves all manner of external religiousness, but they will not be cleansed from their iniquity.

There are others who, practically, "have refused to return" because *they have only returned in part*. They have given up some forms of sin, but their heart is not right in the sight of God. Yet a man cannot truly turn in part—he must turn altogether, or not at all. If I am walking along a certain road, I cannot send one of my legs backward and the other one forward and, in like manner, I cannot send half my soul in one direction and the other half another way, though a great many try to do so! They will give up the grosser sins to which they have been accustomed, but the smaller sins, the more respectable sort of sins, these they will keep on committing. Yet God is not pleased by their changing the form of their guilt. You say that you do not worship Baal but, if you bow down to Ashtaroth, or any other false god, you are an idolater! And if there is any sin to which you cling, you are a sinner in God's sight!

You read, sometimes, a dreadful story of a man being entangled in machinery. Perhaps it was only one cog of a wheel that caught a corner of his coat, but it gradually drew him in between the works and tore him, limb from limb, till he was utterly destroyed. Oh, if that piece of cloth could have but given way so that man's life might have been spared! But it did not and though he was only held by the tiniest part of his garment, yet that was sufficient to drag him in where the death-dealing wheels revolved. And it is just so with sin—you cannot get in between the wheels of iniquity and say, "I shall go just so far, but no farther." No, if you once get in there, you will be ground to pieces as certainly as you are now alive! There is no way of escape but to turn yourself right away from the evil thing that God hates. There must be no union between our heart and that which God abhors! We must have a clean bill of divorcement separating us, once and for all, from the love of sin!

"Well," says one, "I have given up strong drink. I am no longer a drunkard." That is well, but you may go to Hell as a sober man. "I have given up Sabbath-breaking," says another. I am very glad to hear it, my Friend, but you may perish by dishonesty. "Oh, but I am no thief! I am as honest as the day!" Yes, that may be true, and yet you may perish through pride. "But I am not proud," you say. But you may go to Perdition through your lust, or even through your self-righteousness—any *one*

sin harbored and indulged in by the soul will be the means of your everlasting ruin! Any single poison may suffice to kill a man—he need not take 50 different drugs—one will be enough to destroy him. So, if there is but one sin that is loved, that one sin will be as deadly poison to the soul! And as long as you cling to even one sin, I lay this charge at your door, that you "have refused to return." God grant that you may not continue any longer in this fatal folly and guilt!

I will only mention one more class of those who "have refused to return." It is *those who return to God only in appearance, yet not in heart.* What a very long way a man may go towards being a Christian and yet miss the mark! He may give up all outward sin, such as his fellow men condemn, and yet he may be lost. Very solemnly would I say to you, my Friend, that you may even be a professed disciple of Christ, but so was Judas. You may preach—so did Judas. You may work miracles—so did Judas. And you may stay with Christ under much opposition and persecution—so did Judas. It was only at a certain point, when the glitter of the pieces of silver was too much for him, that he at last betrayed his Lord and Master. Many covetous persons are the most respectable people we know—yet covetousness is idolatry. They are not likely to give way to sinful lusts—that form of iniquity is too expensive for them. They are too stingy to spend anything on themselves. They are not, generally, the men who drink to excess and waste their substance in riotous living. Oh, no—they are in the shop from early morning till late at night. Look how they work in their shirtsleeves, doing all they can to make money and, perhaps, doing it all honestly. But, still, covetousness is the master-thought with them, and to be rich is the end and aim of their whole life! That is the one thing for which they are striving. If it is covetousness that remains in the soul, there may be great outward reformations even through that very covetousness, for one sin will often sweep away another. There are very many sins that are like sharks that swallow up other devouring monsters. A man may devote himself to some one evil in such a way that he denies himself all the rest—and yet that one will bore such a hole in the vessel of his life that the water will get in and sink it just as surely as if there had been a thousand augers doing their desperate work.

So, you see, dear Friends, that there are many, many persons who "have refused to return" to God. And in telling you about them, I have answered my first question.

II. Here is a second one. WHAT DOES THIS REFUSAL TO RETURN TO GOD UNVEIL?

Well, I think that it shows, first, that there is, in the heart of such a person, *an intense love of sin.* The man not only sins, but he loves to sin and, therefore, he will not return to the Lord. The paths of sin are pleasant to him so, if you cry to him, "Return, return, return," he heeds you not because he loves both the way and the wages of iniquity.

This refusal to return also unveils *a great lack of love to God.* The prodigal son did, at last, return home because, with all his failings and wickedness, he remembered his father and his father's house—and there was some sort of love still lingering in his heart, so he said, "I will arise and go to my father." But many have no such love in their souls and,

consequently, the word, "Return," has no power over them. They love their sin, but they love not God, so "they have refused to return."

In many people, there can be no doubt whatever that this refusal to return unveils *a disbelief in God*—perhaps not a disbelief in the *existence* of God so much as a denial of the evil of sin. These refusers of God's mercy say to themselves, "Sin is not half as bad as God makes it out to be, and it will not bring such consequences as He threatens." When we read to them what the Apostle says about those who "obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power," they do not believe that such a sentence as that will ever be executed upon *them*, so they harden their faces like flints and go on in their sin—and absolutely refuse to return unto the Lord. Even when He tells them that unless they turn to Him, He will shut them out of Heaven, they seem to fancy that it does not matter much. Heaven is no very wonderful and desirable place, after all, so they dream and again they harden their hearts and continue in their evil ways. There is, in the heart of every unconverted man, a real atheism—he would be ashamed to be called an atheist, yet he acts like one, and he is one practically. He may not be such a fool as to say with his mouth, "There is no God," but in his *heart* he is all the while saying, "No God for me! I wish there were none. I would gladly escape from the belief even in His existence."

But, oh, this is a dreadful thing, for a man to love sin and not to love God—and not even believe that God speaks the truth! Yet there is a worse evil. This refusal to return *is really a despising of God.* It is as if a man said, "I will not submit to Him! I defy Him to do His worst! Let Him smite me if He can. I am not afraid of His Hell and I do not need His Heaven. I would sooner have the pleasures of sin for a season than dwell with God and behold the glory of Christ to all eternity." Perhaps you think that I am putting the matter too strongly, but I am not. I am only speaking the truth and I wish to speak it in love to the souls of those of you who are refusing to return unto the Lord. You have not that reverence and fear of God which He deserves from you, otherwise you would turn at His reproof and He would pour out His Spirit upon you.

Yet once more, I am afraid that this refusal to return shows that there is, in your heart, *a secret resolve to continue in sin.* If you "have refused to return," and done so for years, I fear that you are fixed in your evil course and that your mind is made up to remain as you are. I would to God that you would think a little of what the end of such a life must be! As you read of the eternal doom of others, you may hear the Lord saying to you, "Unless you repent, you shall all likewise perish." There is no way of salvation for a man who perseveres in the way of evil. Then, "Turn you, turn you, from your evil ways," for only by turning from sin, and unto God, can you find salvation! Yet, alas, many have resolved not to turn unto the Lord.

There are some who regard their refusal to return *as a trifling matter.* They trifle with everything. Heaven and Hell seem to them to be of no more worth than a boy's tennis racket and balls—their soul appears to be, at least in their estimation—the merest trifle. I verily believe that

some people think more of their fingernails than they do of their souls, and there is many a man who spends more on the blacking of his boots than he does on the cleansing of his soul from sin. Thus are these all-important things despised by those who "have refused to return." They make mirth about those matters which have been upon God's heart from all eternity and, whereas He has given His well-beloved Son to be the Savior of sinners, many sinners act as if salvation were not worth the having, or as if it were merely a thing to be talked about for a while and then to be forgotten forever. O Sirs, surely, these are the mischiefs of the heart which the refusal to return manifestly sets before you!

III. I must not say more upon this point, for I want to answer a third question. WHAT IS IT THAT DEEPENS THE SIN OF REFUSING TO RETURN?

Well, first, it is *when correction does not lead to repentance*. Let me read the sentences that precede our text—"You have stricken them, but they have not grieved; You have consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return." This passage may be applied to any of you who have been very ill and made promises of repentance, all of which you have forgotten. It may also be pressed home upon the consciences of some of you who, perhaps through your own fault, have been thrown out of a situation and cast adrift in the world. You have been corrected by poverty and, possibly, you have also been stricken by affliction, but all that has not touched your heart—you "have refused to return." I have known some who have lost child after child, and friend after friend. Those bereavements have been God's method of correcting them, so as to bring them to their senses, yet they have not turned to Him. No, they have even grown all the harder the more they have been chastened! They have stood out, like Pharaoh, against God's sternest plagues, and still have said, "Who is Jehovah that we should obey His voice?" If they have not said so in words, they have said it in their acts, which have spoken louder than words.

This refusal to return also leads to deepening sin *when conscience is violated*. If I were to put the question to any one of you who have not turned to God, "Ought you not to repent of sin and trust the Savior?" I feel sure that your answer would be, "Of course I ought to! Do you think that I am so ignorant as not to know that it is right to forsake sin and to follow that which is good and holy?" Then, understand, if you know this, yet do it not, your doom will be terrible, according to our Lord's words, "That servant which knew his lord's will and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." It is an awful thing, a dreadful thing, to know what you ought to do—to feel that it is right that you should do it—and yet remain stubborn and disobedient!

All this adds greatly to a man's guilt in refusing to return unto the Lord. And so it does *when he knows that it would be the best thing for him*. I have often heard a man say, "Oh, yes, Sir, I know that if I repented of sin, if I believed in Jesus, if I became right with God, I should be much happier than I am now. Indeed, I cannot rest as I am, I need to find

something better." Then why do you not find it? You cannot have peace with God all the while that you keep your sin—then why do you not give them up? Why not turn unto the Lord with full purpose of heart? When you know that it would be for your present and eternal good. When you know that you would be happier and holier, and yet you continue as you are, who shall be found to plead for you? Where is the advocate, in Heaven or on earth, who will take up the cause of a man who knows the right and yet will not do it—who is well aware that turning to God will save him—and yet acts in direct opposition to his own highest interests? It seems incredible that anyone should be so foolish, yet multitudes are!

It greatly adds to a man's sin, also, *if this refusal to return to the Lord has been long continued,* and I am afraid, in the case of some here—and, oh, how tenderly would I grasp their hands if I could, and ask them whether it is not so—that this refusal has gone on for many years! Is it not so, my dear Friend? You had a tender conscience in your childhood and you have not quite lost it. You have often been moved to tears under earnest, faithful preaching and, tonight, you hardly know how to sit still. You are ready to cry out to me, "Leave off urging me thus, for I cannot bear it!" And do you expect that God will spare you for another 10 years, or another 20 years? You cannot tell that He will. You have no right to think that He will and, if He does, will you fling the sins of those additional years on to the heap of your past and present iniquities? Will you make the millstone of your guilt bigger and yet bigger until, at last, it sinks you into the lowest Hell?

Take heed, I pray you! It is a great blessing to turn to God in youth, for early piety often becomes eminent piety—but it is terrible to be living year after year without God, without Christ and without hope in the world. Turn unto the Lord speedily, I pray you! Let the time past suffice for you to have refused the mercy of your God and now, this very hour, I charge you, before you dare to go from under this roof, turn unto your God and seek and find pardon and salvation through the atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, His Son!

There is one other thing which sometimes makes this refusal to return to God become even greater sin, and that is, *when there is some evil reason at the bottom of it.* I cannot pry into the hearts of my hearers, but I did know a man, once, and he was very fair to look upon—and I often wondered why he did not become a decided Christian. He was respected by all who knew him until they found out his awful secret—he had another family in addition to his own family at home. How could he turn unto God when he was living in sin? I have known others who seemed to be sure of salvation, but they were drinking in private—I mean women as well as men—how could they turn to God when they were secretly indulging in excess? Perhaps it is a very mean and contemptible thing that is keeping you from the Savior. You would turn to God, but you have an old friend who would laugh at you if you became a Christian. Possibly, it is your own father who would despise you, or, perhaps, dear wife, it is your husband who would oppress you if you gave yourself up to the Lord. But shall any of these be allowed to ruin your *souls*?

They may laugh you into Hell, but they cannot laugh you out again! Men may put cruel pressure upon you till your fear of them drives you away from God, but it would be well if your fear of them could be slain by a greater fear, for it is infinitely better to dread the wrath of God than to fear the anger of man! For what can man do, after all, even if he should kill the body? Remember the words of our Lord Jesus upon this matter, "I say unto you My friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: Fear Him, which after He has killed, has power to cast into Hell; yes, I say unto you, Fear Him." Be not such cowards as to be lost forever through indulging your cowardice. Pluck up courage enough to seek your own salvation, for "what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Oh, flee, flee from the wrath to come! Whatever the ribald crowd may say, what will it matter to you in the tremendous day when you stand before the Great White Throne? How can you, then, escape from the wrath of the Lamb if you do not fly to Him now that you are exposed to the wrath of ungodly men?

IV. Now I must close with my last question. WHAT IS THE REAL REASON OF THIS REFUSAL TO RETURN?

Well, first, it may be ignorance. I hope it is, for then Christ can pray, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Notice how the Prophet put it—"Therefore I said, Surely these are poor; they are foolish: for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God." He hoped that it was downright ignorance that kept some of them from yielding their hearts to God, but he said that he would go and try the rich ones—"I will get me unto the great men, and will speak to them; for they have known the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God." But he fared no better there! "These have altogether broken the yoke and burst the bonds." It is still very much the same—rich and poor alike refuse to return unto the Lord their God.

Then, next, while there are some who are kept away from Christ through ignorance, there are many others who fail to come to Him *through self-conceit*. Perhaps—though it is but a choice of evils—it is better not to know the way of salvation than to know it, and yet not to walk in it. Some poor soul says, "I cannot come to Christ, for I do not know the way." HE is the way! Trust Him and you have already come to Him! But some great man says, "I do not want to go to Christ. I am good enough, I have always been religious." Ah, poor deluded creature! You are defying God by setting up your own righteousness in the place of Christ's righteousness—and so your "sacraments" and your hearing of sermons, and your few miserable good works are to stand instead of yonder amazing Sacrifice upon the Cross where there hangs the Son of God in agonies and blood? You set up your filthy rags to compete with the spotless robe of His matchless righteousness? This is an atrocity which, even if you had committed no other sin, would sink you to the lowest Hell!

But, to tell you the real reason of this refusal to return, I must say that *men do not turn to Christ because they do not want to be made holy*. An eminent man of God said, "To some sinners, the Gospel comes as a

threat from God that it will make them holy." Is it not a dreadful thing, that men should actually turn what is the greatest of all blessings—the being made holy—into a thing of which they are afraid? They do not want to be true! They do not want to be good! They do not want to be right in God's sight! They prefer their own ways, they choose to follow their own devices. That is the top and bottom of the mischief! Now I have laid my finger upon the very core of the evil. If you willed to be saved, you would be saved—if you really desired to be made holy, you would be made holy! It is because your heart's longings still go after that which is evil that, therefore, you do not turn unto the Lord! O mighty Spirit of God, change the very nature of men and bring them to desire the holiness which they now despise, for then will You work it in them and they shall be saved!

The fact is and this is the last reason for refusing to return, *there is, in most men, a preference for present joy above future blessing*. "Heaven" they say—"well, Heaven—Heaven—we do not know where it is. It is a long way off and we cannot tell when we shall get there. But here is an opportunity of spending an evening in pleasurable sin and we prefer that! 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.'" O foolish men! Your poor little bird in the hand is not worth one of the birds in the Paradise of God!

Others cry, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." What? Are you no better than the brute beasts that perish—the cattle in the pasture fattening for the slaughter? What? Has God given us immortal souls and yet are we never to look beyond the present life? Has He adapted us to live with Him at His right hand and yet is the dim horizon of this little life to shut in all that we care to know? Is it so that when you are in your coffin, you will have had your all? "I have no fear," says one. But have you any *hope*, Sir? That is the point, for many a man has so drugged his soul with the opiate of self-deception that fear, which was meant to be like a watchman, has been lulled into deadly slumber! So listen again—Have you any *hope*? "No," you answer. Then you are in a desperate condition, but why are you without hope? Because you are without God! I would not change places with you even to get rid of all fear as you have done, for I have a good hope that, through Divine Grace, though my spirit must be parted for a while from this flesh, yet it will never be divided from Christ, my Lord, and it shall be my delight to be—

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

God bless you, dear Friend! Believe in Jesus and you live at once! Believe in Him this moment and this moment you are saved! Trust Christ now, as soon as this word reaches your ears, and your sin is forgiven, you are justified and accepted and you may go your way, a sinner saved—saved to all eternity! God give you that blessed privilege, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HEBREWS 2.

Verse 1. *Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.* It is well to give heed to what you are now hearing, but it is also important to give heed to what you have heard. Oh, how much have we heard, but have forgotten! How much have we heard which we still remember, but do not practice! Let us, therefore, listen to the words of the Apostle here—"We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip"—as it were, slipping through our fingers and flowing down the stream of time to be carried away into the ocean of oblivion!

2. *For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward.* See, Brothers and Sisters, the punishment for disobeying the word spoken by angels was death. What, then, must be the penalty of neglecting the great salvation worked by the Divine Redeemer, Himself? He who does not give earnest heed to the Gospel treats with disdain the Lord Jesus Christ and he will have to answer for that sin when the King shall sit upon the Throne of Judgment. Trifle not, therefore, with that salvation which cost Christ so much and which He, Himself, brings to you with bleeding hands. And, oh, if you have hitherto trifled with it, and let it slip, may you now be brought to a better mind, lest haply, despising Christ, the "just recompense of reward" should come upon you! And what will that be? I know of no punishment that can be too severe for the man who treats with contempt the Son of God and tramples on His blood—and every individual who hears the Gospel and yet does not receive Christ as his Savior—is committing that atrocious crime.

3. *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation?* If we neglect that salvation, is there any other way by which we can be rescued from destruction? Is there any other door of escape if we pass that one by? No, there is none.

3, 4. *Which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?* This Gospel of ours is stamped with the seal of God! He has set His mark upon it to attest its genuineness and authority. The miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were the seal that the Gospel was no invention of man, but that it was, indeed, the message of God. Gifts of healing, gifts of tongues, gifts of miracles of divers kinds, were God's solemn declaration to man, "This is the Gospel. This is My Gospel which I send to you; therefore, refuse it not."

5. *For unto the angels He has not put the world to come in subjection, whereof we speak.* We have no angelic preachers. We sometimes speak of "the seraphic doctor," but no seraph ever was a preacher of the Gospel of the Grace of God—that honor has been reserved for a lower order of beings!

6. *But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that You are mindful of him? Or the son of man, that You visit him?* God speaks to men by men. He has made them to be the choice and chosen instruments of His wondrous works of Grace upon earth. Oh, what a solemn thing it is

to be a preacher of the everlasting Gospel! It is an office so high that an angel might covet it, but one that is so responsible that even an angel might tremble to undertake it! Brothers and Sisters, pray for us who preach, not merely to a few, but to many of our fellow creatures, that we may be the means, in the hand of God, of blessing to our hearers!

7, 8. *You made him a little lower than the angels; You crowned him with glory and honor, and did set him over the works of Your hands: You have put all things in subjection under his feet.* It was so with Adam in his measure. Before he fell through his disobedience, all the animals which God had made were inferior to him and acknowledged him as their lord and master. It is infinitely more so in that second Adam who has restored to humanity its lost dignity and, in His own Person, has again elevated man to the head of creation—"You have put all things in subjection under his feet."

8. *For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.* Man does not yet rule the world. Wild beasts defy him. Storms vanquish him. There are a thousand things not at present submissive to his control.

9. *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that He, by the Grace of God, should taste death for every man.* Thus lifting man back into the place where he first stood so far as this matter of dominion is concerned.

10. *For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.* Is it not amazing that the Christ, who is the Head over all things, could not be perfected for this work of ruling, or for the work of saving, except by *sufferings*? He stooped to conquer! Not because there was any sin in Him, but that He might be a sympathetic Ruler over His people, He must experience sufferings like those of His subjects. And that He might be a mighty Savior, He must be, Himself, compassed with infirmity, that He might "have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way." Brothers and Sisters, do you expect to be made perfect without sufferings? It will never be so with you—

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."

We shall never be fit for the Heavenly Canaan unless we first pass through the wilderness! There are certain things about us which require this, so thus it must be.

11. *For both He that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one.* One family. One by nature with Christ our glorious Head.

11. *For which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren.* Oh, this blessed condescension of Christ! We are often ashamed of ourselves. Alas, we are sometimes so base as to be ashamed of Him—but He is never ashamed to call us brethren.

12. *Saying, I will declare Your name unto My brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto You.* Christ, the center of the celestial

choirs, is also the center of all the bands of true singers that are yet here below.

13. *And again, I will put my trust in Him.* This is our Lord Jesus Christ putting His trust in the Father, overcoming by faith, even as we do. Oh, what a marvelous oneness there is, here, between Christ and His people! Well might the Apostle say that "both He that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one."

13, 14. *And again, Behold I and the children which God has given Me. Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same.* We know what it is to be partakers of flesh and blood. We often wish that we did not. It is the flesh that drags us down. It is the flesh that brings us a thousand sorrows. I have a converted soul, but an unconverted body. Christ has healed my soul, but He has left my body, to a large extent, still in bondage and, therefore, it still has to suffer. But the Lord will redeem even that! The redemption of the body is the adoption and that is to come at the day of the Resurrection. But think of Christ, who was a partaker of the Eternal Godhead, condescending to make Himself a partaker of flesh and blood—the Godhead linked with materialism! The Infinite, an Infant! The Eternal prepared to die and actually dying! Oh, wondrous mystery, this union of Deity with humanity in the Person of Christ Jesus our Lord! Why did He become a partaker of flesh and blood and die upon the Cross? Listen—

14. *That through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.* That, through dying, He might overthrow Satan's power for all who trust Him!

15-18. *And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Therefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted.* Glory be to His holy name forever and ever! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—587, 527, 521, 522.

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END OF VOLUME 45

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