A KING SENT IN LOVE
NO. 2760

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

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

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

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

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

I want you to notice, also, that Hiram here distinctly recognizes that every blessing comes from God. If Solomon is a blessing to his subjects, Hiram attributes that to the fact of God having placed him where he was. Now, if one who had been a heathen could thus trace a blessing back to

God as its source, what heathen must those be who never do anything of the sort, but trace it to what they call, "good luck," or to "chance," or to *anything* rather than to God? O Beloved, whenever there is anything of good, anything of excellence, anything of happiness that comes to our door, let us praise and bless the God who gave it! We are all too apt to complain of Him when we suffer and ready enough to attribute our afflictions to Him. Surely, then, when plentiful mercies come to us, we should magnify and glorify the name of the Lord our God from whom they come! We should say of every mercy, in somewhat similar fashion to that of Hiram when he wrote to Solomon, "Because the Lord has loved His people, therefore has He done this and that for them."

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

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

If we believe that, does it not prove that *we do not regard the dominion of Jesus Christ as any burden whatever*? It is a proof that in our esteem His yoke is easy and His burden is light. Those who look on from the outside say, "We would rather be perfectly free—free thinkers and free livers." And when they hear any of us say, with the Psalmist, "O Lord, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid: You have loosed my bonds," they feel that they do not want to share any such servitude with us. But we are living and truthful witnesses to the fact that we do not look upon the rule of Christ over us as any hardship. On the contrary, we take delight in it! We trace it to the love of God, not to His anger—not even to His justice, or to any necessity that may constrain Him, but to His infinite love and to His gracious thought that He could not do any better thing for us than to give us Jesus Christ to be our King—and we devoutly thank and bless the Lord, this day, that He has set Him over us, to rule us and to have dominion over our spirit, soul and body henceforth and forever.

But, Beloved, *there was an urgent necessity that we should have Jesus as our King*. We are such poor creatures that we cannot live without some form of rule and government. Men have tried to live in anarchy, but their experiment has proven to be a disastrous failure. Think of the French Revolution at the end of the 18th Century and see what awful abominations resulted from it. A den of tigers, all let loose upon one another, would be peacefulness, itself, compared with a mass of men living without any law or order! We are such creatures that we need to be under authority of some kind. God has frequently compared us to sheep, but what can sheep do without a shepherd? I do not know that there has

ever been a discovery made of really wild sheep anywhere. There are certain wild animals that are somewhat like sheep, but sheep like those with which we are familiar—what shiftless, hopeless, helpless, defenseless creatures they would be without a shepherd! They would soon die out altogether if it were not for man. The rule, leadership and kingly shepherdry of man are good for sheep—and Christ's rule is absolutely necessary for His sheep. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture if we have believed in Him and, we as much need Jesus, our Shepherd-King, as the sheep need their shepherd!

If you object to that figure, let us think of ourselves under a higher aspect. As many of us as have been born-again are the children of God. Now, a family without rule—I venture to say very boldly—is not a happy family. Children who are always allowed to do just as they like will very soon be exceedingly unhappy. A father's gentle sway over the various members of the household, which is, I take it, the first type of kingship, is absolutely necessary for their good—for disorder soon breeds unhappiness, envy, strife, malice and all kinds of evil. Every house needs to have a "*house-band"* to keep it together. Every family needs to have someone as its head. Every thinking person feels that it must be so and, therefore, how thankful we ought to be that our glorious God, seeing that His own brightness unveiled might have been too much for our feebleness, has given us His Son, "whom He has appointed Heir of all things," and made Him to be the first-born among many brethren, that He might sweetly rule the whole household! Because the Lord loved His people, therefore He gave Jesus to be King over them.

Further, this fact tends greatly to our happiness. It is not merely a matter of necessity, but, over and above that, it makes us exceedingly happy to have such a King as Jesus is. Just suppose, for a moment, that we, the people of God, were left without any law or ruler. Well, my Brothers and Sisters, in such a case as that, we would not know what to do! We might wish to do what was right, but we would not know what right was! I am sure we must all desire to be guided by God, for we feel unable to guide ourselves and we dare not trust the best earthly guide. So it is a mercy that we have a King to whom we can refer all difficult cases and who will guide us. Why, even if I were conscious of having done right, yet if I had no Ruler and Law-Giver, whose Infallible Word would assure me that I had done so, I would always be in a fidget about it! I would be anxious to know whether I had made a wise choice or not—whether I might not, after all, have put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. When a man is his own ruler, he has all the responsibility of what he does—but when he implicitly obeys Christ's command, he is not responsible for the result of his actions—that rests with Him who gave the command. If, in doing right, we meet with trouble—if we have to suffer persecution or if the reward of virtue does not reach us in the present—yet we have the comfort that we did what Jesus told us to do. We did what our King commanded, so the responsibility of it must rest with Him. This is always a sweet feeling and much to the ease of such poor minds as ours are.

"Well," says one, "I like to be my own master." Yes, and that involves two things—first, you have a very bad master and, next, your master has a fool for his servant! But he who takes the Lord Jesus Christ as his Master will be rightly and wisely guided—and hence arises the comfort of such a relationship.

But, to my mind, the bliss of being under the dominion of Christ lies *in the Character of Christ*. As I must have a master, let me have the Christ of Bethlehem—the Christ of Nazareth—the Christ of Calvary—the Christ of Heaven! If I must submit my mind and will to another—and surely I must do so, or else I must submit it to the imperious domination of my own lusts and passions, which is the worst slavery in the whole world—if I must have a king, let it be Jesus Christ, whose head was once crowned with thorns!

For, my Brothers and Sisters, in Him we have all the wisdom of Solomon and infinitely more. He will rule and guide us wisely. To err is human, yet He never makes any mistakes! His rule and guidance are Infallible!

There is also united with this wisdom, unlimited power, for, where Christ rules, He is able to protect. He can put forth the might of Omnipotence. His decrees and proclamations shall never be wasted words. All power is given unto Him in Heaven and in earth. Though He sometimes leaves His subjects to suffer in this world, (they must have tribulation, for they have to carry their cross after Him), yet He could deliver them in a moment if He pleased, for there is nobody above or below the sky who can successfully withstand the almighty power of the Christ of God! Happy are the people who have so wise and strong a King as He is.

But, then, with this wisdom and strength, He is also gentle. Was there ever such a gentleman and such a gentleman as He was? Who would not gladly serve Him who suffered the little children to come unto Him and would not let His disciples forbid them to come? Who would not willingly serve Him who sat upon the well at Sychar to talk with the poor sinful woman till He had won her soul and made her into a zealous and successful home missionary? Who would not freely serve Him to whom publicans and sinners drew near, that He might woo them, with tender love, to forsake their sins? He is truly and Divinely royal! But He is also, as the children are taught to say—

"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,"

so affable, generous, humane, benevolent, gracious, Godlike—that to be enlisted beneath His banner is to serve One who is, indeed, a Standard-Bearer among ten thousand! Yes, He is altogether lovely. We are not ashamed to be the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. There have been some kings and princes whom a man might well be ashamed to serve—to have anything to do with such loathsome creatures as some despots are, would make a stain upon anyone's character! But to come beneath the blessed servitude of Christ is to be honored indeed! The meanest scullion in His royal kitchen has more real glory than all the peers of the realm put together if they have not entered the service of our gracious King!

Further, this blessed King not only commends Himself to us by His Character, but also *by His relationship to us*. Surely it was because the Lord loved His people that He made Him to be King over them who is their Brother, for Jesus is our Brother. He was in all things made like unto His brethren and, while upon the earth, He was tempted in all points like as we are. But—"Now, though He reigns exalted high," He is still our Brother, and He is not ashamed, even in Heaven, to call His people His "brethren"—

"Though now ascended up on high,
He bends to earth with a Brother's eye.
Partaker of the human name,
He knows the frailty of our frame.
Our fellow Sufferer yet retains
A fellow feeling of our pains,
And still remembers in the skies,
His tears, and agonies, and cries."

He also comes, if possible, nearer than that, for He is our Husband—married to every believing heart, united with us in a conjugal union which never can be broken by divorce. Christ is the heavenly Bridegroom and each believing soul is His bride, as the whole Church of the redeemed is the bride, the Lamb's wife. I may say to each Believer, in the words of the 45th Psalm, "So shall the King greatly desire your beauty: for He is your Lord; worship you Him." He not only reigns over us, but He loves us with such love that He even died for us! What other monarch ever did that for His subjects? You have seen the portraits of kings holding the globe and the scepter in their hands, wearing a crown, perhaps adorned with a wreath in token of their victories. But when our King puts on His royal regalia, when He comes forth in His coronation robes, I will tell you what are the chief ensigns of His sovereignty, the tokens of His universal dominion. They are the wounds in His hands, and in His feet, and in His side! He *deserves* to be our King and we delight to say to Him—

"You have redeemed our souls with blood
Have set the prisoners free—
Have made us kings and priests to God,
And we shall reign with Thee."

Truly, none who really know our Lord Jesus Christ can refuse to rejoice that the Father has so loved His people as to set the Savior, who did redeem them, to be King over them henceforth and forever.

I think I have said enough upon that point, so I will now turn to another side of the subject. Just to refresh your memories, I remind you that the first division was that the love of God has made Jesus our King.

II. Now we will shake the kaleidoscope and then we shall see the same Truth of God presented to us under another aspect—IT IS THE LOVE OF GOD WHICH HAS MADE US TO BE THE SUBJECTS OF KING JESUS.

There is love in the selection of the King who has been chosen for us, and there *is also love in the choice of His subjects*. It was certainly Divine Love which made a choice of Israel to be the subjects of Solomon because, if God meant to make a great king, and a wise king with wide do-

minions and vast influence, it was a very singular thing that He should choose the land of Israel to be the country over which Solomon should rule in such glory. Palestine was a poor, miserable little country, a very small district to be the center of so much splendor. And the people were not very numerous and they were very poor. Only a little while before they had been downtrodden by the Philistines. David, Solomon's father, had only just rescued them by the skin of their teeth from being slaves to the Philistines and, before that, they had been perpetually harried by all the neighboring nations, so that they never had any settled peace. Yet it was this little paltry nation that God chose to be ruled over by Solomon, to give it a name and make it the leading nation on the face of the earth!

Well, now, Beloved, what are we who have been chosen to be God's people? What are we that Christ should ever rule over us? Surely if He wanted to exercise dominion, He might have chosen the kings, queens, lords, dukes and the fine folk of earth! But you know how it is written, "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," Not even to the wise and prudent has He revealed the Truths of His Kingdom, but He has revealed them unto babes. "Even so, Father," said Christ, "for so it seemed good in Your sight." Surely it was because the Lord loved us that He put us under the dominion of Christ, that He might rule over us!

More than that, these people of Israel began with Solomon by a rebellion. You know how all through the reign of David, they were continually kicking against his rule. He had saved them from the Philistines, yet, at one time, they set up Absalom in opposition to him and, at another time, another pretender would come forth and they would follow him, for they seemed to wish to get rid of their best friend and deliverer! Even when David was near death, and Adonijah proclaimed himself king, Joab and Abiathar, and many of the people followed him, so that Solomon's reign began with rebellion! Yet he was set up as king over these traitorous and disloyal people—and what a mercy it is for us, who used to be rebels against our King—that the Lord Jesus Christ ever admitted us under the sway of His scepter!

I need not go into the details of what we used to be. It will bring tears to the eyes of some of us if we only think of what we once were. Lord, what a rebellious wretch I was! Many here had to fight against conscience, to fight what was against everything good in order to remain as they were! Yet they did remain as they were until the Lord so loved them that He subdued them, by His Grace, and brought them to His feet! With almighty love He came to them, broke down all their opposition and made them willing in the day of His power! I am sure that if any of you are rejoicing in being Christ's subjects, you will ascribe it to the love of

God and not to your own will, or to your own goodness, that you ever came to bow at Jesus' feet, for no man ever comes there of himself. They are drawn by Divine Grace and then they run, but never does a soul crouch at the feet of Jesus, crying for mercy and taking Him to be its King except by an act of Almighty Grace which leads the sinner to that happy and blessed decision! So let us give all the praise to God if we belong to the Kingdom of Jesus, for it is Love, amazing Love that has put us under such gracious Sovereignty as that.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, we are happy, indeed, for it is with us as it was with Israel. For, *after Solomon was once settled on the throne, there was no more rebellion.* In his God-given wisdom, he so ruled the nation that all was quiet and peaceable. After he had once climbed up into the saddle, he could not be thrown out of it. And after King Jesus once gets into the throne of our heart, stubborn wills and rebellious passions must lie still, for Jesus knows how to rule. What wonderful order Solomon set up! What remarkable peace the people enjoyed! What extraordinary prosperity they had! For "the king made silver and gold at Jerusalem as plenteous as stones."

And, Beloved, Christ has made us to be so rich, so happy, so contented, so blessed, that we have no wish to escape from His dominion, but rather does each of us cry, "O Jesus, subdue me more completely! Drive out all my old enemies! Root out my sins! Hunt them down like traitors and hang them up to die—and You alone rule and reign over me absolutely. In the entire kingdom of my nature, over my whole spirit, soul and body, You be the supreme and only Lord! And let no rebellion be so much as thought of." But it must be the love of God that will effect this—we cannot do it ourselves. It is the Grace of God—the mighty Love of God in Christ Jesus—that will subdue our spirit to the dominion of Christ! And in so far as He has already done it, let us praise and bless Him and, in any respect in which the gracious work is not yet fully accomplished, let us cry to Him to complete it.

III. I conclude my discourse with the third point, which is simply another view of the same Truth—OUR LOVE TO GOD NOW MAKES THE REIGN OF CHRIST OVER US TO BE VERY BLESSED, INDEED. Since we have been taught to love the Lord Jesus Christ, it has become a great delight to us to be under His dominion.

First, Brothers and Sisters, *the courts of Christ are our home*. In this House of Prayer, the Lord has often revealed Himself to us. Some of us feel that when we get into our places and join in holy worship, it is the best spot beneath the sun. I know that it is so by the way in which you strive to get here on Monday evenings and Thursday nights. Many of you are glad, then, as well as on the Sabbath, to steal away for a little while out of the world and even, perhaps, out of the worry of the household. And because our Lord Jesus Christ manifests Himself to you, here this place becomes to you the very palace of the great King—and you love to be here.

There are some hearers who must have a very grand place of worship and a very soft seat in it—and very eloquent preaching—and even then they soon drop off to sleep! But a true child of God who loves his Savior with all his heart, says, "I can stand anywhere. I do not mind being squeezed up in a corner so long as I can hear about Jesus—

'Sweeter sounds than music knows
Charm me in Immanuel's name.'"

That is right, Brother, Sister! Keep on playing that tune! Praise the name of Jesus! Let that be the theme of all your music! Ring again, and again, and again, those sweet silvery bells that sound out—

"Free Grace and dying love."

You may hold me by the ears and by the heart, too, as long as you play such music as that! Even though there is no eloquence in the speaker, and he only talks straight on and tells what he knows of Jesus in his own heart, I will sit, or I will stand anywhere if I may but hear the strains of that blessed melody! And I know that many of you say the same. I can tell that you do by the look on your faces and I also know how I feel, myself, when, now and then, it is my privilege to listen to a sermon full of Christ. That is what causes tears of joy to flow and makes me feel, "I know that I am the Lord's, for I do rejoice in the music of His charming name." Yes, He is such a King to us that His courts are the place of our highest delight! And we are never happier than when we are among even the meanest of those who gather within His palace gate. We often feel that we would rather be doorkeepers in the House of our God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

We also realize that it is God's Love that made Jesus to be our King, for *His service has come to be our best recreation.* I heard a young man say, in a railway carriage, "I do not like the English mode of spending Sunday. I think Sunday ought to be devoted to recreation—everybody needs recreation." An old gentleman who sat opposite to the one who made this remark, spared me the trouble of replying to him by saying, "I think, my dear Sir, it is very likely that you need recreation, too." "Yes," answered the young man, "I certainly do." "Ah! " said the other, "but perhaps you do not quite understand the word I used—*re-creation*—that is, being created anew, so as to be made a new creature in Christ Jesus. If you were created again, the recreation that you would then desire would be of a different kind from that which you are now advocating."

That was quite true, but even using the word, "recreation," in the ordinary meaning of the term, we have found the service of God to be really a recreation to us. When you, my Brother, get a little spare time, I know that you feel it a pleasure to spend it in some form of service for Christ. Someone might say to you, 'Well, I should think that you had had enough work with that quill-driving, or standing behind the counter, or toiling in that factory—and that when you get an hour to spare, you would go to bed, or take your ease in some form or other." "No, I do not," you reply. "I go and gather my class together, or call on my scholars in their homes and try to find out whether they have really given their

hearts to the Lord Jesus Christ." "Well," says the enquirer, "do you mean to say that you get recreation out of such work as that?" "Yes," you reply, "I do," and he says, "Then, you must be an odd fish!" Well, perhaps we are odd fish, but that is one of our highest sources of recreation! We find the service of Christ to be so blessed to us that we take our rest in it and if, sometimes, we get wearied in it, we can truly say that we do not get wearied *of* it. Our whole soul delights in it and we are resolved that we will serve our Savior as long as we have life and breath.

More than that, it has now become such a joy to us to serve our King that *His revenue has become our riches*. Solomon's subjects were very heavily taxed, yet their very taxes were a proof of their prosperity. They worked at a high pressure in order to produce wealth. They were a poor people to begin with, but they grew rich under the plan which Solomon adopted. It was an expensive plan but, then, if they paid much in the way of taxation, it was because they had so much the more coming in, year by year. Silver and gold had become so plentiful that it was not at all a hardship that the people should help to pay for the efficient maintenance of the king's postal service and all the other arrangements by which they were, themselves, enriched.

Now, our King has a great revenue with which we have nothing to do except to draw from it all that we need. Unbounded riches of Grace are stored up in Christ Jesus and He gives us liberty to take all that we require. As to anything that we present to Him, what little we can give, we count it our highest riches to offer to Him and, whenever we do give anything to the Lord, we find that He multiplies whatever we have left in our basket and store! But, if He did not do so, we would still delight to lay at His dear feet anything that we can—and we do not need Him to give it back to us. It is a delight and joy to us to have an opportunity of doing anything in His blessed service! It is no task to us, it is never irksome. Some of us—I do not know whether each one of us—can sing, with Dr. Watts—

"All that I am, and all I have,
Shall be forever Yours.
Whatever my duty bids me give,
My cheerful hands resign.
Yet if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love my God with zeal so great,
That I would give Him all."

So, Brothers and Sisters, I hope it has come to this with many of us, that *Christ's Cross is our crown*. We have fallen in love with it and we gladly bear it for His sake. The very hardships that we endure in connection with Christ's Kingdom have become a joy to us! While, as for His Glory, that is now our honor and, as for Himself, He is our Heaven!

Thus have I spoken, all too feebly, concerning the King given to us by God in love. If there are any here who are not under the rule of Christ, I wish that they would, at any rate, give heed to my testimony that the service of Christ is the best service in the whole world! There is no other

that is worthy to be compared with it for a single moment. If you resolve to serve yourself, or to serve the world, or to serve pleasure, or to serve the devil, you will rue the day—you may depend upon it! There is one remarkable thing about the service of Christ which ought to have great weight with impartial observers. Many who have lived to serve the world have repented of their folly on their deathbeds—but there was never yet heard of even one instance of a Christian saying, when he was dying, "I am sorry that I have served Christ." There never has been since the foundation of Christ's Kingdom, one of His subjects who, when he was dying, said, "I am sorry that I did so much for Christ, that I was so earnest in His service, or so generous to His cause." No, there never has been such a case and there never will be one!

I always say that it is the sign of a man having a good master when he tries to introduce his sons into the service of his employer. A man is not likely to complain of his master when he comes to him and says, "I would be much obliged to you, Sir, if you would take my two sons into your service." It looks as if he had a good master when he talks like that! Well, that is my own case—it is my intense delight to see my two sons actively engaged in the service of my Master! He has been a good Master to me. I often wonder that He has not turned me off, yet I should have wondered still more if He had done so, because He has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." All this while He has borne with my ill manners and put up with many imperfections in my service. I wonder that He is not tired of me, yet I have His own word for it that He will not turn me adrift, for He has said, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." I must love Him! I must praise Him! And I wish that everyone else would enter the service of my blessed Lord and Master. If you would only give Him a trial, (by God's Grace may you be led to do so!) you would never regret it. Ask any man who loves the Lord Jesus Christ, whether He has ever regretted having done so—you will never find one who will say that he has!

Well, then, if we can all speak so well of our King, we think that common reason, if it were really reasonable, would lead men to say, "Can we not enter into this service, too?" I pray that God's Grace may enable many of you to say this. Will you not seek to become His servant this very hour? The way into His service is by your becoming nothing and letting Him be your All-in-All. Any soldier can tell you how he gets into his sovereign's service. What does he give in order that he may become a soldier? Give? Why, he gives nothing at all! He takes a shilling from the recruiting officer and that seals the act! That is the way to become a Christian—take the Lord Jesus Christ as your own! He gives you Himself, so trust Him and take Him, for thus you become His soldier, enlisted forever! He will teach you your drills. He will show you how to behave yourself in His service and He will give you a rich reward at the end of it. So may He bless each one of you, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 72:1-4.

Verse 1. *Give the king Your judgments, O God, and Your righteousness unto the king's son.* "Give the king Your judgments, O God." The right to reign was transmitted by descent from David to Solomon, but not by that means alone. Israel was a theocracy and the kings were but the viceroys of the greater King. Therefore the prayer that the new king might be enthroned by Divine right and then endowed with Divine Wisdom. Our glorious King in Zion has all judgment committed to Him. He rules in the name of God over all lands. He is King "Dei Gratia" as well as by right of inheritance. "And Your righteousness unto the king's son." Solomon was both king and king's son—so, also, is our Lord. He has power and authority in Himself and also royal dignity given Him of His Father. He is the righteous King. In a word, He is "the Lord our righteousness." We are waiting till He shall be manifested among men as the ever-righteous Judge. May the Lord hasten in His own time the long-looked-for day! Now wars and fights are even in Israel, itself, but soon the dispensation will change and David, the type of Jesus warring with our enemies, shall be displaced by Solomon, the prince of peace.

2. *He shall judge Your people with righteousness, and Your poor with judgment.* "He shall judge Your people with righteousness." Clothed with Divine authority, he shall use it on the behalf of the favored nation, for whom he shall show himself strong, that they be not misjudged, slandered, or in any way treated maliciously. His sentence shall put their accusers to silence and award the saints their true position as the accepted of the Lord. What a consolation to feel that none can suffer wrong in Christ's Kingdom! He sits upon the Great White Throne, unspotted by a single deed of injustice, or even mistake of judgment—reputations are safe enough with Him!

"And Your poor with judgment." True wisdom is manifest in all the decisions of Zion's King. We do not always understand His doings, but they are always right. Partiality has been too often shown to rich and great men, but the King of the last and best of monarchs deals out even-handed justice, to the delight of the poor and despised. Here we have the poor mentioned side by side with their King. The Sovereignty of God is a delightful theme to the poor in spirit—they love to see the Lord exalted and have no quarrel with Him for exercising the prerogatives of His crown. It is the fictitious wealth, which labors to conceal real poverty, which makes men quibble at the reigning lord, but a deep sense of spiritual need prepares the heart to loyally worship the Redeemer King. On the other hand, the King has a special delight in the humbled hearts of His contrite ones and exercises all His power and wisdom on their behalf, even as Joseph in Egypt ruled for the welfare of his brothers.

3. *The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness.* "The mountains shall bring peace to the people." Thence, aforetime, rushed the robber bands which infested the country, but now the forts erected are there the guardians of the land and the watchmen publish far and near the tidings that no foe is to be seen. Where Jesus is,

there is peace—lasting, deep, eternal. Even those things which were once our dread lose all terror when Jesus is acknowledged as Monarch of the heart. Death itself, that dark mountain, loses all its gloom! Trials and afflictions, when the Lord is with us, bring us an increase rather than a diminution of peace.

"And the little hills, by righteousness." Seeing that the rule of the monarch was just, every little hill seemed clothed with peace. Injustice has made Palestine a desert. If the Turk and Bedouin were gone, the land would smile again, for even in the most literal sense, justice is the fertilizer of lands and men are diligent to plow and raise harvests when they have the prospects of eating the fruit of their labors. In a spiritual sense, peace is given to the heart by the righteousness of Christ. And all the powers and passions of the soul are filled with a holy calm when the way of salvation, by a Divine Righteousness, is revealed. Then do we go forth with joy and are led forth with peace! The mountains and the hills break forth before us into singing.

4. *He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.* "He shall judge the poor of the people." He will do them justice, yes, and blessed be His name, more than justice, for He will delight to do them good!

"He shall save the children of the needy." Poor, helpless things, they were packhorses for others, and paupers, but their King would be their Protector. Happy are God's poor and needy ones—they are safe under the wing of the Prince of Peace, for He will save them from all their enemies.

"And shall break in pieces the oppressor." He is strong to smite the foes of His people. Oppressors have been great breakers, but their time of retribution shall come and they shall be broken themselves, Sin, Satan and all our enemies must be crushed by the iron rod of King Jesus! We have, therefore, no cause to fear, but abundant reason to sing—

"All hail the power of Jesus' name!
Let angels prostrate fall,
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all."

It is much better to be poor than to be an oppressor, for both the needy and their children find an Advocate in the heavenly Solomon, who aims all His blows at haughty ones and rests not till they are utterly destroyed!

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, 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 FREE AGENCY OF CHRIST
NO. 2761

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 12, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 21, 1879.

"And He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him. So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything. And he looked up and said, I see men as trees, walking. After that He put His hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw everyone clearly." Mark 8:22-25.

THERE is a very wonderful variety in the miracles of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the variety is apparent even in the way in which men come to Him to partake of His blessing. With regard to the blind men to whom our Lord gave sight, we read of some that they were brought to Christ by their friends, as in the case of this man at Bethsaida, who was almost passive all the way through. His friends appear to have had more faith than he had and, therefore, they brought him to Jesus. There were other cases in which the blind men cried to Christ and, as far as they could, came to Him of themselves. Some of them even came to Him in the teeth of stern opposition, for, when the disciples upbraided one of them for crying out so loudly, he cried out the more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me." So that, you see, some were brought to Christ by their friends and others came to Him in spite of much opposition.

Then there is that notable case which many of you must remember, of that remarkable blind man who had been blind from his birth, to whom Jesus came uninvited. Jesus saw him and anointed his eyes with the clay which He had made, and then bade him go and wash in the pool of Siloam. "He went his way, therefore, and washed, and came seeing." Thus, from the very commencement of our Savior's earthly ministry, there were differences in the way in which one class of characters, the blind, came to Jesus Christ.

I. The lesson for us to learn from this undoubted fact is just this—that THERE ARE GREAT DIFFERENCES IN THE WAY IN WHICH MEN COME TO JESUS CHRIST—and differences even in their first desires. Some will begin to seek the Savior like merchantmen seeking goodly pearls and when they have found Him, He will be the Pearl of Great Price to them. Others will be like the plowman whose plow struck against a crock of gold—they will know Christ's value as soon as they stumble upon Him, as it were, and will be ready to sell all that they have and buy the field so

that the treasure may be theirs. Some of you who are here may get a blessing instantaneously, though you have not come especially seeking it. Others of you may have come here for months and years, seeking the Savior—and you may *now* find Him.

Some may begin to seek even while the sermon is progressing, but may not find Christ for a while—while others will no sooner seek Jesus than they will at once find Him. Some will be brought by the example of the godly. Some by the preaching of the minister. Some by a kind word from a friend. Many by parental exhortations. Some by a holy book. Some by no outward means at all. Some simply by their own thoughts in solitude, or at the dead of night—all led by the one gracious Spirit of God—but each one brought to Christ in a different way and by different means from all the rest.

I think that the same differences will be found, not only at the beginning of the Christian life, but also all the way through that life in all who are the subjects of Divine Grace. All Christians are like each other in some respects, but no one Christian is exactly like another in all points. There is, often, a great family likeness in the children in one family. Sometimes, you might go where there are 10 or twelve, and you might pick them all out and say, Yes, we are quite sure that they all belong to this family—there are certain distinctive features which evidently show that they belong to these parents." After you have noticed that resemblance, take the 10 or 12 children, one by one, and look at them individually. Perhaps, at first sight, you might say that you did not know one from the other, but those who see them day by day will tell you that there are distinct differences of countenance and contour about each one—and idiosyncrasies of character which distinguish them from one another—so that there is not one of them who is exactly like the rest.

Now, it would be a great pity if they should all begin to wish that they were exactly like someone in the family whom they set up as a model. It would be a right and proper ambition that every son should wish to be like a godly father, and that every daughter should seek to imitate a lovely and gracious mother, but that one girl would wish to be just like her sister, or a boy to be exactly like his brother would be absurd. Yet I have often seen that absurdity in the Church of God! One is depressed because his experience is not quite like his neighbor's. Another because he sees that there are points in his experience that are unlike anybody else's—and I have even known them go and try to remove their names from God's register and "unchristianize" themselves! And, what is worse, sometimes unchristianize one another because they are not all exactly run into the same mold—like so many shot, precisely alike in form and shape—as manufactured articles are when they come quickly from under the die! No, we fall into grievous error when we entertain this kind of idea! God's ways are diverse—from the beginning to the end, God the Father, God the Holy Spirit and our Lord Jesus Christ act sovereignly and do not choose to follow one particular mode of action in every case.

That lesson I wish to teach, first, in reference to our prayers. We must not attempt to dictate to God with regard to His answers to our prayers. Let us learn that lesson from the incident before us—"They brought a

blind man to Him, and begged Him"—to open his eyes? No—that would have been a very proper prayer, but they, "begged Him to touch him." But Christ did not do His work according to their request—"He took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything." Now, with regard to our prayers, we may bring our children, friends and neighbors to Christ—and we may ask that they may be saved—but we must not dictate to Christ the methods by which salvation is to come to them, for it is very usual with Him not to follow those means which *we* would prescribe!

That plan of touching the sick person was a very common one with Christ and, therefore, the people began to expect that He must always heal by a touch. Naaman thought that the Prophet Elisha would come out to him, "and stand and call on the name of the Lord, his God, and strike his hand over the place and recover the leper." But he was mistaken, as were those folk at Bethsaida. It was a sort of understanding among them that Christ's touch was the usual method by which His cures were worked, so they begged Him to touch their blind friend. But He would not give any support to that notion. If they thought than He worked His miracles by putting His hands upon the sick, then He would *not* put His hands upon them—He would let them see that He was not bound to any particular method. If He had allowed them to cherish such an idea, probably their next step in error would have been that they would have said that it was an enchantment, a kind of performance by certain passes and touches, as by a wizard or conjurer, through which Christ went in order to heal the sick.

Superstition can be very easily made to grow, and you and I, mark you, may think ourselves perfectly free from superstition, yet, all the while, it may only have taken some other form from that in which it appears in other people. For instance, if the Lord is pleased to bless a certain preacher to the conversion of souls, you may settle it in your mind that if you get your children to hear him, they will assuredly be saved. Yet it may not be the case, for the Lord has a thousand ways of saving souls and He is not tied to any one man as His agent or instrument. It may get to be a kind of superstitious notion that in some one person, alone, the power of converting others may rest. Or it may be that you say to yourself, "I was converted by reading such-and-such a book. If I get my boy to read that book, it will convert him, too." Yet it may have no influence whatever upon him, for the Grace of God is not tied to any book, nor to any way of working that you choose to prescribe!

I would not wonder, my dear Friends, if some of you have tried to tie the Lord down to your way of working. For instance, in your class in the Sunday school, it was the reading of a certain chapter in the Bible that brought one of your scholars to Christ. So, in order to bring the rest of them to the Savior, you get them to read that chapter. That may be all right, for the Lord can bless it to them if He pleases, but, at the same time you must remember that He is a Sovereign and, therefore, He will probably use other means in other cases. You preached, dear Friend, in the street, or in a Chapel, and God blessed that sermon. So you have

made up your mind that you will preach it a second time. I recommend you not to do so, for very likely it will hang fire if you do. If you begin to confide in the sermon, God will not bless it. I think it is often well to do with a good sermon as David did with Goliath's sword—he said that there was none like it, yet he did not keep it by him for constant use, but he laid it up before the Lord—then it was ready for the special occasion when it was required. When God has blessed any sermon that I have preached, I do not make it a rule to preach it again, lest I might be led to put my trust in that sermon, or to have some confidence in the way in which I set forth the Truth of God, rather than in the Truth itself—though I never hesitate to preach the same sermon again and again if I feel that the Spirit leads me to do so. We must not, in our prayers, tie the Lord down to any particular means, for He can use what means He pleases and He will do so, whatever we may say. We may ask Him to open the blind man's eyes, but it is not our place to beseech Him to touch the blind man in order to effect His cure!

Notice, also, that Christ did not answer the prayer of these people in the place where they presented it. They brought the blind man to Him and they evidently expected the Lord Jesus Christ to open his eyes there. But Jesus did not do so. "He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town"—right away from the place where the people wanted to have the miracle performed! The Savior acted as though He could not do anything in the matter until He was out of town—and He would not speak a word to him till He got him quite away by himself. Well, now, it is very easy, in our prayers, to fix upon a certain place as the one where God will give His blessing, and to think, "The friend I am praying for must be converted in the Tabernacle, or must be converted in the little meeting that I hold in my house, or must be brought to Jesus Christ in the Church where I attend, or in the Chapel where I worship." But our Lord may, perhaps, never convert that young man in any of the places you have mentioned—He may meet with him behind the counter, or on board boat, or walking by the way, or on a sickbed. Do not be disappointed, therefore, when your place does not prove to be God's place! Take your friend to the House of God, for Christ's miracles on a Sabbath and in the synagogue are frequent—but do not try to tie Him down to the synagogue, for He must be left at liberty to work His miracles in His own way.

Neither, dear Friends, must we, for a moment, try to tie the Lord Jesus Christ down to work in our particular manner! I have no doubt that these people meant to prescribe to Christ that He should open that man's eyes directly. He had done so before and He was able to make the sightless one see in a single moment. And they, therefore, naturally expected that He would do it. But the Savior did not do so—He did not work an immediate, but a progressive cure. He opened the man's eyes a little and afterwards opened them more fully. This was a very extraordinary miracle—there is no other case like it in Scripture. All the other cures that Christ worked were immediate—but this one was progressive. So, my Brother, the Lord may hear and answer your prayer, but it may not be by a conversion in the way you expected. You thought that, all of

a sudden, you would hear that your dear friend had been turned from darkness to the Light of God. You have not heard that, but you have heard that he begins to be more thoughtful than he used to be, and that he attends the means of Grace more regularly than he formerly did. Perhaps the Lord intends, in his case, to work salvation by degrees.

Do not go and run the risk of spoiling it by trying to run faster than God guides you! The daylight does not always come in a moment. I am told that in the tropics there is but slender notice of the rising of the sun—he seems to be up and shining in full glory in a few seconds! But here, in England, you know how long a time of twilight and dawn we have before the sun has fully risen. No doubt there are conversions that are just like the tropical morning—in a moment the great deed of Grace is done! But there are many more conversions that are slow and gradual, yet they are none the less sure! The genial sun is up when he is up—even if he takes an hour in the operation of rising—quite as effectually as he is up when he seems to leap out of the sea into meridian splendor! So, if the Lord should see fit to bless your friend in a different manner from that which you had thought of, do not you quarrel with Him. Whatever He does is right—so let us never question any of His actions.

One other point, in which we must not dictate to God, is this. *He may hear our prayer and grant our request, yet we may not know that it is so.* I do not think that these people who brought the blind man to Christ ever saw him again after his eyes had been opened. Mark tells us that Christ "led him out of the town"—that is, away from his friends. And after He had healed him, "He sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town." I suppose they found it out afterwards, but then and there, at any rate, they did not see the man's eyes opened. If he did as Christ commanded him, he went straight away home and kept the matter quiet, so far, at least, as the general public and, perhaps, these friends of his were concerned.

Now, it is quite possible that God may hear your prayer for some dear friend in whom you are interested and yet you may never know of it till you get to Heaven. The Lord has promised to hear prayer, but He has not promised that you shall know that He has heard your prayer! A godly mother may be in Glory long before her supplications have been answered in the conversion of her son. A Sunday school teacher may go Home to be with Christ before the boys, over whom he has agonized, are brought to the Savior. Our farmers know that earthly harvests are sometimes late and it is the same in spiritual husbandry! Divine Grace ensures the crop, but even the Grace of God does not guarantee that the crop shall come up tomorrow, nor whenever we please. So, dear Friend, keep on sowing the good seed of the Kingdom of God, water it with your tears and your prayers, and then leave with God the question whether you shall see the harvest or not. He may, in your case, fulfill that gracious promise, "He that goes forth and weeps, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Or He may simply choose to make you the sower and another the reaper. It is for you to believe that your petitions shall be granted, even if you do not live to see them!

There have been many instances in which men's prayers have prevailed, although they themselves have never lived to see that happy result. I think I have told you, before now, the story of a godly father whose unhappy lot it was to see his sons grow up without the fear of God in their hearts. This was a very heavy burden upon the good old man's spirit. Day and night he wept and prayed about it before God. At last, the time came for him to die and he had not, then, one son who had found the Savior! It had been the old man's prayer that his death might be the means of the conversion of his children if they were not brought to Christ in his lifetime—and so it was. Yet the scene at his death was very different from what he had hoped that it might be, for it was a very gloomy departure. His faith was grievously tried—he did not enjoy the Light of God's Countenance—he was put to bed, as God often puts some of His best children to bed, in the dark. He died humbly trusting in Jesus, but not triumphing, not even rejoicing—he was in great pain of body and deep depression of spirit—and his last thought was, "This experience of mine will only confirm my sons in their infidelity. I have borne no witness for Christ as I had hoped to do. And now they will say that their father's religion failed him at the last and so, my heart's desire will not be granted to me."

Yet it was granted, though he did not live to see it, for, after they had put him in the tomb and had come home from the funeral, the eldest son said to the others, "You noticed, brothers, what a struggle our father seemed to have on his dying bed and how hard it went with him. Now, we all know that he was a man of God. His conduct and example were such that we have no doubt about his being a true Christian, yet, if he found it so hard to die, what will it be for us when we come to the day of our death and have no God to help us, and no Christ to look to in the hour of our extremity?" It was remarkable that the same thought had struck all the good man's sons—and they went to their own homes deeply impressed by their father's gloomy death—to seek their father's God and to find Him!

Could the old man have known what was best, he would have chosen just such a death in order that he might, thereby, be the means of bringing his children to Christ! In like manner, you may not be sure that you will see, here, the answer to all your prayers, but you will see it when you get up yonder—when God shall bid you fling up the celestial windows and you will look down and see the harvests which you never reaped, but for which you sowed the seed! You will see, springing up from the soil, the rich result of your labor, though you saw it not while here on earth—and your Heaven will be all the sweeter because, then, you will know that the Lord has heard and answered the prayers that you offered in your lifetime here below.

II. Secondly, I learn, from this narrative that WE MUST NOT ATTEMPT TO TELL THE LORD JESUS CHRIST HOW HE IS TO WORK, for He has various ways of working in the blessing of men.

For instances, when this blind man was brought to Him, *He did not open his eyes with a word.* Often, when the sick were brought to Him, He spoke and they were at once cured. He might have done so in this case.

He might have said to the blind man's eyes, "Be opened!" The ancient fiat might have been repeated, "Light be!" and there would have been light in his darkness. But there came out of Christ's mouth—not a word—but spittle! Christ spat on the blind man's eyes. Ah, but if anything comes out of His mouth, it does not matter much what it is—whatever comes out of the mouth of the Christ of God means healing and life to those whom it reaches! He has His own ways of working. Usually, He is pleased to save men by the preaching of the Word and, sometimes, the great change is brought about through very feeble testimony. Yet, nevertheless, it is the Word of the Lord that is spoken, and it comes from the mouth of God, so He blesses it to the opening of blind men's eyes.

In this case, too, *Christ did not work upon this man all at once*. As I have already reminded you, He worked a gradual cure upon him. So, dear Friend, you must not dictate to Jesus Christ as to how you will be saved. I know that some of you do. One said to me, in my vestry, that she believed she had found Christ, but she was half-afraid it could not really be so. "Why not?" I asked. And she answered, "My old grandfather told me that it took him three years before he got peace and he was locked up in a lunatic asylum most of the time. I thought it was an awful affair altogether." I enquired where she could find anything in the Word of God to support that idea and then told her to simply believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and not to trouble about what her grandfather did. I have no doubt that he got to Heaven even through a lunatic asylum, but there are other and better ways of getting there!

Mr. Bunyan tells us that his pilgrim went through the Slough of Despond and did not pick the steps well, so he floundered, and it was with difficulty that he got to the other side. Mr. Bunyan pictures Evangelist as bidding the poor seeker fly towards a certain wicket gate and keep his eyes on the light within that gate. Now that was a mistake on the part of Evangelist—and it was through that mistake that the poor pilgrim got into the Slough of Despond. The Gospel does not tell you to look for wicket gates, nor to keep your eyes on any light! You remember how, at last, the poor pilgrim *did* get rid of his burden—it was at the Cross that the burden rolled from his shoulders and disappeared into the sepulcher so that he saw it no more! And, dear Friends, that is where *your* eyes have to be turned—to the Cross of Christ and to the full Atonement He has made for all who trust in Him! As for wicket gates and the Sloughs of Despond—the less you have to do with them, the better. "But is there no Slough of Despond?" someone asks. Oh, yes! Twenty of them, but it is far easier to go through that Slough with the burden off rather than on your shoulders! The best thing you can possibly do is to go to Christ, first, for then you can better go wherever you have to go. As for me, I would rather avoid the Slough of Despond altogether if I could—and keep my eyes always upon the Cross—for Christ Crucified is the one and only hope of sinners!

You must not, any of you, say, "Bunyan went through the Slough of Despond. According to his '*Grace Abounding*,' he was there for years. And there is our Pastor, I have often heard him say that he was a long while in that Slough." Yes, I am sorry to say that he was, but that is no reason

why *you* should go there. If, when I was a youth, I had heard the Gospel of Christ preached as plainly as I have preached it to you, I feel certain that I would never have been in the bog so long as I was. But I heard a mixed sort of Gospel, a mingle-mangle—a mixture of Law and Gospel—a muddling up of Moses and Christ—something of "do" and something of "believe." And, therefore, I was for so long a time in that sad state of bondage! In fact, the good sound doctrine people that I used to hear, said, "You must not come to Christ, for you do not know whether you are one of the elect—and you must not come until you do." I know perfectly well that nobody can possibly tell whether he is elect, or not, till he finds it out by coming to God! And that no one ever comes to God the Father, who makes the election, except by Jesus Christ His Son! So we have first to do with the Son and afterwards with the Father. That I did not know when I was seeking the Savior. I needed an angel to tell me that I was one of the elect, but I was obliged to come to Christ as a poor, guilty sinner and just trust in Him, and so to find peace in believing. That is the plan that I recommend you adopt if you want to be saved!

Do not say, "I shall not come to Christ till I stick in the mud of the Slough of Despond. I shall not come to Him till I get laid by the heels in Giant Despair's Castle! I shall not come to Him till I get whipped on the back with the ten-thonged lash of the Law." If you really want to have that lash, perhaps you will get it, and I hope you will like it—but the Gospel says, "Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Come to Jesus just as you are!" Never try to lay down rules and regulations for Christ, but let Him save you in His own way and be you content, just as you are, to take Him just as He is!

There is one more point about this man in which the singular Sovereignty of Christ is seen, and that is, *He did not make use of the healed man*, though we would have thought that He would have done so. If this miracle had been worked in the present day, we would soon have seen this man in the Salvation Army, or in some other public position. Nowadays, the rule seems to be send off a paragraph to the newspapers, "So many in the enquiry-room! So many converted on such-and-such a night! Blow the trumpets! Beat the drums! Let everybody know!" But that was not Jesus Christ's way of working—He told this man not to go into the town. And when he did get home, not to tell anybody what had been done to him. Why was he not to tell anybody? Well, first, because the Lord wanted to do good and not to have a noise made about it. And, secondly, because there was no need to tell anybody. Suppose I had been for years a blind preacher and that my eyes had been opened—would there be any need for me to tell you, next Sunday, that my eyes were opened? You would see it for yourselves—everybody can see when a man's eyes are opened. And, often, the best way in which a man can tell that he is converted is simply by letting other people see what a change there is in him because, if his eyes are not really open, it is of no use for him to stand up and say, "Bless the Lord! My eyes are open," while he is still blind! I have heard people say that they were converted and I have thought that if the work were done over again, it would not hurt them much and that, indeed, six or seven such conversions would not amount

to much! Oh, give us a conversion that speaks for itself! Give us a new heart that shows itself in a new life! If a man is not able to control his temper, or to speak the truth—if he is not a good servant, or a good master, or a good husband—do not let him think it necessary to proclaim what Christ has done for him, for, if he has done anything that was worth doing, it will speak for itself!

Now I must close by just noticing one fact about this man as to the early steps that Jesus Christ used with him. There is one point I want to dwell upon for a minute. Our Lord, before He did anything else with the blind man, took him by the hand and led him out of town. There are some of you here, perhaps, with whom the Lord has been thus working. You have begun to come to listen to the Gospel—through your wife, perhaps, or through some Christian friend. I am very hopeful concerning you, for, although you cannot yet see, the Lord has taken you by the hand. All the faith that this poor man had was a *yielding* faith—he gave himself up to be led—and that is a saving faith. My dear Friend, give yourself up to be led by Christ! If you have come under gracious, heavenly influences, yield yourself up to them!

The Master led this blind man right away from other people and it will be a good sign when you begin to feel that you are getting to be lonely. Sometimes, when the Lord means to save a man, He lays him aside by illness, or, if not, He takes him away from the company he used to keep by some other means. Or, if the man is allowed to go into the same company, he gets to dislike it. He does not feel at home with those who were once his companions—he goes in and out of the shop as if he were one by himself. He has the Lord's arrow sticking in him and, like the wounded stag, he tries to get away to bleed alone. You feel, sometimes, as though nobody understood you. You read in the Book of Job, or the Lamentations of Jeremiah and you say, "This is the kind of experience that I am passing through. I have a broken heart and a troubled conscience, and I feel that I am all alone."

Well, dear Friend, that is the Lord Jesus Christ leading you out of town, getting you away from everybody. And, mark you, the place of mercy is the place where a man stands alone—away from everybody except his Lord. Do not draw your hand back from the hand that is leading you away! Perhaps ungodly company has been your ruin and it is through solitude that God intends to save you. Be much alone. Think over your own case. Make a personal confession of sin. Seek for personal faith in a personal Savior. You were born alone—you will have to pass through the gates of death alone. Although you will stand in a crowd to be judged, yet you will be judged as a separate individual—and even though myriads perish with you, your loss will be your own if you are lost!

Therefore, look into your own affairs. Cast up your own account and, before the living God, stand separate from all your fellow men! I believe that if any of you have reached that point, you are where the deed of Grace shall be done. May the Lord enable you to yield yourself up completely to Him, for your safety lies there! We rightly put faith before you as a look, but now I will put it before you, if you have not even an eye to look with, as the yielding up of yourself to the guidance of the Savior. Be

nothing and let Christ be everything! Give yourself entirely up into His hands and He must and will save you! For, though it is faith in its passive form, it is, nevertheless, a real and saving faith! And blessed are all they that have it! May God grant it to everyone of us now, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 8:1-30.

Verses 1-4. *In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples to Him and said to them, I have compassion on the multitude because they have now been with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for many of them came from far. And His disciples answered Him, From where can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?* Why did they not ask their Master what He could do in such an emergency as that? After so much experience of His power as they had already had, it is amazing that they did not refer the matter to Him and say, "Lord, You can feed the multitude; we beseech You do it." But they did not act so wisely. Instead, they began questioning about ways and means. "From where can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?"

5-9. *And He asked them, How many loaves have you? And they said, Seven. And He commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and He took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and broke them and gave to His disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people. And they had a few small fishes: and He blessed them and commanded to set them also before them. So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up seven baskets of leftover fragments. And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and He sent them away.* Christ is the great Master of the art of multiplication! However small is the stock with which we begin, we have only to dedicate it all to Him and He will multiply and increase it until it will go far beyond our utmost expectations—and there will be more left after the feast is over than there was before it began!

Bring your small talents! Bring the little Grace you have to Christ, for He can so increase your store that you will never know any lack, but shall have all the greater abundance the greater the demand that is made upon that store. Had these four thousand people not been miraculously fed by Christ, the seven loaves and the few small fishes would have remained just as they were—but now that the four thousand have to be fed, the loaves and fishes are multiplied by Christ in a very extraordinary manner, so that, in the end, there is far more provision than they had at the beginning. *Expect*, Beloved, to be enriched by your losses, to grow by that which looks as if it would crush you and to become greater by that which threatens to annihilate you! Only put yourself into Christ's hands and He will make good use of you and leave you better than you were before He used you as the means of helping and blessing others!

10-12. *And straightway He entered into a boat with His disciples and came into the region of Dalmanutha. And the Pharisees came forth and be-*

gan to question Him, seeking of Him a sign from Heaven, tempting Him. And He sighed deeply in His spirit, and said, Why does this generation seek after a sign? Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation. Unbelief always pricked Him to the heart and greatly grieved Him. When men trusted Him, He delighted to exhibit His matchless Grace. But when they quibbled and questioned, His heart was heavy and He turned away from them.

13. *And He left them and, entering into the boat again, departed to the other side.* But, alas, even on board that little boat there was unbelief—and from the small and select circle of His own disciples! He had fresh reason for sorrow from the same cause.

14-21. *Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the boat with them more than one loaf. And He charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread. And when Jesus knew it, He said unto them, Why reason you because you have no bread? Perceive you not yet, neither understand? Have you your heart yet hardened? Having eyes, see you not? And having ears, hear you not? And do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took you up? They said unto Him, Twelve. And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took you up? And they said, Seven. And He said unto them, How is it that you do not understand?* Can we not learn from past experience? If the Lord has helped us before, is He not equally ready to help us again? What? When there are only a few of you disciples on board boat, do you begin to distrust your Lord because you have only one loaf when He found enough food for five thousand and for four thousand out of a few scanty loaves? O you unbelieving children of God! What infinite patience your gracious God has with you, though you so often and so shamefully doubt Him! "Do you not remember?" "How is it that you do not understand?" Can it be that all your Lord's lessons of love and deeds of kindness have taught you nothing? Do you still doubt Him—still distrust Him? Has He delivered you in six troubles and can you not trust Him in the seventh? Has He kept you, by His Grace, till you are 70 years of age, and can you not trust Him for the few remaining years of your earthly pilgrimage? Oh, shame upon us that we are such dull scholars in the school of Christ!

22-26. *And He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him. So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything. And he looked up and said, I see men as trees, walking. After that He put His hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw everyone clearly. And He sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.* "Your house is outside Bethsaida, so go round-about, and get home without going into the town. And if any of your neighbors call to see you, say nothing about Me to them, for I wish to remain concealed for the present."

27. *And Jesus went out, and His disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way He asked His disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am?* It was Christ's usual way, when He took a walk with His disciples, to beguile the time with holy conversation. It would be well if we always did the same. We might do much good and we might get much good if we made our Lord Jesus the theme of our talks "by the way." It was an important question that He put to His disciples, "Whom do men say that I am?"

28, 29. *And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elijah; and others, one of the Prophets. And He said unto them, But whom do you say that I am?* "That is the main point. It matters little to you what other men say about Me—whether they are right, or wrong, may not concern you. But what is your own opinion? What do you know about Me? 'Whom do you say that I am?'"

29. *And Peter answered and said unto Him, You are the Christ.* "You are the Messiah." We know, from Matthew's Gospel, that it was this confession of which our Lord said to Peter, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona," son of Jonas—"for flesh and blood have not revealed it unto you, but My Father which is in Heaven."

30. *And He charged them that they should tell no man of Him.* He wished, at that time, to remain in comparative retirement. He was not anxious that His miracles should be blazoned abroad. By-and-by He was to die and He preferred to derive His fame from His death rather than from His life—to gather His honors from His Cross rather than from His miracles. He never bade any man to be silent about His death on the Cross, but when honor was likely to come to Him among men from His miracles, He frequently "charged them that they should tell no man of Him." That restriction is no longer in force—it was entirely abrogated after our Lord's Resurrection when He said to His disciples, "All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth. Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK—235, 491, 538.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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

TAKING HOLD OF GOD'S COVENANT
NO. 2762

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 19, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 5, 1879.

"And takes hold of My Covenant."
Isaiah 56:4.

"And takes hold of My Covenant."
Isaiah 56:6.

IT was generally supposed by the Jews that no one except the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob could be in Covenant relationship with God. You remember, however, how Paul says, in writing to the Romans, "But Isaiah is very bold," and he is so in this instance. He declares that men may take hold of the Covenant of God though, heretofore, they appeared to be shut out from its privileges. There were certain poor mutilated beings who were despised by some because of their disabilities—yet they were to be encouraged to keep the Lord's Sabbaths, to choose the things that pleased Him and to take hold of His Covenant. Then there were the foreigners, of whom the Lord said, "Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to Jehovah, to serve Him and to love the name of Jehovah to be His servants, everyone that keeps the Sabbath from polluting it, and takes hold of My Covenant; even them will I bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon My altar; for My house shall be called an house of prayer for all people."

It was thus clearly revealed that persons who appeared to be shut out from the Covenant because they were not of the seed of Abraham, were, in later days, to be encouraged to obey the commands of God and especially to obey His ordinance concerning the keeping of the Sabbath—which separated His people from the rest of mankind—and to take hold of His Covenant. It is of that particular action of taking hold of God's Covenant that I am about to speak as the Holy Spirit shall enable me.

I. And first, let us enquire, WHAT IS THIS COVENANT? We must know the truth concerning this point, for it has been well said, "He who understands the Covenants holds the key of all theology."

Well, then, let us bear in mind the fact that there was, first of all, a Covenant made with our father, Adam—not, perhaps, in set terms, but virtually—that if he would do the will of God, he would live and that, if he did so, we also would live by virtue of his obedience. But, alas, our great Covenant head, Adam the first, could not keep that Covenant. He took of

the fruit of the tree which he was forbidden to eat and so the Covenant of Works, which had been made with him, was torn in pieces. We might say of that sad event what Mark Anthony said of the murder of Julius Caesar—

"Oh, what a fall was there, my countrymen!
Then I, and you, and all of us fell down."

I should think that none of us want to take hold of that Covenant, for we are already all sufferers by it. We are, all of us, the heirs of sorrow, travail and death as the result of that broken Covenant. Those of you who fancy that you can get to Heaven by obeying the commands of God should remember that even the perfect Adam could not keep the Law of God, so how shall his imperfect children do what he failed to accomplish? He, in whom was no sin, for he was created without taint of guilt, disobeyed his Maker—so, shall not we be sure to disobey Him when all our powers and faculties are debased by the guilt which we have inherited from him?

Yes, we have disobeyed Him already. We have broken His Law again and again! So any hope of happiness through the keeping of the Law which we may have cherished, is forever vain. The Covenant of Works is broken and all hope of our being saved by it is gone forever—

"Vain are the hopes the sons of men
On their own works have built.
Their hearts by nature are unclean
And all their actions guilt.
Let Jew and Gentile stop their mouths
Without a murmuring word
And the whole race of Adam stand
Guilty before the Lord.
In vain we ask God's righteous Law
To justify us now,
Since to convince and to condemn
Is all the Law can do."

But, now, blessed be the name of the Lord, there *is a second Covenant, made with the Second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ!* And by that Covenant, made with Him on behalf of all His people, it was provided that He should Himself perfectly keep the Law and also that He should suffer the penalty due from His people for their breaches of the Law. And that, if He did both these things, then all those who were represented in Him should live forever! We rejoice to know that Christ has both kept the Law and paid the penalty that His people had incurred by breaking it! He has rendered both an active and a passive obedience to the Law of God so, now, according to the conditions of the Covenant, all those for whom He lived and died, inherit, by Divine right, all the blessings which Christ, their Covenant Representative, has procured on their behalf!

I have already read to you the Inspired record of what those blessings are. Let me just recall them to you—"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments, and do them." All these are clear, definite, unconditional

promises—there is no, "if," or, "but," in the whole quotation. There is nothing to be done, on our part, in order to win the blessing! All that had to be done was done by Christ our Representative more than 18 centuries ago! We fell, by no act of our own, in the first Adam—and we rise, without any merit of our own, in the Second Adam. The only question about which we need to be concerned, is—Are we in Him? I know that question can be answered in the affirmative by many of us—and I trust that others of us will be able to lay hold on that Covenant by the life-grip of faith—then they will also be able to say, "Yes, we are among those over whom Christ is the Head and we have a share in all the privileges of the Covenant into which He entered on our behalf."

The first Covenant was the Covenant of Works—"Do this and you shall live." That Covenant, as I have shown you, was broken, but *the new Covenant is a Covenant of pure Grace*. Christ has fulfilled all its conditions on His people's behalf and, therefore, all its privileges are theirs. Because He lives, they shall also live. Because He honored and kept the Law—because He bore the shame and death of the Cross—because He rose again from the dead and ascended to His Father's right hand, where He always lives to carry on His glorious work of intercession, therefore all they who are in Him shall have their iniquities forgiven, their natures changed, their hearts renewed and their whole souls filled with the overflowing Grace of God!

Not only is it a Covenant of pure Grace, but it is also a "*Covenant ordered in all things and sure.*" The first Covenant failed because it rested upon Adam—the pivot of the machinery broke and the whole thing fell with a crash. The new Covenant stands because Christ did not fail. The ancient Prophecy concerning Him was, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged." Nor was He. He went right on with the great work He had undertaken, treading the winepress alone, until He cried, "Consummatum est"—"It is finished!"—and then, and not till then, He gave up the ghost. Now, as every condition of the Covenant has been fulfilled by Christ, the whole of it stands fast as a clear matter of promise which a truth-speaking, ever-faithful God must keep. He cannot run back from it, nor does He wish to do so—

"Engraved as in eternal brass
The mighty promise shines!
Nor can the powers of darkness erase
Those everlasting lines!"

Yet once more, let me remind you that *the ensign of this Covenant is faith*. Under the old Covenant it was and always would have been, works. But, under the new Covenant, it is faith. Do you believe? Then you are in Christ and all the blessings of the Covenant of Grace are yours. Do you accept Christ to stand as your Substitute? Do you lay hold on this Covenant and claim an interest in it for your own soul? Do you cast yourself wholly upon Him who kept that Covenant for you? Then it is yours and God speaks to you, my believing Hearer, as though there were no other person in the whole universe—and He says to you—"I will sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be clean; I will put My Law in your mind, and write it on your heart; and I will give you a new heart and a right

spirit. From all your uncleanness will I cleanse you, and you shall be My child, and I will be your Father and your God." What a Covenant of Grace this is! I have given you only a bare outline of its provisions, but I hope that outline will make many of you want to know how you can lay hold upon it for yourselves!

II. That is the next question I want to answer. HOW CAN WE LAY HOLD OF IT? My text speaks of "taking hold of My Covenant." How can I do that?

Well, the first thing that I must do is, *I must loosen my hold of the old Covenant*. Oh, what dolts, what fools, men are to cling to the old Covenant which can never do anything but curse them! You say that you hope to be saved by keeping God's Law, but, Man, you have already broken that Law! If you had a beautiful vase in your home and it had the slightest crack or flaw in it anywhere, it would not be a perfect work of art. Now, the Law of God is so tender and delicate, and enters so into the spirituality of man's nature that even a sinful thought spoils the perfection of obedience to it! And you have had a great many more than one sinful thought, I know, whoever you may be. And many an idle word have you uttered and, I fear, many a wrong act have you done. You have broken the Law to shivers—it is clear that you cannot keep it. It is absurd and wicked for you to talk of doing so!

But you will try to do your best, you say. Well, then, if it is your deliberate choice to come under the Law of God, let me tell you what the Law requires of you. It says, "Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them." That is all you will ever get out of the Law of God—a curse. You may try to keep it till you wear the skin from your bones, but that is all it will ever give you, for you have not continued in all things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them, so your deficiencies and your transgressions must inevitably bring a curse upon your head. I pray you, if you are in your right senses, to have done with that old Covenant of Works. There is no hope for you there, so get away from it at once! You cannot be saved in that way, "for by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified." The Law brings sin to our knowledge as we see what its demands are, but it never *kills* sin. It never thinks of *pardoning* sin—it makes no provision for anything of the kind so, dear Friends, let all your good works go—let all confidence in your prayers—all confidence in your own repentance—all confidence in anything that you can do or be—let it all go!

Do not retain a rag of it! If you do, it will be like keeping something that is full of the seeds of disease and death. When a man dies of a foul fever, or the plague, burn every rag he has had on him! "Oh, but I would like to save that little piece of fringe—it is so beautiful!" It will bring a pest into the house if you do. Burn it all! Get rid of it all! So, let every rag of self-righteousness be destroyed. You cannot take hold of the Covenant of Grace till you have, once and for all, loosed your hold of the Covenant of Works!

"Well," you say, "when this is done, how am I to take hold of the Covenant?" Well, the main plan is by *believing in Christ Jesus unto the salva-*

tion of your soul. Say, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. I am a sinner, Lord, and I lay hold on You, and trust You to save me. I know that You bid burdened souls to come to You and I am a burdened soul so, Lord, I come and I hang upon that gracious invitation of Yours, 'Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'"

"But may I lay hold on Christ," asks someone, "and trust Him thus?" You had better ask me whether you may *refuse* to do so, and I will answer you in His own words, "He that believes not shall be damned." Now, if Christ pronounces condemnation upon the man who believes not, it is clear that you may believe in Him! Oh, dare to do it! Dare to do it! There never was one person yet who believed in Jesus Christ by mistake—never one to whom Christ said, "You had no right to believe in Me." He could not say so, for He has said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Make a dash at it, then, Man—lay hold on Christ and say, "If I perish, I will perish trusting in His merit and His blood." And you shall never perish so, for He who has laid hold on Christ has laid hold on God's Covenant and that Covenant shall stand secure when earth's huge columns crumble! There is no fear of the Covenant failing, even when Heaven and earth shall pass away!

This is the way to lay hold on the Covenant by faith in Jesus. But I have known those laying hold on the Covenant begin in different ways. Some have laid hold upon it *by a confession of sin*—and you know that the Lord has said—"He that covers his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy." I earnestly advise any of you who are longing for salvation, to say, "I will confess my sin and forsake it, for God has said that then I shall have mercy." You know that if you get hold of the Covenant anywhere, you have got hold of it, and you shall be saved. Do but confess your sin and forsake it, looking to Christ alone as your Savior, and then you have secured a grip of the Covenant!

Another way of laying hold of it is *by seeking the Lord in prayer*. It is written, "Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Say, "Lord, I seek Your face. I cry to You, through Jesus Christ, for mercy. I come to Your Mercy Seat and fall prostrate before You, crying—

'If I perish, I will pray,
And perish only there.'"

You have got a hold of the Covenant, Friend, because you are clinging to God's promise and every promise of His is a part of the Covenant! So, if you get a grip, by faith, of any of God's promises, so that it becomes truly yours, you have laid hold of His Covenant and you shall be saved forever!

When you have once accepted Christ, I like you to get a hold of the Covenant in all sorts of ways. We have only two hands, but there are some creatures that have a great many hands, or feelers, or suckers—and when they want to be quite safe, they seize hold with all their hands! Well, now, Christ has made a Covenant with His Church and I like to lay hold of that Covenant by uniting with His people. I read that He loved His Church and gave Himself for it, so I say, "Lord, I will be a part of Your Church. I will, by Your Grace, put myself among Your people. If they are

laughed at, I will be laughed at with them. If they are a despised people, I will be despised, too, and I will not be ashamed of it. I will share with them now, hoping to share with them hereafter—

"With them numbered I will be,
Now and through eternity!"

It will be a great help to you to lay hold of the Covenant by availing yourself of all Church privileges. That should be your motive for being baptized. You should say, "Lord, I read in Your Word, 'He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.' I wish, therefore, having believed, to be baptized, that I may lay hold on that promise. I know that Believers, when they are baptized in the true Scriptural fashion, are buried with Christ. It is to them a type and symbol of their death to sin and resurrection to newness of life. They do not trust in the water, but they look at it as an emblem of their being buried to the world—and I wish to be all that. I will take that mark of Your people upon me and I will not be ashamed of it. I will go where Your people go and I will follow You wherever You lead me for I have got a hold of Your Covenant and I wish everybody to know that I have! I can truly say, with Paul, 'I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.' The watermark is on me. I am buried with You, my Lord and Savior."

That is also the reason why we come to the Lord's Table—not that we have any superstitious reverence for the bread and wine, but we say, "Lord Jesus, You have told Your people to do this in remembrance of You, and You have promised to give them a blessing in so doing. I mean to do it, for I am in Covenant with You and what You bid Your servants do, I, Your servant, would do, for, 'I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid. You have loosed my bonds and, be it little, or be it great, I will be obedient to all Your commands, as far as I know them, and so will take hold upon Your Covenant."

I like to see young Believers when they first take hold on Christ. I sometimes think that they do it better than the older ones do, for they just believe what Jesus says and take Him at His Word, and so they at once get "joy and peace in believing." But, sometimes, older sinners come and they say to me, "May we lay hold on Christ?" I ask them, "What is to hinder you from doing so?" And they reply, "Because we are such sinners." "Well," I answer, "the Lord Jesus Christ did not come to save anybody but sinners, so you are just the right sort of persons for Him to save." "Oh, but," they say, "there is nothing that is good in us!" "But Jesus Christ did not come to call the good. He came to call sinners, so you are just the very ones whom He does call." "Oh, but," they reply, "we do not feel as we ought to feel." "But Jesus Christ came to quicken those who are dead in trespasses and sins—and there is no feeling while we are dead. He came to give us life and to give us feeling—so you poor dead creatures are just the right sort for Him to bless." So we try to argue with them but they still keep on crying, "But, but!"—raising all possible objections against themselves—yet, at last, they just dare to put out their little finger to lay hold of Christ and the mercy is that even a little finger con-

tact saves! There was one who only touched the hem of Christ's garment, but she was made perfectly whole!

The right thing for every sinner to say is just this, "The Covenant of Grace exactly suits my case. Jesus Christ has come to save the guilty and the needy—that is the sort of person I am, so I will lay hold of His Covenant. I have got a grip of it and there I hang. If His Gospel is true, I am a saved man! If it is not, I am lost, for I have nothing else to which I can trust. On Christ, and on Christ, alone, do I hang forever and ever. Sink or sail, I commit myself to this one boat which God has built and furnished to cross the seas of sin and temptation. And I believe that if it is but on a single plank or a broken piece of that boat, I shall surely come safely to land, for Christ has said, "He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." Oh, that we might all take hold of the Covenant in that blessed way! God help us to do so by His gracious Spirit!

III. Now I want briefly to answer a third question. WHAT IS THERE TO LAY HOLD ON?

I will tell you what I first laid hold on in the Covenant of Grace. First, I laid hold on *an atonement*. When I understood the meaning of that blessed word, "Substitution"—Christ standing in the sinner's place—Christ paying the sinner's debts that he might have a full discharge—when I saw God laying my sin on Christ and I knew that a thing cannot be in two places at one time—I said to myself, Then, if God laid my sin on Christ, it is no longer upon me! If He took that great mass of guilt which would have crushed me, and laid it on His Son, there cannot be any reason for me to try to carry it, since He carried it for me! So I first of all laid hold on the Covenant in the fashion described in the verse we sang just now—

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

I believed that Christ died for me. I trusted Him and I found that He died for all who trust Him. I knew, therefore, that He died for me and that, in that death, He slew my sin and buried it, and that I was forgiven all my transgressions. That is a fine place in which to lay hold of the Covenant—that blood-red spot—and it just exactly suits the sinner's crimson-dyed hands.

There is another place where you can lay hold of the Covenant and that is *the Mercy Seat*. Go and bow before God in prayer. Christ being your Intercessor, plead with God for mercy through His atoning blood and then say, "I will never leave off praying till I get the blessing—

'With You all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day'—

but the blessing I must have, for You have promised it. Have You not said, 'Ask, and you shall receive'? I ask. Have You not said, 'Seek, and you shall find'? I seek. Have You not said, 'Knock, and it shall be opened unto you'? I knock, my God! I will knock and keep on knocking. I will bring the door down sooner than go without the blessing! I will knock,

and knock, and knock till Heaven's high arches ring with the sound of a poor sinner thundering away at the gate of mercy! I will not let You go except You bless me." Ah, you have got a hold of the Covenant and you are sure to be heard and answered! The horns of the altar and the corners of the Ark of the Covenant are your holdfasts upon the Covenant of God's Grace!

It is also a grand thing to lay hold of *a promise in God's Word*. I recommend some of you who say that you have been seeking rest, but that you cannot find it, to turn to some promise that just suits your case—such as that great one in Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Open your Bible, put your finger on that passage, and say, "Lord, I believe that this promise is made to all who believe in Christ. I believe in Christ. I trust myself wholly with Him—so this is a promise which You have made to me. Now, do as You have said. I am altogether unworthy of such favor, but that does not make Your promise to be of no effect. You have said it and You will keep Your promise. It is a wonder, O Lord, that You should ever have said, 'Come now, and let us reason together, said 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.' But You have said it, Lord, and You will be true to Your promise." Hold on to that and never let it go, for a hold on a promise is a hold on the Covenant! As the spokes of a wheel all meet in the axle, so all the promises of God meet in the great center of the Covenant of Grace made with Christ Jesus on behalf of all His people.

There is one other thing which you should lay hold of and that is, *an invitation*. If a man has an invitation to a feast and there stands someone at the door who says to him, "You cannot come," he answers, "I beg your pardon, for I *can* come in." "But, Sir, you cannot come in. All the people who have entered have been good-looking people in evening dress—you are not like they, so you cannot come in." But the man says, "You will not be able to keep me out, for here is the invitation that I received, asking me to come. There is my name and there is nothing about good looks, or evening dress, so I mean to come in, for I have been invited." I wish, dear Friends, you would do the same with your doubts and fears—and with the devil himself when he says—"You cannot come to Christ, you must not lay hold of the Covenant." Say to him, "Look here, Satan. Christ has said, once and for all, 'Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' Now, I labor and I am heavy laden—I have come to him, so I expect to have rest given to me. I have come to Christ because I was invited to come!"

Then you can further say, "There is also that gracious Word of God, 'Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.' Now, I will! God knows how willing and desirous I am to find salvation in Christ. I do will it with all my heart and Christ's last invitation is, 'Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.'" Take any other invitation that you please—there are plenty of them in the Word of God addressed to just such persons as you are—and when you find one suited to your case, say, "My God, I come to

You at Your own invitation; can You cast me out?" If anybody comes to your house by invitation from yourself, you are in honor bound to take him in and do what you can for him. And when you come to God, at His invitation, you have, in effect, taken hold of His Covenant, for all the invitations of our Covenant God are a part of that Covenant and are yes, and amen, in Christ Jesus!

IV. Now I must close with this last question. WHY SHOULD I NOT LAY HOLD OF GOD'S COVENANT? I put the enquiry to all whom I am now addressing—Why should you not take hold of God's Covenant?

One reason for doing so is this. *Others, who are like yourself, have done so*. What sort of person have you been? Self-righteous? So was Saul of Tarsus, but he cast aside his own righteousness and he laid hold on the Covenant! And so he became the great Apostle of the Gentiles. Perhaps I must look at you from another point of view. Have you been a thief? Well, there was a thief who laid hold on the Covenant, and Jesus said to him, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Are you a sinner fallen from virtue? There was a woman who was a public sinner and she took hold of the Covenant, and her sins, which were many, were all forgiven her! Whatever you may have been, there is somebody like you in Heaven. If you have been a blasphemer, if you have lived to old age in neglect of God, or whatever your sin has been, there has already been somebody saved who was just what you have been and who took hold of God's Covenant. If I, being a great sinner, see another great sinner come, and take hold of the Covenant, why should you not do the same?

Then, next, *out of all who have ever come to Christ, there has never been one rejected*. "Him that comes to Me," says Christ, "I will in no wise cast out." Perhaps somebody says, "But suppose I am not one of the elect." Christ says, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out," so election does not stand in the way. "Ah, Sir! But when I come to Christ, I come with many doubts and fears." But Christ says, "Him that comes to Me"—however he comes—"I will in no wise cast out." There lives no sinner on earth that Christ ever cast out and there is not in Hell a soul that ever came to Christ and Christ cast him out—and there shall never be such an one! If the world should grow gray with age and the sun should become black as a coal, there never shall be a sinner who comes to Christ, who shall be cast out! So, come along with you—if you do but come and take hold of the Covenant, that Covenant shall save you!

Besides, I am sure you may come, my Friend, because you are the very sort of character that is bid to come. "This Man receives sinners." Is not that your name? Does not the Lord say, "Let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts"? Is not that you? Well, if it is you, then come to Him! He calls you—you distinctly, for so He describes you. So, surely, you may come to Him! I have often said that if I had read in the Bible, "Charles Spurgeon may come to Christ," there was a time when I would have said, "That must mean somebody else whose name is the same as mine. It is not meant for me." Then I would have wanted to know his address and if it had been Nightingale Lane, I would have said, "Ah, there was a man with the name of Spurgeon living there,

no doubt, years ago, so the promise may have been for *him*." I would never have felt sure about the matter. But when it says, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"—well, the devil is a great liar, but he never tried to make me believe that I was not a sinner! If he did, I would tell him I knew better than that. On the contrary, he is often telling me what a sinner I am—and I am much obliged to him for that, because, the more clearly he makes me out to be a sinner, the more certain I am that I am one of those whom Christ came to save!

Martin Luther used to say, "This is true wisdom, to cut off the devil's head with his own sword. When he charges you with guilt, reply, 'It is quite true,' I am a sinner and, therefore, I am one whom Christ came to save.'" We know that Christ gave Himself for our sins, but He never gave Himself for our virtues, so we, having sins and iniquities, come to Him as guilty sinners and He saves us from our sins!

The last reason I will give you why you should take hold of the Covenant is that *there is nothing else for you to hold to!* There is nothing else that you can take hold of but the Covenant of God's Grace. Here is a man who hopes to get to Heaven because he has such blessed feelings. Oh, dear, dear, dear, dear! How many times would I be without any hope of getting to Heaven if I had to go by my feelings, for they are just as wretched as wretchedness can be! Here is another man who thinks he is going to Heaven because he has a sound creed, but the more I read the Bible, the more I find that I do not know everything and that there is something more to be learned and so, if my knowing everything and having a perfectly sound creed must save me, I shall be lost!

There are some who are hoping to go to Heaven because of this, and some because of that, but, as for you and me, dear Friends, we had better end all fancies and resolve, by God's Grace, that we will go there because, "this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." So, casting everything else away, we lay hold of the Covenant, come what may. God bless you, Beloved, and enable you to do so, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JEREMIAH 31:31-34; EZEKIEL 36:25-32; HEBREWS 8:7-13.

Jeremiah 31:31-33. *Behold, the days come, said 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, said the LORD. But this shall be the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, said the LORD, I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.* The old Covenant was written on tablets of stone, but the Lord said concerning the new Covenant, "I will put My Law in their inward parts." The old Law was hidden from sight when it was written a

second time and placed in the Ark of the Covenant. And God says of His new Law, "I will write it in their hearts." They were always rebelling against God and wandering away from Him, but in this new, gracious Covenant, He says, "I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

34. *And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, said the LORD.* God gives to all His people a knowledge of Himself. "Whatever else they know or do not know," said the Lord, "they shall all know Me." Though they differ as to their growth in Grace, yet "they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, said the Lord."

34. *For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.* If God has pardoned your sins, you will be sure to know Him. There will be no mistake about that point. Men shrink back and hide away from an angry God punishing sin, for they do not care to know Him. But when He comes forth, dressed in the silken robes of love to bestow free pardons upon the chief of sinners, then they know Him! God grant that all of us may have this blessed knowledge! Now kindly turn over the leaves of your Bibles until you come to then 36th Chapter of the Book of Ezekiel and the 25th verse, where you can read still further about this same gracious new Covenant of Jehovah.

Ezekiel 36:25. *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.* "You would not cleanse yourselves! You even went back to your idols, and so defiled yourselves still more! But I will cleanse you. I have a wondrous stream, such as no river or spring on earth can ever produce. It wells up from the heart of Jesus and this shall cleanse you from all your filthiness, and from all your idols."

26, 27. *A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments and do them.* The old Covenant told us what to do and commanded us to do it—but the new Covenant enables us to do it! Yes, it works in us that obedience which we never could have rendered to the old Law, but which the new Covenant gives to us.

28-31. *And you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and you shall be My people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleanness and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that you shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. Then shall you remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loath yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.* How sweetly the mercy of God melts the human heart! How graciously the goodness of God produces repentance! That blessed result was never produced by the terrors of the Law—but it is continually being brought forth by the loving kindness of the Lord as manifested in the Covenant of His Grace.

32. *Not for your sakes do I this, said the LORD GOD, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.* The Covenant is all of Grace, you see. Mercy is shown to the unworthy—not for their own sakes, but for God's own Glory's sake. Oh, how sweet it is to have a share in this blessed Covenant! Now turn to the Epistle to the Hebrews, the 8th Chapter, and 7th verse, where you have still more concerning the new Covenant.

Hebrews 8:7-13. *For if that first Covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, He said, Behold, the days come, said the Lord, when 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 when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in My Covenant, and I regarded them not, said the Lord. For this is the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, said the Lord; I will put My Laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that He said, A new Covenant, He has made the first old. Now that which decays and waxes old is ready to vanish away.* So the old Covenant has vanished away, with all its types, symbols and sacrifices. As the morning mists dissolve upon the rising of the sun—as darkness flies away when the light shines—so has the Covenant of Works departed forever and, in its place, stands out the Everlasting Covenant of God's unmerited mercy to the most guilty and vile of the sons and daughters of men! May He graciously grant to us the privilege of having an interest in that Covenant, for His dear Son's sake. Amen.

HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK—555, 586.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, 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 GLORY OF GRACE
NO. 2763

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 26, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A THURSDAY EVENING, DURING THE WINTER OF 1869.

"The glory of His Grace."
Ephesians 1:6.

GOD is essentially glorious. Even were there no eyes to behold Him, no lips to hymn His praise, no intelligent creatures to obey Him, He would be infinitely glorious in Himself. Yet, nevertheless, God chooses to exhibit His Glory that He may get praise out of the hearts of intelligent beings, who, beholding the varied and wonderful manifestations of the exceeding riches of His Grace, may be compelled with joy and gratitude, to glorify Him. In this sense, also, God is glorious—that is, Glory is given unto Him—He is admired, He is beloved, He is adored. Every attribute of God has its Glory, not only essential, but Glory through its exhibition of Himself. God's power is glorious, as we all know, in the works of His hands. His skill, His wisdom, His benevolence—all these are to be seen in those works of Nature, as we call them, which meet our eyes every day. God's justice is glorious and we sometimes tremble to think how awfully glorious it is in the lowest pit of Hell. We have, on the present occasion, however, not to talk about other attributes of God, but about this one—"the glory of His Grace"—and while we are doing so, I must remark that we shall have to see, incidentally, how this Grace, in itself glorious, really brings Glory to all the other attributes. When God glorifies His Grace, He glorifies His whole Character—Grace becomes a platform upon which all the perfections of Deity exhibit themselves—and Grace becomes a light which shines upon all the rest, and they, albeit bright enough in themselves, seem to be doubly bright when they glow in its brilliance.

Where every place is rich, one scarcely needs to strike out a pathway. Let me, however, ask you first to notice *the Glory of Divine Grace as it has been displayed*, and then, secondly, I will give you a few words on *the qualities for which it is distinguished*.

I. In the first place, then, let us meditate on THE GLORY OF DIVINE GRACE AS IT HAS BEEN DISPLAYED.

Grace has been displayed, of old, in the great council chamber, where all the attributes of God sat in solemn conclave to devise a way by which God should be glorified. Foreknowledge, as one of the attributes of God, prophesied that man, if made fallible, would sadly fall. Justice, therefore,

arose and thundered forth his word that if man fell and transgressed the Creator's command, he must be punished. Grace, however, asked whether it could not be possible that man could be saved and yet Justice should be satisfied. Wisdom, infinite Wisdom, answered the question, and God's own Son was the answer! He promised that in the fullness of time, He would become a Man for us and, for our redemption, bear the whole weight of Jehovah's justly merited wrath, that the vessels of mercy might be secured.

Now, albeit that all the other attributes displayed themselves in the council chamber, when our soul, in holy reverence, dares venture into that once secret, but now revealed counsel of the Most High, we are compelled to admire all the attributes of God, but most of all, His Grace. Why, it seems to me that Grace presided at this congress! It was Grace that pressed man's suit, it was Grace that inspired Wisdom, it was Grace that invited Wisdom to be its counselor, it was Grace that defended man when Justice might have spoken against him. Grace was our advocate! Christ Jesus, who was Grace, itself, of old, as He is now, stood then as The Wonderful, The Counselor. And He devised the plan, pleaded our cause and promised to work it out. The Glory of Grace, as it sits with its crown upon its head in the council chamber of eternity, is a subject well worthy of your devout reflection and quiet meditation.

But now the council is over, and Grace steps forth to be glorified in another manner. Now *it glorifies itself in its gifts*. Look how Grace gives man blessings, countless in number, and priceless in value, scattering them along his pathway as if they were but stones, while each is so precious that only Heaven itself can tell its worth! At last, after having given man blessings through long ages, Grace comes up to Calvary and there gives its last—no, its first, its all, its grandest gift! Grace gives up the Incarnate Son of God to die! He gives up His own life and bows His head upon the Cross. There may be much of shame and ignominy about the Cross—assuredly there is, for there we see sin punished—but how much there is of Glory and of majesty for there we see Grace triumphant over itself—Grace in the heart of Christ leading Him to save others while Himself He cannot save!

We talk of these things, nowadays, as household words, but not thus do the angels speak concerning Grace glorified in the Person of the dying Son of God! Not thus did we think when, for the first time, we saw Him to be ours in the day of our sore trouble and sorrow! We shall not think so slightingly of Grace, as I fear we sometimes do now, when we shall see His face without a veil between and then shall know what wondrous Grace that was which made that glorious face become marred with sorrow, and bowed that glorious head Divine to the depths of the grave! Grace, in its highest Glory, is to be seen best on Calvary, but I think it is rather to be seen and felt than to be talked of. My feeble tongue declines to bear the burden of a theme so weighty. I cannot stretch the wings of my imagination and rise to the height of this grand argument! I cannot adequately utter the praises of that Grace which is to be seen in the dy-

ing Son of God on Calvary. Since then, Beloved, you have had to glorify Grace in its continued gifts. You have found that He, who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, has with Him also freely given all things to us. What debtors you and I are! As Rutherford would have said, we are drowned debtors—we are head over heels in debt—we are sunken fathoms deep in an ocean of indebtedness to God!

How much do you owe my Lord? Take your pen and sit down quickly, and reckon up the amount. Ah, you may sit down quickly, but you will not rise up quickly, for the full account you can never write. There are no scales in which to weigh those ponderous blessings! Earth has no coin by which to represent their value! Talk of millions and of billions—we must get into the inconceivable before we can estimate the infinite, the unutterable value of those gifts which Jesus Christ continually gives to us, which Grace pours into our lap from the cornucopia of love!

Now we go a little further. We have had God's Grace in the council chamber, we have had His Grace in its gifts and, in both these things we may well speak of "the glory of His Grace." Now we will speak of *Grace in its triumphs*. It is a strange thing that love should be a warrior and that Grace should fight, but when Grace came to make us gracious, it found us graceless and averse to Grace. The door was shut when Jesus came, though His hand and heart were open. Jesus Himself burst open the door and stormed the passage into the heart of man. When mercy comes to bless, it finds us bent to curse. We will not receive the proffered gift—we reject the mercy—and Grace must overcome our will. It must lead us captives in silken bonds, or otherwise it cannot bless us! Man, while his will is free, is graceless. It is only when his will is bound by fetters of Sovereign Grace that he is gracious at all. If there is such a thing as free will, Luther truly hit the mark when he called free will a slave! It is only our will in bonds that is truly free. Our will constrained, ranges at liberty! When Grace binds it, then it is free, indeed, and only then—when the Son has made it free!

Think, my Brothers and Sisters, of the battles which Grace has had with men, and what glory it has gained, for, remember, it has never once been defeated! When Grace has come into the heart, there may have been a long struggle, but it has always ended in a victory. In your case and mine, how stern has been the fight! Do you not remember well the day when Jesus met you by the way and He said to you, " Soul, have you no interest in Me?" Do you remember how you spat in His face and passed Him by, and made a jest of the Crucified? Do you remember another time when He sent His black messengers, sickness and sorrow, and you lay upon your bed and He came to you, again, and you uttered words to Him which looked like truth, but, alas, they were but lying, deceptive words—and you turned your face to the wall and you vowed repentance—but you did not repent? You use no other friend so evilly as you have used Him.

And do you recollect how you were determined to be lost—how your soul set itself desperately on mischief? But you have not had your way. Grace has overcome you and here you sit, a captive—

"A willing captive to your Lord,
To sing the triumphs of His Word."

Ah, this always delights me when I think about preaching the Gospel, that Grace must be a conqueror where God sends it forth! We may sing, in the language of one of those good Welsh hymns, which I think, when translated, runs something like this—

"Ride forth, O Jesus!
Hell trembles at You,
Earth cannot withstand You!
Man's heart will break before You
Go forth and win the day!"

And when Jesus goes forth, He *does* win the day! The man may kick and struggle, but if his name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life, he will be obliged to yield. If thus the heavenly mandate runs, "Almighty Grace, arrest that man," that man, in God's time, shall be arrested by the strong hand of Sovereign Grace and he, converted, changed and made a new man in Christ Jesus, shall be one of Grace's willing captives—a trophy of its Omnipotence!

And then, my dear Brothers and Sisters, as we speak of the triumphs of Divine Grace, we must not forget the multitudes of triumphs Grace has had in each soul. If you could bear in your body a mark for every triumph that Grace has had in you and if every mark were a jewel, would you not be covered from head to foot with jewels? And then it is not merely one man in whom Grace has worked, but think of the countless myriads of souls that Grace has overcome. It has gone into every land, into every sort of habitation and it has secured its trophies. Oh, what a glorious day will that day be when Christ, who is Grace Incarnate and embodied, shall enter into Heaven with all His blood-bought saints and shall cry, "Here I am, Father, and the children whom You have given Me. Here are they whom I have rescued from the jaws of the lion and from the paws of the bear. Not one of them is missing! I have been triumphant over all their foes and I safely bring them to their promised rest." "The glory of His Grace" is seen, then, in its triumphs.

But let me remark, further, that *the glory of Divine Grace is to be seen more fully, by-and-by*, when the whole plan of Grace shall be worked out. I take it that we have, none of us, a very clear idea of what the full design of Divine Grace is. We say it is the blessing of the elect—it is, moreover, the indirect blessing of the world through these elect ones—or, as good Elisha Coles has said, and we endorse his saying, "Grace gives some good things to all men, though it gives all good things to some men." But I take it that we have not, any of us, fully realized the design of God's Grace. We all have some little confusion in our minds. That confusion may be, probably, a better insight of what God is doing than if we were able to put it into an orderly system. I doubt not that, in the millennial days which are yet to come, we shall see that God's Grace will be so

wonderfully magnified at the winding up that our little hearts have never thought of how grandly the scene shall end!

At present, I see the world continually go on in its wickedness. It seems to me that Justice is rather magnified than Grace, for multitudes are daily descending into Hell. But there are happier days to come and a brighter season, when Messiah the Prince shall stand a second time among the sons of men! Then shall the earth ring with His praise! Then shall myriads of men and women be made to know Him! Then shall they come and bow down before Him and all people shall call Him blessed! And then the enormous multitudes shall swell the roll of those chosen ones to such a marvelous degree that, at the winding up, it shall be fully known and seen that there is a number that no man can number whom Christ has redeemed out of all people, and kindreds, and tongues! And when the multitudes of infants and all the myriads of these elect ones who shall be brought in, shall be encompassed within the shining walls of Heaven, then shall we see that the number of the saved infinitely surpasses the number of the lost! Then shall we see that though the gate was narrow, though the road was strait, yet the number of those who pass along it shall be immeasurably greater than the number of those who shall go in the other road, broad as it is, and wide though its gates may be!

I believe that the songs of Heaven shall prevail over all the growls of Hell. Satan shall not be triumphant. Christ shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied! And Divine Grace, when it counts up its numbers, shall laugh in the face of Hell and cry, "I am triumphant over you! The number of my trophies far exceeds the number of yours, for you, black tyrant, have done little in comparison with what I have accomplished! See, you have here and there a ruined soul, but I have multitudes of blood-bought ones, whom I have raised up to everlasting life and more than perfection, for it is the very perfection of Deity which I have given to them."

II. Well now, having just run briefly over these things—you may think of them at your leisure more fully—I want to talk about the subject in another way for a little while. "To the praise of the glory of His grace." I take it that we may see the Glory of this Grace if we notice THE QUALITIES FOR WHICH IT IS DISTINGUISHED.

Grace is glorious if we consider *its antiquity*. Grace is not a piece of new cloth put into an old garment. Grace is not an alteration which God made in His original plan. It is not some addition that He made because some unlooked-for catastrophe occurred. He foresaw the Fall from all eternity and every iota of the plan of Grace was devised of old. Before yon sun was created, long before he had been swaddled in mists, before the stars had known their resting places and had sent the rays of their light through the thick darkness. Long before the mountains knew their places, or the water was poured into its fountains, God had chosen His people, had set His heart of love upon them, had devised His plan and chosen the objects that should be embraced by it. I love to think of Grace

in its antiquity. There are certain people who have a reverence for everything that is old—the Puseyite, for instance—he likes a thing because it used to be worn some six, seven, or 800 years ago!

Now, I confess I have a reverence for that which is old, but then it must be old enough. If a doctrine or a ceremony is as old as the time of Christ, I am content. But as to doctrinal truth, I can always rejoice if I can see the fact to be old as the everlasting hills! The geologist tells us that some rocks must have been fused myriads of years ago—and we tell him it may be so, but we are certain that the Covenant of Grace is older than the oldest of these things. They are but born yesterday infants, aged though they seem to be. But Grace has hoary age upon its head. Its head and its hair are white like wool, as white as snow! Venerable for age is the Grace of God and the plan of Grace is no new chapter of modern compilation, but it is old as God's own eternity—an everlasting thing! O Grace, you are from everlasting to everlasting!

Then, again, the Glory of Grace consists not only in its antiquity, but in its Immutability. The Grace of God, old though it is, has never changed. Many a mighty river has been dried up and now, over its dry bed men can walk. The very sea has changed. There are no furrows on its brow, but it has forsaken its channels and now finds a resting place that is new to it. The very sun alters, everything grows dim with age—but Grace flows on as it did at first! Its stream is just as deep and its current just as mighty. There is no failing in Grace, any more than there is any failing in God. And I may remark that it has never failed of its objects. No, Grace runs in one direct stream and it has never been made to wind about. The chosen vessels of mercy have been washed in that stream—it has not passed by a single one, nor has one more been washed by it than those chosen ones of old. Never, never can we permit the idea of the mutability of Grace—Grace given today, and taken away tomorrow!

I repeat what I have often said. If Grace could be given to a man temporarily, and then taken away from him, I cannot imagine a more awful malediction than that Grace would really be! I would sooner perish as that fallen angel, that great sinner, Satan, than as one whom God had loved, if He did not love me forever, because to give Grace, and then to take it away would be the most awful method of tantalizing that was ever known! Better for God to send no Gospel if He did not send an everlasting one! The Arminian scheme of salvation is worse than nothing! I had rather have no Revelation than believe it if, on that hypothesis, I am but tantalized and tempted to hope that I may be saved, but it ends in blackness and darkness forever because there is a condition annexed to it which I cannot fulfill—and there is something demanded of me which I cannot give. The Grace of God, then, is greatly magnified in its Immutability as well as in its antiquity.

And then, to turn to another view of it, Grace derives great Glory from *its freeness*. The Grace of God is as free as the air we breathe. If any man here asks whether he may believe in Christ, my answer to him is—he not only may, but he is *commanded* to do so! If, as I have often declared to

you, it is the command of God that we believe on Jesus Christ whom He has sent, you are guilty of sin every moment that you live without faith in Christ! It is commanded of you, therefore you can clearly say you have a right to it, for any man has a right to obey a Divine command! If we are commanded, we have a perfect right to come. He who commands us to come to the feast gives us, in that very command, the only permit we need. Oh, I would that men would believe in the freeness of Divine Grace!

I preach the sovereignty of Divine Grace and desire to preach it with reverence before God and with faithfulness to man—but the freeness of Grace is not inconsistent with the Sovereignty of it. Albeit that none ever drink of that sacred Fountain but those whom God sweetly constrains to drink—if men do not drink, the fault lies with them—and their blood will be on their own head forever. For thus cries the Gospel, "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The Grace of God is free—no preparation is needed before you can receive it, for God gives it even to men who do not ask for it—"I was found of them that sought not after Me." There is no preparation needed! I tell you, the preparation that you imagine is necessary would be just that which would disqualify you! Come to Jesus now! You are commanded to come just as you are. Oh, may Divine Grace, that gives the command, induce you to obey—may it sweetly constrain you to obey! Remember that there is no barrier between you and Christ except your own depraved heart. If once you have the will, if God *gives* you the will to go to Christ, there is nothing that can keep you back and nothing that should intimidate you from coming, for the cry is, "Whoever will, let him come."

This is, I think, one of the glories of Divine Grace—its freeness. But it is a Glory which a great many cannot see. As soon as we touch upon it, some Brother says, "Ah, he is not sound upon *that* point," though, when we preached upon God's Sovereignty, he liked it well enough. With regard to the matter of soundness, I do not so much consider soundness as sense. I always think if a thing is in Scripture, it little matters to me if it is not in men's creed. They can alter their creed as quickly as they like—I shall not alter mine. I will just stand to what I always shall and always have preached, and take God's Word as it stands, whether I can reconcile it with another part of God's Word or not. One part of the Glory of Grace, then, consists in its freeness.

And now let me notice another thing. The Glory of Free Grace will be found in *its benevolence*. What good has Grace done? I will put it in another shape—What *hurt* has Grace ever done? There is not a man in the universe who can blame Grace for any hurt he has received by it. You know that a great public good is often a private evil, but while Grace is often a public good, it is never a private evil. No one was ever injured by it. I love a Gospel that hurts nobody. If there are none saved by it, at least they cannot point the finger at the Gospel and say, "That has destroyed me." Their destruction lies with themselves! Grace scatters mercies, but never anything that is the reverse of good. Its path is that of a conqueror, but its garments are not stained with blood, except its own

blood. It is true that it marches over the world, beating down every high look and leveling every lofty thing. But, then, that is a blessing, for it is better to be leveled by Grace than to be exalted by pride! Good, only good are you, O Grace! You are a continually gushing fountain of mercy. Your stream is always crystal clear. There is no adulteration here, or anything that is ill to man, but, as Milton says, "'It is better still, and better still, and better still in infinite progression.'"

And now let me say, once more, what I think in my own soul will be one of the greatest glories of Divine Grace. I think it will be if ever I shall see the face of God with acceptance. I have said, and say it again—

"Then loudest of the crowd I'll sing,
While Heaven's resounding mansions ring
With shouts of Sovereign Grace."

You remember the story of the three wonders in Heaven? The first wonder was that we should see so many there we did not expect to see. The second was that we should miss so many we did expect to see there. But the third wonder would be the greatest wonder of all—to see ourselves there! Oh, when I hear people censuring and condemning their fellow Christians because they are not perfect—because they see some little fault in them—I think, "Do these people know that they are saved by Grace and that they have nothing which they have not received? I think, surely, if they knew how they received what they have, they would not be quite so hard with those who have not the blessing." When we feel right, my Brothers and Sisters, we always feel ourselves to be veritable beggars. No, the more right we come to be, the less we feel ourselves to be! That big letter, I, is so large with us all, pride is so interwoven into our nature, that I am afraid we shall never get it pulled out until we are wrapped in our winding-sheets! But if there is anything that can cure it, I think it is the fact that it is all of Divine Grace. Heaven shall show us how gracious God has been to us, but on earth we shall never know the full value of the Grace we have received. Let us continually sing—

"Oh, to Grace how great a debtor,
Daily I'm constrained to be!"

And, then, as a consequence, let us walk humbly with our God. Let us always be giving glory to Christ, waiting for and expecting that happy day when we shall glorify Him with all His saints, when He shall come in the Glory of His Father and all His holy angels with Him!

Brothers and Sisters, will we not sing if we once get across the Jordan? Oh, what leaps for joy! What shouts! What praise! What thanksgiving! Ah, my hoary-headed Brother, you are saying, "Would to God I were safely there!" And so you shall be before long. Ah, my dear young Friend, you are saying, "Oh, what temptations I have to battle with! Would God that I were at rest!" Your rest may be nearer than you think it is—we are, none of us, sure how near we are to Heaven. That trouble you are dreading may never come! That trial may never arrive, for Christ may come before the trial and we may be caught up to dwell with Christ before it shall come!

Let us just speed up the day by an hour or two. Ah, I shall soon be dying. Time quickly fades away. Speed on, O Time! Roll on your wheels and every year fly on apace! The shorter the road, the sooner I shall be with Him! The nearer I am to Jordan, the nearer am I to Canaan! Farewell, manna of the wilderness! Farewell, fiery serpents and Amalekites! My soul shall soon cross the Jordan! I shall see the face of Him whom, though I have not yet seen, I do unceasingly adore—in whom I have a Heaven on earth and with whom I shall have an everlasting blessedness in that day when He calls me Home to Himself!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
EPHESIANS 4.

Verse 1. *I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called.* "You are called to be sons of God, you are called to be one with Christ, you are called to be kings and priests unto God—this is the highest possible vocation that anyone can have, so walk worthy of it!" O Beloved, if we walk worthy of this vocation, what holy and noble lives we shall lead! The Apostle so much desired godliness and holiness to be the characteristics of those to whom he wrote that he used a very strong term of entreaty—"I beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called."

2. *With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.* "You are not called to bully others, to be lords over God's heritage. You are called to be Christ-like, to be gentle and tender, ready to bear and to forgive all manner of wrong that may be done to you."

3. *Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* Some people seem as if they endeavored to break the unity of the Spirit and to snap every sacred bond of love and Christian affection—be you not like they, but let Christ's mind be in you and with lowliness, and meekness, and long-suffering, endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

4-6. *There is one body, and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.* If there were two lords, you might be divided into two parties. If there were two faiths, you might split up into two sections. If there were two baptisms, you might be right in having two denominations. If there were two fathers, there might be two families. If there were two indwelling spirits, there would be, and there must be, two sorts of people! But, in the true Church of Jesus Christ, there is "one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

7. *But unto everyone of us is given Grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.* We have not all the same form of Grace and we cannot all perform the same service for the Savior. We differ very much from each other as to our abilities and as to the positions which we can occupy—and our Lord intended it to be so.

8-10. *Therefore He says, "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men. (Now this, "He ascended," what is it but that He also descended, first, into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same, also, that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things).* Paul could not help giving us this lesson by the way, that He that ascended was also He that first descended. And you may depend upon it that the man who will attain the highest honor in the Church of Christ is the man who descends—who lays aside all ambition and all desire to be honored and respected—and who is willing to be nothing. He who thus descends, shall surely ascend.

11. *And He gave some, Apostles; and some, Prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.* Not all alike, not all Apostles or Prophets. And not all equal, for pastors may not be equal in rank with Apostles. They are not all to do the same work, for all teachers cannot prophesy, neither does a Prophet always serve as a pastor and watch over a flock. Jesus Christ gave different gifts.

12, 13. *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.* Then, whatever spiritual gifts we have, they are not our own to use as we please—they are only entrusted to us that we may employ them to help our fellow Christians. Beloved Brothers and Sisters, we are one with Christ, and we are one with each other and, therefore, we must not look, every man upon his own things, but also upon the things of others! And it should be a question of the first importance to every Christian, "How can I best utilize myself for the benefit of the rest of the members of the Church?" Do not ask, "How can I benefit myself?" but let your enquiry be, "How can I be most profitable to my fellow Christians?"

I have heard some professors say of a sermon that they could not feed under it—the discourse was very likely to be useful to the unconverted, but they could not stand it because they could not feed under it. Their idea seems to be that preaching must always be a spoon used for feeding them—but it is not so! The Word of God contains much spiritual nutriment specially suitable for the lambs of the flock. These men who are strong, need meat, so they say that they do not enjoy what they hear, it is of no use to them. But are the babies in Christ's family never to be fed? Does not humanity itself teach us that, first of all, the weakest and feeblest should be cared for? Oh, for Grace to be unselfish! There is such a thing as Christian selfishness and, of all evil things in the world, it is the most unchristian! When the first and last concern of a man is his own salvation, his own comfort, his own advancement, his own edification and nothing besides, he needs to be saved from such a selfish spirit as that!

14-16. *That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth*

in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is 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. Every part of the body has its own special function. There are some secret vessels of which as yet the physiologists know very little. What may be the particular use of them has not yet been ascertained, but depend upon it, God has created no part of our body in vain and, in like manner, in the mystical body of Christ, every Christian has his own office, his own work, something that he can do that nobody else can do! And our great objective should be to find out what that work is and to give our whole strength to it, for the nourishing of the entire body of Christ.

17-19. *This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their minds, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling.* That is a terrible expression, "past feeling."

19-25. *Have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ; if indeed you have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus that you put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that you put on the new man, which God created in righteousness and true holiness.* Therefore putting away lying, as a rotten, worn-out garment that you could not bear to wear.

26. *Speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members, one of another.* Then, why should we lie, one to another? Should one hand try to deceive the other hand? Should the eye mislead the foot? Surely, the union of one member with all the other members should ensure its truthfulness!

26. *Be you angry, and sin not.* If you must be angry, (and you must, sometimes), take care that you do not sin when you are angry. It is rather a difficult thing to be angry and not to sin, yet, if a man were to see sin and not to be angry with it, he would sin through not being angry! If we are only angry, in a right spirit, with a wrong thing, we shall manage to obey the injunction of the Apostle, "Be you angry, and sin not."

26. *Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.* Never let it outlive the day, but forgive before the sun goes down.

27. *Neither give place to the devil.* A man who harbors malice in his heart invites the devil to come in and keeps a place ready for him.

28. *Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor.* For laziness is generally the cause of theft. If a man would work for what he needed, he would not be tempted to steal it. Paul carries his argument very far, "let him labor."

28. *Working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needs.* What a rise there is here—from a thief up to a

giver to him that needs! This is what the Grace of God does. Here is a man who used to take his neighbor's goods if he could, but, when Divine Grace transforms him, he actually gives a share of his own goods to his poor neighbor—that is a marvelous change!

29. *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth.* I have heard unthinking people say, "Well, if it is in your heart, you may as well speak it—it is better out than in." I do not agree with them! If you had a barrel of whiskey in your house, that would certainly be a bad thing to be in your possession, but it would not do any hurt so long as you kept it unopened so that nobody could get at it! The mischief arises when people begin to drink it. Undoubtedly, it is an evil thing for you to have anything that is corrupt in your heart, but it will not be mischievous to other people until it begins to come out. So, "let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth."

29. *But.* Since some communication is sure to come out of your mouth, let it be a good one.

29-31. *That which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister Grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.* Especially take heed of that "evil speaking" against which the Apostle warns you, for there are many people who cannot live without speaking—they must talk a great deal and they often say that which is false—they invent evil, they twist an honest action and impute wrong motives to the doer of it! A few such persons in a community can cause much of heartache and distress. They little know what servants of Satan they may become. God help us to put away all evil speaking and all malice!

32. *And be you kind, one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you.* That is, very freely, very often, very abundantly, very thoroughly, very heartily—"even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you," so also do you.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, 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 CLOUD OF DOVES
NO. 2764

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 2, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 12, 1879.

"Who are these who fly as a cloud, and like doves to their roosts?"
Isaiah 60:8.

WE believe that, in the latter days, according to the Word of God, men will flock to Christ and to His Church in far greater numbers than they have ever done. At present, we have to go to them, but, by-and-by, they will come to us. Now we have to search them out, like lost sheep in a cloudy and dark day, but, in those days, they will feel a gracious drawing towards their God and His Church—and they will come in vast multitudes to worship with the people of God—yes, they will themselves become the people of God and bow down before the feet of Emmanuel, the Prince of peace! Why should it not be? Why should we not expect it and why should not the expectation greatly encourage us in laboring on through these weary years, being well assured that they that sow in tears shall one day reap in joy?

Yet, even at that time when, through the full preaching of the Gospel and the effectual working of the Holy Spirit, men shall come flocking to Christ in troops, even in that hour the Church will be astonished at the result! She will lift up her hands, and say, "Who has begotten me these?" She will cry, in the words of our text, "Who are these who fly as a cloud, and like doves to their roosts?" For, alas, God's people are often very unbelieving. We have seen something of this spirit even in our own time. There are certain good old Christian people who, if they see a convert added to the Church, now and then, are pleased and satisfied. But if there should be a score added in a month—if there were to be a hundred—they would hold up their hands and say, "This cannot be the work of God! There are too many, it is all excitement!" And they would take counsel together and try to stop it. "Surely," they say, "it cannot be the work of God because it is so great."

Now my argument is that if we are to judge a work by its size, I should say that a little work was not the work of God. My method of reasoning would be this—the greater the work, the more likely is it to be of God. I do not insist upon that always being the case because God is in the least conversion—if there is but one, as much as in the conversion of thousands—but still, if a Brother begins to throw discredit upon a work in any place because large numbers are converted, I am ready to meet him

and to prove that he is wrong! Pentecost was not the conversion of some one old woman in a chimney corner through reading a sermon—Pentecost was not the bringing in of one dear child of a deacon, one who had been in the Sunday school all his life—but Pentecost was the conversion, then and there, of three thousand sinners of every sort, through the preaching of the Word of the Lord! And I expect that where God is especially manifested, and where He gives His Churches, Pentecosts, we shall have thousands born in a day, multitudes flocking to Christ as the doves to their roosts!

Let us begin to enlarge our expectations. Already, in this house, we have had the prophecy fulfilled on a small scale. See how, these many years, the multitudes have pressed and thronged to listen to the Gospel! What other attractions have we had? We have not even that wonderful box of music with which men praise God with wind—we have nothing but the most plain possible singing. I am certain that the crowds do not come to hear that and, as for the preaching, I have purposely laid aside all the graces of oratory that I might have had—and tried to make my message as plain and simple as possible. One good man, who is going away from us, said to me, this morning, "I shall miss the plain preaching to which I have been accustomed. No doubt there are some rich people who would like to have it put very finely, but, you see," he said, "I have no education and I am glad you have preached so that I could understand you, because the other people can do the same if they like." Yes, and they must, too, if they come here, for I will never get away from the simple preaching of Jesus Christ, as plain as I can make it! My one work is just to talk of Jesus Christ and of His blessed Gospel, as plainly as I can. And is there anything like it, in all the world, to draw the multitudes, to hold the multitudes, to impress the multitudes? Yes, and to lead them to fly, like doves, to Jesus' wounds to find salvation there?

Now, coming to our text, I think that the passage refers, first of all, to the Israelite who sees multitudes coming to Jerusalem to worship the one living and true God. He stands on the top of Carmel and he looks across the Mediterranean and he sees the ships of Tarshish coming in such great numbers across the sea, scudding along before the wind, that he says, "Who are these who fly as a cloud?" Seen from a distance, the great fleet of vessels seem like a cloud, and as they come nearer, those long triangular sails which we who have been along the coast of the Mediterranean remember so well, suggest to him the second figure, "Who are these that are flying like doves to their roosts?" It was the promise being fulfilled, "the ships of Tarshish first"—the men from the far-off lands hurrying up that they might worship with the multitude that kept holy day in the sacred city!

Now we may leave both these figures and use the text as the exclamation of the Church of God when she expresses her wonderment at what God is doing in the conversion of sinners—"Who are these who fly as a cloud, and like doves to their roosts?"

I. First, WHO ARE THEY THAT THEY SHOULD BE SO MANY—that they should "fly as a cloud," like doves in flocks?

The answer to that enquiry is another question—Why should they not be many? *There are a great many sinners in the world*—why should not a great number be converted? When many souls are brought to Christ, they are only relatively many. Usually, alas, they are relatively small! We have sometimes rejoiced greatly when we have had as many as a hundred added to this Church in a month, yet I have gone away and said to myself—"What is that hundred, after all? It is not sufficient to keep pace with the increase of the population." It makes us very sad to know that the increase of sinners far exceeds the increase of the converts to God. At present, they do not "fly as a cloud." They come in scores, perhaps, and we are thankful for that, but they do not come as a cloud, and like a flock of doves flying to their roosts! But why should they not do so one of these days? Why should they not do so very soon? If the Gospel is but faithfully preached, and the power of prayer is fairly and fully tried, and the Spirit of God is working mightily through the Gospel, why should they not come like a cloud?

There are plenty of them all over the world. Look at the millions all around us in this nation-city—scarcely to be called a *city*—for it is a very world for multitude! Think of the millions of inhabitants in the British islands who still remain unconverted. There is no fear of our nets being drawn to shore empty because there are no fish! We may be bad fishermen, but there are plenty of fish. When we fire in among the birds, the coveys are large enough. There is no reason, except bad marksmanship, why we should not hit some among them, for there are plenty of them! When I hear of a minister fearing that his congregation will suffer because another chapel is brought near his, I feel ashamed of him! Go and build a whole street of chapels, if you like! If the Gospel of Jesus Christ is faithfully preached there, you will fill them! If it is not, you will not. You need not fear however many preachers come near you in such a city as this, so swarming with people as it is. And why should they not be converted in swarms, as there are so many of them? Why should they not "fly as the doves to their roosts"?

Has not Christ brought into the world a great redemption? When I see Him dying upon yonder Cross, I cannot sit down and watch His amazing sufferings and then think that He died only for a few and that, as the result of the travail of His soul, there will be just a few very respectable people redeemed with His precious blood! If you can believe it, you must—but I cannot. I claim for Christ a great reward! I expect that His Father will so abundantly reward Him that when He makes Him to see of the travail of His soul, and to be satisfied, it will be with unnumbered and innumerable millions of redeemed men, women and children who shall look unto Him and live! Up till now the passion of Christ has only been very partially rewarded. The Cross has not, as yet, brought forth its full crop of blessed fruit. Jesus—that precious "grain of wheat" that was cast into the ground to die, and so to bring forth fruit—has not yet yielded the wondrous harvest which shall surely come of that marvelous seed-sowing!

O Beloved, by the blood that fell upon the sterile earth and made it fruitful, look for great sheaves and abundant harvests and begin to already sing the harvest home song in anticipation of that great ingathering! Yes, Christ's converts must "fly as a cloud, and like doves to their roosts," for He has bought, with His precious blood, a multitude that no man can number! They must come in great multitudes because He has attractions which they cannot resist. Let Him but be made known to them and they must come to Him! Well has it been said—

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

"But they are blind," says one. I know they are, but cannot He open their eyes? "They are deaf," says another. That also is true, but cannot He unstop their ears? "But their hearts are hard," says a third. Yes, so they are, but cannot He soften them, or take them away and give them hearts of flesh? Oh, with such a Christ as ours, I must believe that sinners must come to Him in vast crowds! He must have the heathen for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. God always works according to scale—He never made a great cause to produce a little result—and when He Himself becomes Incarnate—when He Himself bleeds and dies—when He gives Himself up as a Sacrifice for sin, I must expect that men will come to Him "as a cloud, and like doves to their roosts."

And why should they not come in crowds when *the Spirit of God is quite able to lead them to come*? That same Holy Spirit who converts one, can just as easily convert a hundred! The Gospel, applied by the Spirit of God to a dozen souls, can manifestly convert a thousand, or a million! Spiritual force is like fire—give me but one spark and I can set a city all ablaze! One little lamp, overturned by a cow, caused Chicago to be swept away in flames. One match could cause a prairie conflagration of almost immeasurable extent. There is, practically, no limit to fire, and there is absolutely no limit to the power of the Spirit of God. He has but to work, and the same Truth of God which converted one soul, today, can convert ten thousand or ten millions tomorrow! Why, then, should He not make them willing in the day of His power, so that they should "fly as a cloud, and like doves to their roosts"?

Once more, let us remember, *that Heaven is very great and the preparations which Grace has made are very large.* That is a most gracious sentence in Christ's parable of the great supper, "Yet there is room." If we could enter Heaven, at this moment, I guarantee you that we would not hear the angels or the redeemed from among men talking of the place being overcrowded! If we went down its shining streets, we would see many mansions furnished and prepared, and the destined inhabitants must occupy them. There is many a sacred joy laid up in store and those for whom it is intended must have it. Heaven is not a place prepared in vain, which will, at last, prove to be a failure! You may build a city, but you cannot fill it with inhabitants at your own pleasure. I saw, in the South of France, part of a city with street after street of well-built houses—with fountains and a cathedral—but the streets were green with grass, the

fountains were full of filth and the houses were inhabited by the poorest of the poor, or else were standing empty! But Heaven, at the last, shall not be like that. Oh, no! The wedding shall be furnished with guests. At the great King's banqueting table, there will not be one empty seat! No David will be missing in that day! The Lord shall gather in all His elect from the East, and from the West, and from the North, and from the South—and they shall "fly as a cloud, and like doves to their roosts."

II. Now, secondly, WHO ARE THEY THAT THEY SHOULD FLY?

As the light cloud before the breath of the tempest, so they come to Christ. As the doves fly with swift wings, to their roosts, so do they speed to the Savior—but why do they come to Him in such a hurry? These new converts are not to be kept back! Old saints preach patience to them, but they will have none of it. They tell them to wait a while, but they feel that they cannot wait—so they "fly as a cloud and like doves to their roosts." Why do they fly?

The first answer is they fly to Christ *because they are driven and cannot help flying to Him*. When the Spirit of God lays hold upon a man—and like the wind, He blows where He wishes—I guarantee you that that man must fly to Jesus! He can hold out no longer. He must repent, he must believe, he must have Christ and he must have Him now! Look, there he is, on his knees! He cries to God for mercy and he adds many tears to his earnest entreaties. He cannot wait for the blessing and he will take no denial! He cries, "Give me Christ, or else I die!" And well he may, for the blessed Spirit, like a strong North wind, is blowing behind him and making him to be one of those who fly like a cloud!

Why do they fly? They may well fly *because they are in danger*. Do you wonder that a man is in a hurry to escape when he sees the gulf of Hell yawning before him? These sinners who are in such haste to fly to Christ are like doves pursued by a hawk. Satan is after them! Sin is pursuing them! Death is drawing near them and Hell is close at their heels—so they are rightly alarmed and distressed. Do not tell me about seeking Christ calmly and quietly—you cannot do it if once your conscience is thoroughly aroused! If you realize that sin is upon you, that God condemns you because of your sin and that, by-and-by, you may be where hope and mercy can never come to you—

"In flames that no abatement knows,
Though briny tears forever flow"—

why, you must fly! That is not the time for roosting or resting! You must fly like a dove to its dovecot when you have a true sense of the danger in which you are placed through your sin!

Besides that, *these flying sinners have strong desires within them*. The dove flies to her dovecot because she wants to be there and she will not be happy until she gets there. I sometimes see a man throw a pigeon up into the air, that it may find its way home. It usually wheels about for a little while, as though it were uncertain which direction it should take. But, presently, its quick eye catches sight of some familiar landmark, or by instinct it knows which is its way home and then, away it goes! There is no turning to the right, or to the left, but, straight as an arrow shot

from a bow, it flies towards its roost! So is it with a soul that the Spirit of God has once quickened! It longs for Christ, it pines for Christ. It may hesitate and look about to find the way it is to go to find Him, but, at last, it says within itself, "There He is," and away it goes, like the doves to their roosts! Do you wonder that it does so when the sacred instinct, the holy desire, is so strong within it?

Why do they fly? Well, they may well fly *because they have such a short time in which to reach the Savior*. I cannot tell—for I am neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet—but I may be addressing someone who will never see the sun rise again. There may be an unsaved soul in this place who must be saved before 12 o'clock shall come round, or that soul will be lost forever. We have had deaths, before now, while the service was proceeding in this Tabernacle—and such a thing may happen again—and strike us with sudden sorrow as well as with deep solemnity. But, in any case, mortal man has but a short time to live and some—we know not to which among us this may relate—have a very, very short time to live. The Rabbi's answer to a foolish question was a wise one. When he was asked, "How many days before he dies should a man repent?" He replied, "One day before he dies and, as he may die today, or tomorrow, he had better repent at once." So, as we sang, a little while ago—

"Come, guilty souls, and flee away
Like doves to Jesus' wounds"—

using all possible haste—because the day is far spent and the night is at hand in which you will not be able to find your way to the shelter of perishing sinners which is now available for you!

III. A third question is—WHY DO THEY FLY AS DOVES—that is, all together—in a covey—in a flock, so that they look like a moving cloud?

Well, the first reason is, *because they are all in one common danger* and, usually, when persons are in that condition, they give up their bickering against one another and join heartily together! Each one, as he becomes anxious for himself, also feels a similar anxiety for his fellows, so they band themselves together and "fly as a cloud, and like doves to their roosts." Souls convinced of sin have no time or inclination to quarrel! When a man feels that he must "flee from the wrath to come," he does not notice that someone else is not respectful to him. No, he thinks of himself as a lost sinner—and lost sinners must not be so foolish as to stand upon their dignity, nor even to insist upon their rights and privileges! At such times they are willing to stand in the aisle, or to be crowded up in a corner anywhere, so long as they can but hear the Gospel—and they will bear anything from their fellow men if they may but find Christ! It is wonderful what communion of spirit springs up among them.

One, who has himself been under conviction, has seen another weeping on account of sin and has said, "Well, if I do not find Christ, myself, I hope that young man will do so. If I am never to be saved, I do hope that poor woman, whom I saw in such an agony of spirit, may soon find joy and peace in believing." And, sometimes, when they hardly dare to pray

for themselves, they will pray for one another! And when they scarcely have any hope for themselves, they will entertain very kind desires concerning those who have sat next to them, who have been under impression. They are too much taken up with the solemnities of their condition before God to have time or wish for contention and, therefore, they do not quarrel and fight, as a number of hawks might do, but they fly together in one band, as a company of doves might be expected to do.

Besides that, they fly together, *because they are seeking one common Refuge*. They seem to say to one another, "Are you seeking the Savior? So am I. Are you anxious to get rid of sin? So am I! Are you desirous to be washed in the precious blood of Jesus? So am I. Do you want the Spirit of God to renew you? So do I." So, in these various points, they are so closely bound together that they fly as a cloud! Besides, the Holy Spirit has already changed their nature to such an extent that they are all seeking that which is holy. Once they were like the hawk, the bird of prey—they were of an angry spirit and they strived with one another. But penitence imparts to those who possess a dove-like character. When sin is being mourned over, pride lies low. When transgression and iniquity stare a man in the face and humble him, he becomes gentle, tender and patient. He mourns like a dove without its mate and he seeks the Savior in the hope that, finding Him, he will also find peace and comfort of heart.

For all these reasons, convinced sinners, when God is dealing with them, get close together and they "fly as a cloud, and like doves to their roosts." I would like again to see such a cloud of them here as we have sometimes seen. When I came back from my holiday two years ago, and met the 150, or thereabouts, who had sought and found the Savior during the special services, it was a pleasant thing to listen to their hearty singing and to hear them talk in their own simple, earnest style of the way in which Christ had met with them! It was indeed cheering to my heart to see these doves thus flying as a cloud! Oh, for another such flight! May the Lord send it to us speedily! Let us believingly pray for it—then shall we have it—for He is sure to grant us the desire of our hearts.

IV. There is only one other question which I will try to answer. Let me remind you that we have already had these three enquiries—Who are these converts that they should be so many as to fly as a cloud? Who are they that they should fly so fast, like a flock of pigeons or doves, hurrying to their dovecots? Who are they that they should fly together, so as to make one cloud, one flock of doves? Now, lastly, let us ask—WHO ARE THEY THAT THEY SHOULD FLY THIS WAY? I mean, what makes them fly to Christ? What makes them fly to His Church? I can understand that when they are in danger, they should fly, but why do they fly this way? The answer is because it is the dovecot of souls! Christ Jesus is the Owner of this dovecot—no, more than that—He Himself is the Dovecot!

So, first, like a flock of doves they fly this way *because they are seeking safety* and there is no safety for them except in the Lord Jesus Christ. What is the safety that is in Him? It is this. It is inevitable that God must punish sin, but He sent His Son into the world and laid on Him the

iniquity of all who will ever believe on Him. He punished Christ instead of them and, therefore, He cannot and will not punish them, for, to punish the same offense twice would not be justice! To exact the penalty of sin first at the hand of the Divine Surety and Substitute, and then to exact it again at the sinner's hand, would not be right—and the Judge of all the earth will always do right. So, because God has exacted, at the hand of His dear Son, the ransom price for our iniquity, therefore all for whom Christ died are forever clear of all liability—and if you believe on Him, you have the mark of those for whom He died! If you trust Him, you have positive proof that you are one of His! If you rely upon the merit of His blood and righteousness, that is clear evidence that He gave His life as a ransom for you and you can never be sent to Hell! You cannot be punished for your sin, for Christ has borne the punishment of it. Your guilt was laid on Him and all your sin is gone forever—it cannot be brought against you, period! This is the comfort of all Believers and, therefore, these people come flying to Christ to get this safety. Like doves, they fly to the dovecot that they may be in safety there.

But they need more than safety. They also *need rest and a dovecot is a place of rest to a dove*. I went, some time ago, into one of those old dovecots which used to belong, by a sort of right, to large estates. A man must have a considerable amount of property before he was allowed to possess a dovecot. With my guide, I entered a square building and I saw that up the four walls, which were very lofty, there were almost innumerable places made for the pigeons—and they all seemed to be full. We could not stay very many minutes in the place, but we could see tiers upon tiers of nests of pigeons, all occupied by the softly-cooing birds. That is just what is meant here. When the doves are pursued by the hawk, they fly to the dovecot and there they find both safety and rest. It is their home—there, they enjoy themselves to the fullest. And oh, what a sweet rest we have in our Divine Dovecote, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! We are so protected and preserved in Him that we rest in perfect security!

Jesus Christ is the "home, sweet home" of His people. We find ourselves completely at home when once we get to Him. Wherever we wander, there is no place like this home. A swallow has two homes—one here, in the summer—and another in the sunny South, in the winter. I bade the swallows. "Good-bye," a week or two ago, but I daresay that I shall soon see some of them again in their other home. But a dove has only one home. Winter or summer she lives in the same dovecot. So is it with a Believer—he has only one home and that is His Master's bosom! He loves Jesus, He rests in Jesus and Jesus is, therefore, the home of his spirit.

Now, in closing my discourse, shall I tell you why some of you love to come to Christ's House as well as to Christ Himself? I think, first, that you like to come where God's people assemble *because your food is there*. It must be one main part of the business of the minister, on the Sabbath, to feed his people. And if he does that, they will be sure to flock around him. Did you ever stand in the square of St. Mark at Venice, as the clock

struck two? If you have ever done so, you have seen the pigeons come flying down in such flocks that they cover all the ground! You may even walk among them and they will not mind you. Somebody always feeds them at two o'clock and they know it—and they come then because they are fed. I will be bound to say that if I were to employ a musician to go there tomorrow at two o'clock, and to play on a flute to them, but to give them no barley, they would not come! And if he were to go there dressed in the particular robes adapted to St. Monday, or whatever "saint's day" it is tomorrow, the pigeons would not come if his hands were empty—but if he gives them barley, they will come, however he is dressed, and whatever music he may play! And we love to come to the House of God because, like doves, we have appetites and we like to be fed! And if the finest of the wheat is scattered in the form of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we are sure to be there, to eat and to be satisfied.

We love to be there, next, *because our companions are there*. The doves fly to their roosts because there are other doves there that they love. And we sing with Dr. Watts—

"My soul shall pray for Zion still,
While life or breath remains.
There my best friends, my kindred dwell,
There God my Savior reigns."

In the midst of the Lord's people we have formed associations that will outlast all the ties of blood, for, in that land where they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, ties formed here will endure forever there. Fathers in Christ will still be fathers there. Mothers in Israel will continue to be mothers there. Friends in Christ will be friends forever there. If the Gospel had done nothing else for some of us but introduce us to dear friends to whom we are knit for eternity, it would have been an everlasting blessing to us! We fly, like doves to our roosts, because there are other doves there and we wish to be with them.

Some of us fly there *because our young are there.* No dove flies so swiftly home as that mother dove that has young ones awaiting her return. And there is, I think, no man who loves the Church of God better than he does who has young children in it. Remember how the Psalmist wrote, "Yes, the sparrow has found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even among Your altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God." Blessed be His holy name, He is my father's God! He was my grandfather's God! He was my great-grandfather's God! He was the God of all my ancestors as long as we have any record of them and I am glad to say that He is the God of my sons, too! So I must love Him and rejoice in Him. Fathers and mothers, I hope you will all have this tie to the Church of God, for it is a very tender one and, also, a very strong one. May you come to love the Church of God because your children are there!

Last of all, we fly to Christ and to His Church *because our All is there*. Mr. John Wesley used to sing—

"No foot of land do I possess,
No cottage in this wilderness"—

and he had not any—when the good man came to die, all the wealth he had in the world was less than £10. When he was asked how he would dispose of his plate, he said that he had only two silver spoons, one at York, and one in London, for everything else had gone into the great cause of his Master! And we best prove that we love Christ when everything we have is given up to Him and all our wealth, all our strength, all our joy and everything else is found in Him, so that Christ is All, and in all! When He is all to you, you will fly to Him as a dove flies to its roost. God help you all to do so, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 60.

This is a chapter full of good news, a prophecy of the bright days that are yet to come to this dark world. These dull days are not to last forever. The reign of wickedness will come to an end and earth shall have the bright sunlight of Jehovah's Presence. The words are addressed to the Church of God—it little matters whether to the Jewish or the Gentile Church for, now, they are all one in Christ and there is no distinction in the message to both Jews and Gentiles.

Verses 1, 2. *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.* We have had abundant proof of the darkness and of the grossness of that darkness, for these many centuries. Now we are to look—and I trust that we can already see it in part—for the arising of the Sun of Righteousness, first upon the Church, and then upon the whole world!

3, 4. *And the Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your eyes roundabout 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.* Or, rather, "shall be carried as by a nurse upon her side." The strong ones—the sons—shall come walking. The weaker ones—the daughters—shall be carried like children who need to be nursed, but they shall all come. Today, the Church of Christ has to go. The message to Christ's disciples still is, "Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." The Church must send her heralds far and wide to tell the good news, but a blessed change will be worked when the nations will come to hear the story, flocking in crowds to listen to it, and Christ will be sought by those who never sought Him before—

"O long-expected day, begin!
Dawn on these realms of woe and sin!"

5. *Then you shall see, and be radiant, and your heart shall fear, and be enlarged.* First, the blessing shall seem too great to be real, and the Church shall tremble with fear. But, afterwards, she shall believe in it, and rejoice in it, and so her heart shall be enlarged.

5. *Because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto you*—The sailors shall come to Christ in great numbers! And when they are converted, they will be the best of missionaries. Each boat shall be a floating Bethel and every port at which they touch shall be the gladder for the good news they will have to tell—"The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto you."

5. *The forces of the Gentiles shall come unto you.* The soldiers, as well as the sailors, shall enter the service of the King of kings! Oh, what a happy day it will be when every soldier shall have enlisted beneath the banner of peace! Then they will be able to fight the good fight of faith every day and to be the means of saving multitudes of precious souls. According to this verse, great importance is attached to the conversion of sailors and soldiers—God grant that some of us may live to see this prophecy fulfilled!

6. *The multitude of camels shall cover you, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah.* Wealthy nations of the Oriental type, who ride upon camels and dromedaries, and who have long been under the sway of the false prophet, Mohammed, shall yield allegiance to the Son of God.

6, 7. *All they from Sheba shall come. 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.* Pastoral people—travelers from place to place in the wilderness—shall come to Christ. There shall be no untamed nation, no barbarous people that shall continue to oppose the coming of that glorious Kingdom of the blessed God in those happy, happy days! As for the Church, she shall be so astonished that she shall cry out—

8. *Who are these who fly as a cloud, and like doves to their roosts?* Or, "to their cotes."

9. *Surely the isles shall wait for Me, and the ships of Tarshish first.* Tarshish was some country far away from Palestine. It is difficult to say exactly where it was, but the Phoenicians made their most distant voyages there. It may have been this very island in which we live—and we know that they came here for tin. It is a very remarkable thing that islanders have usually been the first people to be converted to Christ. If you will, at this moment, think of any places where true religion is strong and dominant, you will naturally think of islands. Then, the mention of ships shows what regard God has for sailors when He says, "The ships of Tarshish first."

9, 10. *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. And the sons of strangers shall build up your walls.* And it is so today. Some, who were total strangers to God and to His Grace, have now become the most earnest ministers of Christ—"The sons of strangers shall build up your walls."

10, 11. *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 open continually. No alarms of war will cause them, then, to shut the iron gates.

11. *They shall not be shut day nor night.* There shall be free access to Zion, to the Church, and to Christ, Himself, at all times.

11-17. *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 shall milk the breast of kings: and you shall know that I the LORD am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron.* You see, it is better, and better, and better, for that is God's way with His people—to bless them, and then to bless them over again, and again, and again, giving them Grace upon Grace, Grace to qualify them to receive yet more Grace!

17-22. *I will also make your officers peace, and your exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in your land, wasting nor destruction within your borders; but you shall call your walls Salvation and your gates Praise. The sun shall be no more your light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto you: but the LORD shall be unto you an everlasting Light, and your God your glory. 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. Your people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: The LORD will hasten it in His time.* Oh, that "His time" were come! The happy period is hastening on and it will come at the right time. We ought not to be dispirited by delays, for it will surely come—it will not tarry a moment beyond the time appointed by God, blessed be His holy name! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—136, 494, 607.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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

MARVELOUS LIGHT
NO. 2765

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 9, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 26, 1879.

"His marvelous Light."
1 Peter 2:9.

EVERYTHING about a true Christian is marvelous. He is a marvel to himself and a marvel to all who are around him. Mere professors—man-made Christians—people who have made themselves Christians by their own free will apart from the Spirit of God, have nothing marvelous about them. You can make professors of that sort by the score and you can see them dissolve by the score, for what man made, man can unmake! And what is merely natural has its season, like the leaves on the trees and, by-and-by, it withers away because its time to fade has come. But a true Christian is a God-made man, a twice-born man and he is a partaker of the Divine Nature. He is a mass of marvels, for he is dead and yet he is alive! He is one who lives here and yet his life has gone away up yonder. He is one who is a citizen of earth and yet his citizenship is in Heaven. He is a true man, but he is more than a man, for God has lifted him up above the level of other men, given him a life which other men do not possess, revealed to him secrets which others do not know and prepared for him a place into which the ungodly can never enter.

The longer he looks at himself, the more he wonders at God's Grace and at what God's Grace has done, is doing and will yet do for him. He is a riddle to himself—an enigma made up of a thousand enigmas. He probably does not fully understand all that has happened in any single day of his life—and there are certain days in which God's dealings with him quite stagger him. And though faith sees all things to be plain, yet to mere human reason, things often appear to be in a snarl, and twisted together and he does not know what to make of them.

Everything about a true Christian is marvelous, as angels know, who often desire to look into the things which concern them, and as He knows, who is our Leader and Commander—who was a Man wondered at and whose faithful followers are all wondered at still, He, Himself is the greatest marvel of all! And among the many marvels that surround us is the marvelous Light of God in which we dwell. Those of us who are now in Christ, lived at one time in the gross darkness of ignorance. I mean even those of us who were brought up in Christian families and knew the letter of the Gospel well. We did not know its inner meaning and we nev-

er felt its power. We were in darkness, though, indeed, there was a certain measure of Light which had come to us, which made us responsible for our wrong-doing. Still, our heart remained in gross darkness.

And, by-and-by, this darkness was attended with much misery. There came to us a little Light—just enough to make our darkness visible. And so we perceived the darkness in which we dwelt and we began to sigh and cry, like prisoners shut up in an underground dungeon, to whom light and fresh air cannot come. Then everything about us seemed to blacken and the gloom around us deepened. We were in the dark as to our apprehensions of the future. We knew that we must die, yet we feared to die. We clung to life, yet, sometimes, we did not desire even life, itself, but said, with Job, "My soul chooses strangling and death rather than my life." The prospect of annihilation would have seemed almost like Heaven to us if we could, thereby, have gotten rid of our sinful, sorrowful being, clouded with apprehensions of the wrath of God and of judgments yet to come upon us. I know that I am talking about something which many of you understand! It was a thick Egyptian night in which you were then enveloped—a darkness that might be felt—and you tried your utmost to escape from it, but you could not, for it was *in* you. Your soul was in darkness, the Light within your spirit was quenched and all around you seemed to darken, and darken, and darken, as though an eternal midnight were surely descending upon you!

Well, at that time, it happened to me, and I know that it also happened to some of you as it did to Peter, that the angel of the Lord suddenly smote us on our side and a Light shone into our prison and we arose, scarcely knowing what we were doing. But we girded our garments about us and followed our angelic leader, while the prison gates, which had formerly shut us in, opened before us of their own accord and we found ourselves to be free and in broad daylight, too, although, for a time, we could scarcely realize those blessed facts! We saw what we had never seen before. We enjoyed what we had never even hoped to enjoy! Yes, as in an instant we possessed what we thought must forever be denied to us! We scarcely knew how to contain our joy, but we made our way, as fast as we could, to the house of Christ's disciples who had prayed for us. And how we gladdened them as we told them the story of God's delivering and enlightening Grace, and so showed forth the praises of Him who had called us out of darkness into His marvelous Light! Truly, it was marvelous Light to us at that time. Many day have passed since then with some of us, but it is still marvelous Light and, as we look upon it now, it is not any less marvelous than it was at the very first!

It is of that marvelous Light of God that I am going to speak—and as I tell of my own experience of it, I pray God to grant that some of you who have never known its power in your own souls, may be made to rejoice in it.

I. I have already touched upon the first point, of which I want now to speak somewhat more fully—that is, THIS LIGHT APPEARS MARVELOUS BECAUSE OF OUR FORMER DARKNESS.

Out of darkness, light comes not. Out of our dark nature no marvelous light ever shone. This Light came from above and how marvelous it was! Imagine, if you can, the condition of a man who has lived all his lifetime in a coal mine. Suppose he never had a brighter light than his flickering candle and then, after a while, to be brought up the shaft, and to see the brightness of the sun at mid-day. I can scarcely picture his amazement—you may fancy what it would be like, but you can hardly realize it. Or suppose a still worse case, that of one born blind who had heard of a thing called light, but who could never imagine what it was like till a skillful oculist took away the film that was blinding him and his eyes were opened so that he could perceive the light. It would be very difficult to describe all the emotions of one who had never enjoyed the light before, but, certainly, such a person would be full of wonder and amazement! It would be, indeed, marvelous light to him.

You who have never been converted, who never were regenerated, do not know any more about the Light of God than the man in the coal mine knows about the sun, or that man born blind knows about the light of day! Perhaps you talk a good deal about it and, possibly, you write about it and you form judgments about it. And they are just as wise, and just as accurate as the verdict of blind men would be concerning colors of which they have no conception! You say, sometimes, concerning the Gospel, "It is all nonsense! There is no such thing as the Light of the Truth of God"—just because you never saw any, which is a very poor method of argument! I once heard a man say, "I have lived in the world 60 years and I never had the apprehension of anything spiritual." When I looked at his face, and especially at his red nose, I thought that what he said was very likely to be true, but I did not, therefore, conclude that there was nothing spiritual because he had not seen it! Any blind man might say, "I have lived so many years, and I have never seen the sun, so there is not any," but you would not accept negative evidence of that sort.

So, my dear Friend, whenever you are going to speak about something which you do not know anything about, just keep silent and let somebody else talk who does know. If you never knew what it was to be converted—if you never felt the Divine Life go coursing through your soul—if you never had the Divine Light flashing in the midst of the darkness of your spirit, pray speak with bated breath if you speak at all! And when you are going to write one of those famous articles of yours, just say to yourself, "Perhaps I had better take some subject that I understand, for this I do not know, as I never had the Light." If you ever had received it, then you might comprehend something of the wondrous change which conversion makes in a man and you would agree with us that the Light of the Gospel is, indeed, marvelous Light!

II. Secondly, we perceive that it is marvelous Light WHEN WE CONSIDER ITS ORIGIN.

Our text tells us that it is God's Light—"who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous Light." What is God's Light? Can you imagine how that Light existed before He made the sun or the moon? Light

shone on this world before the sun and the moon were created, for light comes not from them except as God has stored it up in them, or continually supplies it to them. But there is always Light in God. He is the great Light-Creator, yet I never read that the light which God created in the world was called His marvelous light. God made the light, but it was not His Light, even then. There is another Light which is natural to Him—a Light of brightness and knowledge, clear and heavenly—a Light such as mortal man attains not unto except as the supreme gift of the Grace of God shall visit him. It is this Light which rests upon the people of God. There is a light which lights every man that comes into the world, but God's marvelous Light comes only to His chosen and gladdens only those whose eyes have learned to look to Jesus and who find their soul's confidence and salvation in Him who is the very Light of God.

"Oh," asks someone, "can a man have this Light? I do not believe it." Again I tell you, my Friend, that I did not expect you would believe it! He who has never had any experience of it may well doubt its existence. But he who has ever had the Light of God shining into his soul, is as conscious of becoming a new man—as conscious of seeing after another fashion than he ever saw before—as a blind man would be if his eyes were suddenly opened! I know that this world is not to me, now, the world that it once was. All things were then seen, if seen at all, as in a mist so thick that I took the transient to be the eternal and I highly prized trifles while I despised that which was most precious! I put light for darkness and darkness for light—bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter—for my foolish heart was darkened, but I knew it not. But, now, such a change has come to me that all things have become new and, in speaking of my own experience, I am also telling of the experience, not merely of some of you, but of hundreds of you upon whose hearts the Divine Light has come, changing all things around you! They are not what they seem to others, to be, for they are all now seen in the clear white Light of God, Himself, and you know even as you are known.

III. Thirdly, this is marvelous Light BECAUSE OF ITS EXCELLENCE OVER ALL OTHER LIGHT.

This Light, which God gives to His people, is far superior to the light which comes of education, or of meditation, or which can be produced by any human effort. When you have gone through a street lighted with electric light, I have no doubt you have smiled to see, side by side with it, the gas lamp with its little yellow attempt at showing that it could not shine. But how bright was the electric light at the side of it! Yet, if it is left to burn at mid-day, how dim it seems compared with the sun! And how the sun must smile at all our attempts to light up this world without him! Well, now, the best light that a man ever gets by his own unaided effort is no better than that of a candle, or, if you will, than flickering gaslight. But the Light of God—the marvelous Light of God, is the illumination caused by the Holy Spirit shining into the inmost recesses of the soul in full meridian splendor! It is the Light of God, and there is no other light that is like that! He who has but a spark of that Light may not know so much about some things as the worldly-wise man knows, but he

is well acquainted with many things to which the other man is an utter stranger!

Cowper said, as some of you may remember, when contrasting the infidel Voltaire with the poor, godly lace-maker, she—

"Just knows, and knows no more, her Bible true,
A truth the brilliant Frenchman never knew."

Perhaps you smile and think within yourself—"That is not knowing much." Ah, but to know the Bible to be true, to live in that Bible Truth and to have it all round about you, filling the air, filling your own soul, filling earth and Heaven with wondrous things that the spirit's eye can see—this is truly marvelous! He who sees even the most of this world has but the same sort of eyes that birds and beasts have—but he who knows his Bible to be true and who realizes the truth of it in his soul—has another set of eyes that can peer into another realm altogether. He sees spiritual things and around him there shines a Light which is, indeed, marvelous!

IV. Fourthly, this is marvelous Light BECAUSE OF WHAT IT REVEALS, for that man who has the Light of God shining in his soul sees that which is invisible.

"O utterer of paradoxes!" cries someone. Yes, but I cannot otherwise express the Truth. This illuminated man sees God, whom ordinary human eyes can never see. He looks back into the ages past and gone and he sees God making all the worlds that ever existed, while those who are reckoned as wise men, but who are without that Light of God, spin ingenious but worthless theories about how those worlds grew! These men have such wonderful theories that it really seems surprising that they do not, themselves, make a few worlds, since they profess to have found out so many ways of making them! But the opened eyes see "that the worlds were framed by the word of God," and it sees God's hand in all the histories of all the centuries—and it even sees God's hand in the things recorded in the newspaper that most startle us! The man who has his eyes opened sees Heaven and Hell, eternity and everlasting life. He sees them—not with dull optics, like these eyes of ours which, after all, do not really see, for it is the soul behind the eyes that really looks out through that window and perceives what is to be seen. But, in this marvelous Light of God, the soul sees without any optics and without any glass—it has flung away its telescope, for it has come so near the object upon which it is gazing that there is no need of any intervening medium! It walks and talks with the angels and, what is far better, it speaks with God Himself! This is indeed marvelous Light which has made us to see things that to ordinary mortal eyes are invisible!

And it is such marvelous Light because it enables us to see them so clearly. To the man who has this Light, God does not appear to be sitting like the heathen Jove is represented, upon a distant Olympus and sleeping while the world is troubled. He who lives in this marvelous Light sees God here, there, everywhere—within him, and about him, he feels the Presence of God! He has an immediate consciousness that God is with him. And, better still, such a man as that sees God to be reconciled by

the death of His Son. He sees God to be his Father, for he is made a partaker of the Divine Nature, "having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." It is, indeed, marvelous Light to see God that enables us thus!

A further characteristic of this Light is that it enables us to see right into the heart of things. By this world's light, you only see that such-and-such a thing *is*, you see the appearance it presents. But this Light lets you see into the innermost heart of truth and, what is still better, it brings the Truth of God right into your soul. By this Light, you not only see the Doctrine of Election, but you also know yourself to be elect! You see the great Truth of Redemption and you know yourself to be redeemed! By this Light, you see Regeneration and you feel the pulsing of the Life of God within your spirit and, though mortal eyes have not seen Heaven, neither have the ears of man heard its rapturous harmonies, nor has the true conception of Heaven entered into the heart of man, yet the Spirit of God brings Heaven down to us and raises us up to Heaven so that we sit among the heavenly in Christ Jesus and, "our conversation is in Heaven, from where we also look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." All this proves that it is a glorious Light of God, does it not?

The man who has not this Light, may believe there is a God. Yes, and he believes that there is a Cham of Tartary, but he does not care about him. He believes that there is a Heaven, but it never enters as a factor into his life to operate upon him. He believes that there is such a thing as sin and he says, "Oh, yes, yes, yes! We are all sinners, no doubt." But he who has this marvelous Light sees sin so as to tremble at it and to hate it. It is a present thing with him which he abhors! He also sees the atoning blood of Jesus and knows that by it he is cleansed from sin and he rejoices in this as a blessed matter of fact.

"Oh," says someone, "that is all fancy!" Of course it is only a matter of fancy to you! Did I not tell you so when I began my discourse? To a blind man, a picture by Kaphael or Titian is all fancy. You say to him, "How splendidly the colors are laid on there! Do you see that wonderful effect of light and shade?" But your wise blind man says, "I do not believe a word of it." Of course he does not! We cannot hope that he will do so all the while that he is blind and, in like manner, he who knows nothing of God's marvelous Light, will ask, "Who is he that bears witness concerning this strange thing?" "Well, Sir, he is one among a great number who have as much right to be believed as you have, for he is as honest a man as you are." Hundreds of us—thousands of us can bear witness concerning the phenomena of Divine Grace—the mysteries of the new creation—the putting into a man of a new life! And we have as much right to be believed as gentlemen who bear witness about the backbone of a fish and who would feel insulted if we said that they told us lies. We have never examined their fish, but we believe their testimony because we know they have studied the question of which they speak.

They have never looked into our inner life, but they have as good reason to believe our testimony as we have to believe theirs! And this is our witness—that there is such a thing as God's marvelous Light, that the

Light of Divine Grace has broken in upon our soul and brought us to see a new Heaven and a new earth, and to live in a new creation altogether, waiting for the time when Christ shall come to take our body, as He has already taken our soul, into that new world and make us perfect with Himself forever!

V. Fifthly, this Light is marvelous BECAUSE OF WHAT IT PRODUCES.

I have already shown you its marvelous character in that it reveals a new world to a man, a world he once despised—and it makes him value it and live worthy of it. Thus it produces a great change in that man, for it makes him love the things he once hated and hate the things he once loved. I heard someone say, "Take care of Number One, is a capital rule. Self-love is the first law of nature." But, when this marvelous Light breaks in upon a man, that law of nature ceases to operate and he says, "No, the first law of my new nature is that I should honor my God, that I should do that which is right, that which is just, that which is true, that which is loving, that which will be like the life of Jesus Christ my Lord." If you carefully watch that man, you will see him beginning to give up many of the pursuits that once delighted him. Perhaps you will say, "Poor man, he is denying himself," but he will answer, "No, I am not. I could not enjoy those things now. In fact, I hate them. They were very pleasurable to me once but, then, I was a blind man. Now that I can see, they give me no pleasure." Such a man, before his conversion, may have enjoyed a spicy song which had just a little touch of what should not have been in it. But, now, if he hears the sound of it in the street, he is ready to cover his ears, for he cannot bear it. "Sing us one of the songs of Zion," he says now—the very songs that he used to call "Methodist cant, Presbyterian hypocrisy," and all sorts of evil names! Now that he has the new life within him, there are new tastes developed.

If this were the proper time, I could tell some remarkable stories of marvelous changes that have been worked in some people whom I know. I am sure they would not recognize themselves if they were to meet their old selves as they were five years ago, or, if they did, they would cross the road and get on the other side of the street, so as not to come into contact with their old selves. They would say, "Thank you, no. I would rather not walk with you. You are not good company for me. I hoped you were dead and buried, and I never wanted to see you again. I am dead with Christ, I have been buried with Christ, I have risen from the dead in Him and I am a new creature in Him," This marvelous Light makes a wonderful change in a man's character! That is to say, if it really comes to him because, you know, there are some who go into the Enquiry Room and kneel down and cry a good deal—and all the good *that* can possibly do is to take away some of the superfluous fluid from the brain, for there is no heart in their repentance—it is mere excitement and nothing more.

But it is a very different thing to have the Light of God—to have the Holy Spirit really shed abroad in the heart. Do not any of you be satisfied with saying, "I am converted. Happy day!" Mind that you *are* converted. Be sure that it is heart-work, soul-work and that the Spirit of God has worked it—not the preacher—not an excited evangelist—not a book you

read—but that God Himself has come to you and made you a new creature in Christ Jesus, for, unless this is the case, I shall not be able to speak of the change as I have spoken, and which, to my intense joy, I have seen in hundreds, and in thousands who have passed from darkness to Light, and from the power of Satan into the Kingdom of Christ.

One change that always takes place as the result of receiving this Light is great joy. The joy is not always as great in all to whom the Light comes but, still, it does bring great joy wherever it shines. Talk of true happiness—it is nowhere to be discovered till the eternal Light breaks in upon the mind and heart! And then, Heaven has begun below! Some of us have our full share of pain of body and depression of spirit, yet, in our worst moments, we would not change places with the happiest worldling that lives! Not even when most depressed and weary would we exchange our position, even for a minute, for that of the greatest emperor in the world who does not know that Inner Light. I can truly say, and so can many of you—

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

VI. Lastly, it is marvelous Light BECAUSE IT WILL NEVER GO OUT.

As it is the Light of God, the devil cannot blow it out. If all the devils in Hell were to try to blow out one single spark that is in a true Believer's heart, they might puff till they died of puffing, but they would never put that spark out! God has lit it and they cannot quench it. Our Lord Jesus Christ 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." "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." If you do not keep this everlasting life, it is quite clear that you never had it. If you really have eternal life—it must be eternal life—and it shall abide with you forever.

But, what is better, not only shall you never lose it, but it will continually increase! If you have God's marvelous Light, though it seems only like starlight now, it will soon be like moonlight. Then it will be daylight and soon it will be noontide, for, to whomever God has given a little of this Divine Light, more is sure to follow, for the Light of God, which is given to us by the Holy Spirit, is the very Light of Heaven—it has only to be fully developed! You have all the elements of eternal happiness within your own spirit if the Holy Spirit has truly enlightened you and made your character like that of the Lord Jesus Christ. As to death—well, at the moment of death, you will leave your body behind and you will leave with it all tendency to sin! The root of eternal blessedness is in you, now, if the Lord has really looked upon you in love and you have looked to Christ by faith. You have the plant of Grace springing up! Some of you have leaves and buds, so all that will happen to you in Heaven is that the buds will open and the flower will be perfected—but it is all there right now. Christ said, "I give"—not, "I *will* give"—but, "I give unto My sheep

eternal life." You have eternal life if you believe in Him—the same life that will develop in Glory is in you now!

"I did not know that," says someone. Well, did you think that you were going to be born-again a second time? That can never be! To be born-again is mentioned in Scripture, but to be born-again, and again—I never read of that in the Word of God though I have heard certain people talk about falling from Grace and being restored—as if they could be born-again, and again, and again, and again, no end of times! But there is nothing like that in the Bible. The great change takes place once and that change is final. If you are born-again, you receive the life that you will live in Heaven. Just think of this! Christ has gone to Heaven to prepare a place for you, but He has left within your bosoms, now, the life that is to be in Heaven! Pray God to develop that life—entreat the Lord to increase it. Think a great deal of it. Value it highly. Suffer not your body, which is its temple, to be dishonored by sin. God dwells in you—the Divine Life is within you—so, I beseech you, live as those should live who are not only heirs of Heaven, but who have the life of Heaven already abiding in their hearts! Come, my Brothers and Sisters, let us rejoice and be glad as we thus think of this marvelous Light which is to be our Light forever and ever, for, up there, the Lord God gives them Light and He gives Light to us even now! And it is His Light and there cannot be any Light better than His! So, in it let us rejoice and magnify His name.

I wish that some here who have not this Light, could be set a-longing for it. Mr. Bunyan says that even if we do not invite the sinner to come to Christ, if we spread a good table before him, it makes his mouth water—and that is the next best thing to an invitation! Does any poor soul begin to say, "I do not know anything about that Light. I am not going to deny that it may exist, but I would be a fool if I were to go upon negative evidence. I wish I did know"? Well, you may know! Do your soul this piece of justice—go and pray to God to make you know it. Go and bow before Him and say, "Lord, if You do, indeed, reveal Yourself to men by your Spirit in Christ Jesus, reveal Yourself to me." He will hear you, I am sure of that. Even if He did not, there would be this reflection on your mind, that, having listened to the testimony of one who has no motive for deceiving you, you have at least given enough credence to it to try it and test it. And you will feel all the easier in your mind even if the experiment should fail.

But it will not fail, for never did a soul, in honest, guileless heartiness, seek the Light and love of God, and seek in vain! And nor will you! Go, then, to God through Jesus Christ, and this marvelous Light shall break in upon you. God grant it, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 PETER 2.

Verses 1-3. *Therefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speaking, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby: if indeed you have*

tasted that the Lord is gracious. When the Apostle describes us under the character of "newborn babes," he would have us lay aside all that is inconsistent with that character. Newborn children have no malice. They have no guile or craftiness; they have no hypocrisies, nor envies, nor evil-speaking. They are clear from all these evils. Would God we were as clear as they are! It would be better to be infants, not speaking at all, than to be among those who speak evil. It would be better to begin life over again than to live long enough to have gained a treasure of malice and a hoard of cunning—and to have learned the tricks of hypocrisy. Let us be as simple as little children, as guileless, as harmless, as free from anything like unkindness as newborn babes are. And inasmuch as we are to follow them in what they have not, let us also imitate them in what they have. Let us desire ardently, as for our very life, the unadulterated milk of the Word. Let us cultivate that combination of hunger and thirst which is found in a little child, that we may hunger and thirst thus after God's Word. We have done more than taste the Word—we have tasted that the Lord Himself is gracious. Let us long to feast more and more upon this Divine food, that we may grow thereby.

4. *To whom coming.* That is, to the Lord. We are always to be coming unto Him. We began our spiritual life by coming to Jesus, and we are to continue coming to Him. "To whom coming."

4. *As unto a living stone.* We are to settle down on Him as the stones of a building settle down upon the foundation. "To whom coming, as unto a living stone."

4. *Disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious.* Christ always was disallowed of men and He always will be, until the great consummation of all things. Some disown Him in one way, some in another. Some boldly blaspheme Him with something like honesty. Others pretend to be His ministers, yet all the while are undermining the Gospel which He lived and died to preach. It matters little that Christ is "disallowed, indeed, of men," for He is "chosen of God, and precious."

6. *You also, as lively stones.* Or, *living* stones.

6. *Are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.* You must have noticed, in reading the New Testament, that you never find the officers of a Church called priests. Whenever that term is used by way of illustration, it is applied to all the people of God. They are all priests but, under the Christian dispensation, there is no set of men who have any right to take that title above their fellow Believers. All those who believe in Jesus Christ are priests, everyone of them as much as all the others and the assumption of priesthood under the Christian dispensation is most truly the repetition of the sin of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, though the men who commit it usually try to lay the guilt of that sin at the doors of other people.

We ministers are no more priests than all of you who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are. We shake our skirts at the very thought of such wickedness and cry, "God forbid that we should, with unhallowed hands, try to steal away from God's people what is the right and prerogative of them all!" "You also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an

holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

6. *Therefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious: and he that believes on Him shall not be confounded.* Put all your trust in Jesus, for you will never have cause to regret doing so! The text in the Old Testament, from which Peter quoted, says, "He that believes shall not make haste." He shall not need to be in a hurry, he shall enjoy the holy leisure which springs from a quiet confidence where confidence ought to be placed. O Beloved, stay yourselves on Christ! Rest your whole weight on Him, for then, "you shall not be confounded."

7. *Unto you therefore who believe He is precious.* "He is an honor—He is your honor, your glory, your boast." It is an honorable thing to be a Believer in a Lord so glorious as He is—in a Gospel so reasonable as His Gospel is, in promises so certain of fulfillment as His promises are—in an Atonement so effectual as His Atonement is, and in a Master so Omnipotent as He is! "Unto you therefore who believe He is an honor."

7, 8. *But unto them which are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.* This is the distinguishing mark between God's chosen people and the rest of mankind. His elect receive Christ and rejoice in Him—but as for the ungodly, they willfully reject the Savior and so He becomes to them "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." Christ is the great Touchstone of humanity—by contact with Him, the precious are discovered and the vile are discerned,

9, 10. *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous Light: who in time past were not a people.* Who were you and what were your ancestors when the Apostle wrote these words? Our forefathers were, in Peter's day, uncivilized and barbarous tribes at the utmost end of Rome's dominions. We "were not a people."

10, 11. *But are now the people of God: who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.* Dearly Beloved, I beseech you us strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul! If you are priests—as you are if you are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ—take care that you are clean before God! Let no impurity stain your body, for sin committed by the body grievously fouls the spirit and defiles the heart! "Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul."

12. *Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, when they speak against you as evildoers.* As they are sure to do, for none are so certain to be slandered as the pure. And the more clean you are in God's sight, the more will you excite the animosity of ungodly men—and they will show it by slandering you—"that, when they speak against you as evildoers."

12-14. *They may, by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man*

for the Lord's sake: whether it is to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. True Christians give no trouble in the State. They are not law-breakers, but they strive to do that which is honest and upright. Where the laws are not righteous, they may cause trouble to bad law-givers and lawmakers, but when rulers ordain that which is just and righteous, they find that Christians are their best subjects.

15, 16. *For so is the will of God, that with well doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free*—What a grand word that is, "as free"! Byron wrote—

"He is the free man whom the truth makes free,
And all are slaves besides."

But we may alter that, and say, "He is the true free man whom His Lord makes free." "As free"—

16, 17. *And not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honor all men. Love the brotherhood: Fear God. Honor the king.* A great deal of stress is sometimes laid upon that last precept, and I would lay just as much emphasis upon it as the Scripture does! But also recollect the earlier command—"Honor all men"—

"A man's a man for all that."

Whatever his condition may be, honor the manhood that is in him. Do not despise him because he is poor, or because his coat is not so fashionably cut as yours is, for, perhaps, he may be a better man than you are. "Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king."

18-26. *Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle but also to the harsh. For this is commendable, if a man for conscience toward God, endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if when you are buffeted for your faults, you shall take it patiently? But if, when you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For to this you were called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judges righteously: who His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes you were healed. For you were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—170, 465, 257.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, 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 SLUGGARD'S REPROOF
NO. 2766

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A THURSDAY EVENING, DURING THE WINTER OF 1859.

"The sluggard will not plow because of the cold;
therefore shall he beg in harvest and have nothing."
Proverbs 20:4.

LAZINESS is the crying sin of Eastern nations. I believe that the peculiar genius of the Anglo-Saxon character prevents our being, as a nation, guilty of that sin. Perhaps we have many other vices more rife in our midst than that, but, in the East, almost every man is a lazy man. If you tell a Turk in Constantinople that his street is filthy—and it certainly is, for there the offal lies and is never swept away—he says, sitting with his legs crossed, and smoking his pipe, "The Lord wills it." If you tell him there is a fire at the bottom of the street, he does not agitate himself, but he says, "God wills it." If you were to tell him that he was sitting on a heap of gunpowder and that he had better take heed lest a spark should blow him up, probably he would never move, or take his pipe out of his mouth, except to say, "God wills it." Some of the most extraordinary instances of idleness are told us of those people by travelers in the East to this day. The further you go East, the less activity there is—the further you go West in the world, the more restless does the human mind become and, consequently, I suppose, the more active.

Yet, while the fact of the superabundance of idleness in the East is a great explanation of the reason why Solomon speaks so much against it in the Proverbs—and seeing that this Book was meant to be read, not only in the East, but everywhere else—I fear that there must also be some laziness in the West and, as this Book was meant to be read in England, I should imagine there must be a few sluggards in England! And this happens to be not a matter of imagination with me at all, for I know there are many such. You can brush against them at the corners of our streets. There are to be found many such who are slothful in business, who certainly are not worth their salt, who do not earn a livelihood for themselves even with regard to the things of this life. There are still far too many to whom the familiar lines of Dr. Watts may be applied—

"'Tis the voice of the sluggard; I heard him complain,
'You have waked me too soon, I must slumber again."

It sometimes happens, too, that these idle people are religious people, or profess to be so, though I have no faith in that man's religion who is lazy. He always reminds me of a certain monk who went to a monastery

determined to give himself up entirely to contemplation and meditation. When he reached the place, he saw all the monks at work, tilling the ground, plowing, or trimming the vines around the monastery, so he very solemnly observed as he entered, "Labor not for the meat that perishes." The brothers smiled and continued in their labors. He thought it his duty to reprove them a second time by saying, "Martha is cumbered with much serving, but I have chosen the good part, which shall not be taken from me." However, it *was* taken from him, for the bell did not ring for him at the usual time for meals and our brother, after waiting some few hours in his cell in prayer, beginning to feel certain calls within, came out and, accosting the prior of the monastery, enquired, "Do not the brethren eat?" "Do you eat?" he asked. "I thought you were a spiritual man, for you said to the brethren, "Labor not for the meat that perishes." "Oh, yes," he replied, "I know I said that, but I thought the brethren ate." "Yes," answered the prior, "so they do, but we have a rule in our monastery that none eat but those who work. There is such a rule to be found in Scripture, too," he reminded the monk, "Paul himself has said it, "If any man will not work, neither will he eat." I think the master of that monastery acted and spoke wisely. A man must work in this life. He was sent to this world that he might be diligent in his calling, in the position in life in which God has been pleased to place him.

However, I do not intend to treat now of this phase of the subject. I am about to direct your attention to spiritual things. I am no legalist—I know that the works of the Law of God can save no man, for, "by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified." I know that the work of salvation is by Grace, alone, and that all our good works are not our own, but are worked in us by Divine Grace, yet, at the same time, I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that, although Scripture continually denies that salvation is by works, it always speaks of the work of Grace in the heart of man and of the experience of the Believer as being a hard work! For, do we not continually hear the Christian described as a pilgrim, as one who is on a long and a weary journey? He is described, not as a gentleman who is carried on other men's backs, or who is borne along in a vehicle, but as a pilgrim who has to toil along the road—and he is told not to be weary and faint in his mind. He is warned that the road will be very rough and very long and that he will have to run with endurance the race that is set before him. The very use of such a figure as that does not look as if religion were a lazy thing!

Then, again, we find religion described as a battle. The Christian is continually exhorted to take unto himself the whole armor of God and to fight the good fight of faith. He is told to resist even unto blood, striving against sin. That does not look as if it were a very easy thing to be a Christian—as if Christianity were a kind of thing to be kept in a bandbox. It looks as if there were something to be done, some foe to fight, some great task to be accomplished. When I also find another figure used, which is, perhaps, yet more forcible, because it combines the idea of pressing forward with that of fighting—when I find the figure of *agonizing* used—"Agonize to enter in at the strait gate." Press, push, labor,

strive, toil—I cannot imagine that to be a Christian is to be an idler or a sluggard! No, my Brothers and Sisters, though salvation is not by our works, yet, as sure as ever the Lord puts Divine Life into us, we shall begin to labor for the meat that endures to eternal life, we shall strive to enter in at the strait gate, we shall run perseveringly the race that is set before us and we shall endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ!

Now it is just this point in religion that many men do not like. They prefer an easy religion—flowery meads, flowing streams and sunny glades—all those things they like, but they do not like the climbing of mountains, or the swimming of rivers, or going through fires, or fighting, struggling and wrestling. They go along the pilgrim's way till they come to some slough and then they are offended. When it was all clean walking, they did not mind, but when they tumble into the bog, and begin to dirty themselves, they straightway creep out on that side of the slough that is nearest to their own house and—like Mr. Pliable in "The Pilgrim's Progress," of whom you have often heard—they go back to their house in the City of Destruction. They went on the right road for a little while, but they found that religion was not as easy a thing as they expected and, therefore, they turned back.

Now, it is of these people I am going to talk. "The sluggard will not plow because of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest and have nothing." When I have spoken about him, I shall talk a little to those of you who are plowing in God's field, exhorting you not to make excuses, not to be dilatory in your Master's service—but to plow all the harder the colder it is—because the day is coming when a joyful harvest shall reward all your pains!

I. First, I am going to speak of THIS SLUGGARD.

Plowing is hard work and the sluggard does not like it. If he does go up and down the field once or twice, he makes a short turn of it and leaves a wide headland. And, moreover, he leans on the handle of his plow and, therefore, the plow does not go in very deep—not so deep as it would if he were to do as the active plowman does—hold the handles up in order that the plow may go deeply into the soil. But he goes nodding along, half-dragged by his horses and glad to do nothing. He would be very pleased, indeed, if his feet would go without being moved and if the clods would but move one another and lift his feet up for him, so that he might not have the trouble of carrying himself after his plow! But the lazy man knows that he will be laughed at if he says plowing is hard work, so he does not like to say that. "I must get a better excuse," he thinks, so he says, "It is so cold! It is so cold! I would not mind going out to plow, but I am frozen almost to death. I shall get frostbite—I have not clothes enough to keep me warm! Oh, how the snow comes down! The ponds are all frozen, the ground is so hard—the plow will get broken—it is so cold!"

Lazy fellow! Why don't you say that plowing is hard work? That is the English of it! But no, he must have a more genteel excuse that he may not be so likely to be laughed at. Suppose it were not cold? Do you know what he would say? "Oh, it is so hot! I cannot plow! The perspiration runs down my cheeks. You wouldn't have me plowing in this hot weath-

er, would you?" Supposing it were neither hot nor cold? Why, then he would say, "I believe that it's going to rain!" And if it didn't rain, he would say the ground was too dry—for he holds a bad excuse is better than none and, therefore, he will keep on making excuses to the end of the chapter! He will do anything rather than go and do the work he does not like—that is, plowing.

Now I have made you smile. I wish I could make you cry because there will be more to cry about than to smile at in this matter when I come to show you that this is *spiritually* the case with many. There are men and women who would like to go to Heaven without having any trouble. They want to enjoy the harvest, but they do not like the labor of plowing. They have not the common honesty to say, "I do not like religion." What do you suppose they say? Why, they make another excuse! Sometimes it is this, "Well, I am as anxious as anybody to be a Christian, but, you know, these are such hard times." Hard times? The times are always hard to such people as you are! "But in these times," they say, "there is no warmth in Christians—they are all so cold-hearted. Why, I go up to the Chapel and nobody speaks to me! There is not one-half the religion that there used to be and what there is, is not half as good as it once was. The article is depreciated. Now, if I lived over in Ireland, then I would plow! If I lived over where there is the Revival, you know I would be a saint! Or if I had lived in the Apostle Paul's days and heard such a preacher as that, or if I could have talked to those early Christians, I would not object to be a Christian! But these are such cold-hearted times—so many hypocrites and so few Christians—I don't think I shall trouble about religion at all."

Ah, that is a pretty excuse, for you know that what you are saying is a lie! In the first place, you know that there is life in Christ's Church even now and that there are still (if you would but look) a few good, loving, warm-hearted Christians to be found. You know that there are still faithful preachers left. The faithful have not failed from among men and although hypocrites are plentiful, there are still many sincere souls. And what if there were not? What business is that of yours? Are you content to be lost because the Church is not what it ought to be? Just look at the matter in that light. Because there are a great many hypocrites, you have made up your mind to go to Hell? Is that the English of it? Because there are such multitudes going there, you think you will go, too, and keep them company? Is that what you mean?

"No," you say, "not that!" That *is* it, Mr. Sluggard, though you don't like to say so. It is a bad excuse you have made. It won't hold water and you know it won't! You know very well that when your conscience speaks, it tells you that this excuse is a bad one. It is one that will not satisfy you when you are lying on your dying bed and, above all, it is one that will vanish in the Day of Judgment, just as the mists vanish before the rising sun! What business can it be of yours what the Church is or what the Church isn't? If you will not think about the things of God in these times, neither would you in the best of times—and if the present agency is not blessed to you, neither would you be converted though one rose from the dead!

"But," says Mr. Sluggard, "if that is not a good excuse, I will give another. It is all very well for you, Mr. Minister, to talk about being religious, but you don't knew where I live. You don't know my business and the sort of shop mates I work with. You know very well it is a hard matter for me to hold my own as it is, with merely going to a place of worship, but if I were really to throw all my heart into it, I would have them all down upon me. I tell you, Sir, my business is such that I could not carry it on, and yet be a Christian." Then, Mr. Sluggard, if it is a business that you cannot carry on without going to Hell with it—give it up, Sir! "Ah, but then, Sir, we must live!" Yes, Sir, but then we must die! Will you please remember that, for that seems to me to be a great deal more of a necessity. Sometimes, when people say to me, "Why, you know we must live," I do not see any necessity for that. Some of them would be almost as well dead as alive. "But we must live." I am not sure of that. I am sure of another thing—you must die. Oh, that you would think rather of dying than of living! Besides, it is all nonsense about your business being one that you cannot carry on and be a Christian. I tell you, Sir, there is no business that is a legitimate one, which a man cannot carry on and adorn his Master in it! Or, if there is such a business, come out of it as you would out of the burning city of Sodom!

"But then I am in such an ungodly household, Sir! I am so laughed at." Yes, Sir, but if somebody were to leave you a thousand pounds on condition that you wore a red ribbon round your arm—you know you would be laughed at if you did! Or suppose the condition was that you were to wear a fool's-cap for a week and you would have a thousand pounds a year for life, afterwards—would you not wear it? Ah, I should not like to trust you. I believe you would put it on and when people laughed, you would say, "You may laugh, but I am well rewarded for it." Yet here your soul is at stake—and a little laughter, you say, drives you back? I do not believe you, Sir! I do not think you are such a fool as that, to be laughed into Hell—for you cannot be laughed out again by all their laughter! I believe your second excuse is as bad as your first one! I shatter it into a thousand pieces! The fact is, Sir, you don't like religion—and that is the truth! You don't want to give up your sins! You are willing to continue to be what you are—a sinner dead in trespasses and sins. That is the plain, simple English of it and all the excuses you can make will not alter it!

"No," says one, "but it is such a hard thing to be a Christian. Very often, when I hear the preacher saying what manner of persons we ought to be, I think, 'Ah, I had better not set out, for I shall never go all the way. When I hear of the trials, temptations and troubles of the child of God, I think I will not go.'" There you are again, Mr. Sluggard, you will not plow because of the cold! But do you not remember what has been so often impressed upon your mind—though we have many troubles and many trials, yet Grace is all-sufficient for us? Do you not know that, though the way is long, yet our shoes are iron and brass? And though the work is hard, yet Omnipotence has promised to give us strength all-sufficient? You only look at one side of the subject, and not at the other.

Why not think for a moment on that Grace of God which guarantees to assist and to carry through all in whom it begins the good work? Sir, your excuse is an idle one! I tell you again that the naked truth is this—you love your sins—you love them better than Heaven, better than eternal life and that you are a lazy fellow! You do not like prayer, nor faith, nor repentance—and I warn you that your fate will be that of this sluggard who begged in harvest and had nothing!

Someone else says, "I have no time, I have not indeed." Time for what, Sir? What do you mean? "Why, I have no time to pray an hour in the morning!" Who said you had? "But I have no time to be attending to religion all the day long." Who asked you to do so, Sir? I suppose you find time for pleasure—perhaps you find time for what you call recreation and the like. There are many precious portions of time that you sweep away and never use. Where there's a will, there's a way, and if the Holy Spirit has made you love religion and the things of God, you will find time enough. That is a worse excuse than any other, for God has given you the time, and if you have not got it, you have lost it! Look for it, for you will be accountable for it at the Last Great Day. You have been hiding your talent in a napkin and now you say you cannot find it! You had it, Sir—where it is, is your business, not mine. Look for it and God help you to shake off your sloth! And may you in earnest be constrained by the Holy Spirit to be a Christian and to espouse the life of the pilgrim—and run with diligence the race that is set before you!

I have thus tried to describe the sluggard as the man who would not plow because of the cold—the man who would like to be a Christian, only he does not like the Cross—who would like to get to Heaven, only he does not like the road to there. He would be saved, but, oh, he cannot give up his sin, he cannot live in holiness. He would like to be crowned conqueror, but he does not like to fight the battle. He would like to reap a harvest, but he neither cares to plow nor to sow. Mr. Sluggard, I have three little sayings to repeat to you. Will you try to treasure them up? No pains, no gains. No sweat, no sweet. No mill, no meal. Will you just remember those three things? I will tell you again, lest you should forget them. No pains, no gains! No sweat, no sweet! No mill, no meal! So just get up, Sir, and may God grant that you may get up to some purpose! "Awake" you that sleep, and arise from the dead and Christ shall give you light." "Let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober."

But, Mr. Sluggard, this life is the time of plowing and sowing. It is wintertime with us now—but wait a while and the springtime shall come, and after that the harvest! There are some of us who are longing for the time when we shall reap the golden harvest—the harvest given to us by Divine Grace, but yet a harvest for which we have sown the seed, as Hosea beautifully puts it—"Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy." We sow in righteousness, but the harvest is not given us as the *effect of righteousness*, it is given us by mercy! Reap in mercy! What a joyous day that will be when God's true sowers shall reap their harvests! The angels shall be with us! They shall cry harvest home with us and

men and angels, hand in hand, shall enter the gates of Paradise, bringing their sheaves with them!

Where's our friend the sluggard? Oh, there he is! Is he cold now? No, but how different he looks! He looked to me quite a smart gentleman when he was sitting by the fire last winter, rubbing his hands and saying that he would not plow. What does he look like now? What is his disembodied spirit like? Alas, poor wretch, he is begging! The saints are shouting, but he is moaning. They are rejoicing, but he is sorrowing. They are taken into Heaven and housed in the Lord's garner, but he is a houseless wanderer, begging! Look at him! He has just gone up to the great golden gate and he has lifted that knocker of pearl—listen to the noise—and he cries, "Lord, Lord, I have eaten and I have drunk in Your Presence!" Just like you, Mr. Sluggard, you are all for eating and drinking—"and You have taught in our streets"—very likely, Sir! You are just the man to be taught, but you never did anything that you were taught to do! Do you hear the terrible words of the loving Jesus, "I never knew you! Depart from Me, you worker of iniquity"? The golden gate does not open to him. He is still begging, but the answer comes, "Your time of sowing you neglected and now your time of reaping must be a time of beggary forever."

Now he goes up to yonder angel and he cries, "Bright spirit, introduce me to the courts of Heaven! It is true, I wasted my time on earth, but, oh, how bitterly do I repent it now! Oh, if I could but have back my wasted hours, what would I not do? If I could but hear the Gospel preached again, I would hear it with both my ears and I am sure I would receive it and be obedient to it." But the angel says, "I have no power to let you in. Besides, if I could, I would not. You had your day and it is gone—and now you have your night. You had your lamp, but you did not trim it. You took no care to have oil in your vessel for your lamp—and now your lamp is gone out and the Bridegroom's door is shut and you cannot enter." Now I see him and he is very sad, indeed—begging of a saint who has just come up, and saying to him, "Give me of your oil, for my lamp is gone out." But the other replies, "Not so, for there is not enough for me and for you. God has given me Grace for myself, but I have none to spare for anybody else."

I remember a mother's dream—a mother who once, after having exhorted her children and talked, prayed and wrestled with them, retired to rest. And she dreamt, at the Day of Judgment, she and her children arose from the family tomb. The trumpet was rending the air with its terrific blast and there she was—"saved!" But her children still unregenerate. She dreamt that they clasped her round the waist, clung to her garments and cried, "Mother, save us! Take us into Heaven with you!" But she dreamt that a spirit came—some bright angel—dashed them from her and wafted her aloft to Heaven, while they were left. And she remembered, too, in that dream, that she then had no care for them, no thought for them—her spirit was so swallowed up with the one thought that God was dealing justly with them—that they had had their day for sowing and that they had not sowed—and now must not expect a harv-

est. The Justice of God so filled her breast that she could not even weep for them when she was taken from them!

Ah, sluggard, you will be begging in another world! And though you will not think of your soul's concerns now, you will think of them then! There is a place where there is a dreadful prayer meeting every day and every hour in the day—a prayer meeting where all the attendants pray—not merely one, but all! And they pray, too, with sighs, and groans, and tears—and yet they are never heard. That prayer meeting is in Hell! There is a begging meeting there, indeed. Oh, that there were on earth half the prayer there will be there! Oh, that the tears shed in eternity had but been shed in time! Oh, that the agony that the lost ones now feel had but been felt beforehand! Oh, that they had repented before their life was ended! Oh, that their hearts had been made tender before the terrible fire of Judgment had melted them!

But notice that though the sluggard begs in harvest, he gets nothing. Now, in harvest time, when everything is plentiful, every man is generous. If a man sees a beggar in the streets in harvest time, he will refuse him nothing. He may go and glean in the field, for there is enough and to spare for all. It is a season of abundance! No man grudges his poor fellow man then. But here is the terrible point, in that last harvest, when the slothful man shall beg for bread, no man will give him anything. I see him standing at the gate of Heaven and he looks in. There they are feasting and he says, "Give me a crumb—a crumb is all I ask! Let me have what the dogs have that feed under their masters' table." But it is denied him. There he is, in the flames of Hell, and he cries, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue," but it is refused him. He begs in harvest and he has nothing! The begging becomes all the more terrible because its results are so disappointing. "And to think that others should have so much, yet I myself should have nothing—others be blessed, but myself cursed," he laments.

I do think that one of the stings of Hell will be for the sinner to see some of his own relatives and friends in Heaven and himself shut out. Think, my dear Hearer, what you will feel if you should see your wife in Paradise and yourself be eternally excluded! Mother, what if you should see those babies of yours, those precious infants who took an early flight to Heaven—what if you should see them above, but between you and them a great gulf fixed so that you can never reach them—you are shut out and they are glorified? Turn that thought over, I beseech you, and may God grant Grace to every one of you, that, by the love of Christ, you may be constrained to escape from Hell and fly to Heaven, for thus said the Lord unto you, "Escape, flee for your life, look not behind you, stay not in all the plain, but flee to the mountain of Christ Jesus—lest you be consumed."

Be wise today, O Sinner—tomorrow may never come! Now, now, repent! Now cast your soul on Christ! Now give up your sins! Now may the Spirit help you to begin a new life and to be in earnest about salvation for, remember, though you laughed when I described the sluggard just

now, it will be no laughing matter if you are found in his hot shoes at the Day of Judgment—if his rags shall be on you and his begging shall be your everlasting portion! God grant that you may have done with your idle excuses! May you truly look at the matter as in the light of the Day of Judgment and God grant you Grace so to act that from this time on you may be found among the most diligent, the most fervent and the most anxious of the followers of Christ! May you be found plowing every day with a plow drawn by a Superior Power, but a plow which shall enter into the world and leave some furrow of usefulness behind it, so that, in the day of harvest, you may have your portion and not, like the sluggard, beg and have nothing!

II. Well, now, having thus addressed the sluggard, I have a few minutes to spare in which to address THE PEOPLE OF GOD. And, knowing you to be by far the larger portion of those whom I address, I am sorry that I have so little time for you, but can only make just these few remarks.

My dear Brothers and Sisters, the Lord has, by His Sovereign Grace, set our hand to the plow. We once, like our poor fellow sinners, hated this plow and we never would have come to it unless Sovereign Grace had brought us. Now we have shaken off that old sloth of ours and we are in earnest about the matter of salvation. But do we not, at times, feel this old sluggishness creeping on us? When we are asked to do something for the cause of Christ, do we not make excuses? There is a Brother over yonder—he ought to join the Church, but he does not, and his excuse is a very stupid one! I will not tell you what it is. There is another Brother—never mind who it is—the man the cap fits, let him wear it till it is worn out—and may it be worn out soon! He ought to teach in the Sunday school, he lives quite conveniently, but he does not like the school. There is another Brother—he ought to be doing something or other, but he says that, really, his position is, just now, such that he does not see that he can. The fact is, it is cold, my Brothers, and you don't want to plow!

Now, remember, those are always coldest that do not plow, for those that plow get warm. I have always noticed that the people in a Church who quarrel are the idle ones. Those that do nothing always grumble. They say, "Ah, there is no love in the Church"—because YOU haven't any! "Ah," you say, "but they don't speak to one another." You mean *you* don't speak to them. "No," says one, "but they are not active." You mean *you* are not active, for that which you think they are, depend upon it, you are yourselves, for we mostly see ourselves in other people. The idea we get of others is close upon the heels of the idea we ought to have of ourselves, except when it is a good notion—and then the less we indulge the thought as being a picture of ourselves, the better!

But whenever this sluggishness creeps upon you, I want you to think of One whom you love, who will be an example to you. Now, who do you suppose it is to whom I am about to direct your eyes if you begin to be weary and faint in your minds? Ah, it is not to a deacon of the Church, or to a minister! It is not to some renowned preacher of the olden time—

yes, it is—I have made a mistake there—it *is* to a renowned Preacher of the olden time—One whom you love! Whenever you feel faint and weary, will you think of One who plowed more than you ever can plow, and deeper furrows, too, and plowed more terrible plowing, on a harder rock and a more terrible soil than you have to plow upon? Whenever you are weary and faint in your minds, consider Him! "And who is that?" you ask. Why, you know, it is your Lord and Master, Jesus Christ! Whenever sloth creeps on you and you begin to lean on the plow handles—and the devil whispers, "Look back"—do not look back! Look UP and see Him—the Crucified One—and you will no longer be weary, I am sure.

Myconius, the friend of Luther, had made up his mind that he would not help Luther, but that he would stay in a monastery, quiet and alone. The first night he went there, he had a dream to this effect. He dreamed that the Crucified One appeared to him—with the nail prints still in His hands, and that He led him away to a fountain into which He plunged him—a fountain of blood! He beheld himself washed completely clean and, being very rejoiced for that, he was willing to sit down. But the Crucified One said, "Follow Me." He took him to the top of a hill and down beneath there was a wide-spreading harvest. He put a sickle into his hand and He said, "Go and reap." He looked round him and he replied, "But the fields are so vast, I cannot reap them." The finger of the Crucified One pointed to a spot where there was one reaper at work—and that one reaper seemed to be mowing whole acres at once! He seemed to be a very giant, taking enormous strides. It was Martin Luther. "Stand by his side," said the Crucified One, "and work." He did so and they reaped all day. The sweat stood upon his brow and he rested for a moment. He was about to lie down when the Crucified One came to him and said, "For the love of souls, and for My sake, go on."

He snatched up the sickle, again, and on he worked! And at last he grew weary once more. Then the Crucified One came to him, again, and said, "For the love of souls, and for My sake, go on." And he went on. But once he dared to pause and say, "But, Master, the winter is coming and much of this good wheat will be spoiled." "No," said He, "reap on. It will all be gathered in before the winter comes—every sheaf. I will send more laborers into the harvest, only do your best." So now, I think, the Crucified One takes me to the brow of that hill, and yourselves with me, and shows us this great London, and says, "Look, this great field is ripe for the harvest, take your sickles and reap it." You say, "Lord, I cannot." "No," says He, "but for the love of souls, and for the sake of the Crucified One, go on and reap."

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, I beseech you, cease not from your labor! Be more diligent than you have ever been! Think more of Christ and that will nerve you to duty and remove all sense of weariness! And if this suffices not, remember, Brothers and Sisters, it may be hard plowing—it may be true that this is a frozen time, that the winter is very sharp upon Christ's Church—but let us plow on very hard, for the harvest will pay for all. Why, I can say that the harvest I have reaped already pays me for all my labors ten thousand times told! When I have grasped the hand of some

poor woman who has been saved from sin through my ministry, I have felt it were worthwhile to die to snatch that one soul from Hell!

Ah, it is a blessed harvest that God gives us here, but what a harvest will that be when we shall see all the saved souls gathered above—when we shall see the face of Christ and lay our crowns at His feet! Then look, labor, hope! An hour with your God will make up for all you may endure here. Oh, may God the Holy Spirit fill you with energy, give you fresh strength and may you, all of you, begin to plow straighter, deeper, longer furrows than you ever made before! Never look back, never take your hand from the plow, for in due season you shall reap if you faint not. Keep at it and be not like the sluggard who would not plow because of the cold—who shall beg in harvest, and have nothing.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
TITUS 3.

Verse 1. *Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work.* You see, they were a rough, wild, rebellious people in Crete, and Christianity came to civilize, to sober, to sanctify, to save.

2. *To speak evil of no man.* Oh, how necessary is this exhortation even to this day!

2. *To be no brawler, but gentle, showing all meekness, unto all men.* Meekness and gentleness are two of the ornaments of our faith. I would that some professed Christians would understand that unholy contentiousness is not after the mind of Christ. It is not according to that gracious command, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart and you shall find rest unto your souls." No, the Christian must be willing to suffer wrongfully and to bear it in patience. He is never to be one who renders evil for evil, or railing for railing.

3. *For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish.* Well, then, if other people are foolish, we ought to bear with them.

4. *Disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.* That is what we were once—and if the Grace of God has made a change in us, we must not boast, we must not censure others, we must not set up as self-righteous judges of others. Oh, no, our action must be the very reverse of all that!

4-7. *But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; that being justified by His Grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.* This is a very practical Epistle. See how closely Paul keeps to the Doctrines of Grace. He is never like Mr. Legality—he never teaches that we are to be saved by works, but, being saved by the Grace of God alone, and being made heirs according to the hope of eternal life, we are then, out of gratitude to God, to abound in everything that is good, holy, kind and after the mind of Christ.

8, 9. *This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that you affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men. But avoid foolish questions.* There are always plenty of thorns about, and there are certain professors who spend half their lives in fighting about nothing at all. There is no more in their contention than the difference between Tweedledum and Tweedledee, but they will divide a Church over it, they will go through the world as if they had found out a great secret—it really is not of any consequence whatever—but having made the discovery, they judge everybody by their new-found fad and so spread a spirit that is contrary to the Spirit of Christ.

9, 10. *And genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.* A man that is an heretic—one who really turns aside from the Truth of God and sets up something contrary to the Word of God—what is to be done with him? "Burn him," says the church of Rome. "Fine him, put him in prison," say other churches. But the inspired Apostle says only this—

10. *After the first and second admonition reject [him].* Just exclude him from the church, that is all. Leave him his utmost liberty to go where he likes, believe what he likes and do what he likes, but, at the same time, you as Christian people must disown him—that is all you ought to do—except to pray and labor for his restoration.

11-14. *Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sins, being condemned of himself. When I shall send Artemas unto you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis for I have determined to winter there. Bring Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that they need nothing. And let our people also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.* How the Apostle comes back to that point! Let all our people, our friends, our brethren, our kinsfolk, "let our people also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful."

15. *All that are with me salute you. Greet them that love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.*

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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

JESUS IN GETHSEMANE
NO. 2767

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 6, 1881.

"When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the Brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which He and His disciples entered. And Judas, who betrayed Him, also knew the place; for Jesus often met there with His disciples."
John 18:1, 2.

I REMEMBER to have read somewhere, though I cannot just now recall the authority, that Bethany—to which place one would have thought the Savior would have gone to spend the night, at the house of Mary and her sister, Martha, was over the brow of the Mount of Olives and was out of the bounds of the city of Jerusalem. Now, at the Passover, it was incumbent that all who kept the feast should spend the whole night within the boundary of the city and our Divine Lord and Master, scrupulous to observe every point of the old Law of God, did not go over the hill, but stayed within the area which was technically considered to be part and parcel of Jerusalem—so that His going to Gethsemane was, in part, a fulfillment of the Ceremonial Law and, for that reason, He went no further and sought no other shelter.

Our Lord also knew that on that particular night He would be betrayed into the hands of His enemies and, therefore, He would need to be prepared, by a special season of devotion, for the terrible ordeal He was about to endure. That Passover night was a night to be remembered on this account and He would, therefore, keep it peculiarly sacred. But it was to be made still more memorable as the time of the commencement of His passion sufferings, so He determined to spend the whole night in prayer to His Father. In this act He reminds us of Jacob by the Brook Jabbok—when he had to face trouble in the morning, he spent the night in wrestling prayer—and this Greater Jacob spent His night, not by Jabbok, but by the black, foul Brook Kidron, and there wrestled with mightier Power. Even. than the Patriarch put forth in his notable night struggle with the Angel of the Covenant. I want you to try, in thought, to go as far as Gethsemane. And I think you ought to be encouraged to go there because our text says, "Jesus often met there with His disciples."

I. And, first, so far as we can in thought, LET US VIEW THE PLACE.

I have never seen the Garden of Gethsemane. Many travelers tell us that they have done so and they have described what they saw there. My impression is that not one of them ever saw the real spot and that not a trace of it remains. There are certain old olive trees, within an enclosure, which are commonly thought to have been growing at the time of the Savior—but that seems scarcely possible, for Josephus tells us that the whole of the trees round about Jerusalem were cut down—many of them to be made into crosses for the crucifixion of the Jews. Others of them to assist in building the bulwarks with which the Roman emperor surrounded the doomed city. There does not seem to have been scarcely anything left that would be a true relic of the old city and I cannot imagine that the olive trees would be spared. From what I have heard from Brothers and Sisters who have gone to the reputed Garden of Gethsemane, I conclude that it is not very helpful to one's devotions to go there at all. One who thought to spend a part of his Sabbath there, and who hoped to enjoy much fellowship with Christ in the place, said that he was made very bitterly to learn the meaning of our Savior's words to the woman at the well of Sychar, "The hour comes when you shall neither, in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father...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."

I do not want to find out exactly where Gethsemane was. It is enough for me to know that it was at the side of Mount Olivet and that *it was a very retired spot*. My conception of it is the result of having, for many winters, resided in a little town in the South of France where olive trees grow to perfection and where, on the side of the hills, I have often sat down in olive groves and I have said to myself, "Gethsemane was a place just like this." I am sure it was so, because one olive garden on the side of a hill must necessarily be very much like another. The hills are lined out in terrace above terrace, each one seldom above eight, 10, or 12 feet wide. Then you rise, say, five, six, seven, or eight feet and there is another terrace and so on right up the hill—and on these terraces the olive trees grow.

One of the charms of an olive garden of that kind is that as soon as you get into it, you may sit down under the lee of the bank at the back of the terrace—perhaps in an angle where you are sheltered from the wind—and you will be completely hidden from all observers. I have had persons sitting within a few yards of me, of whose presence I had no idea. One Sabbath, when we had been spending a little time in prayer together, I saw what appeared to be an Englishman's tall hat moving away, at a little distance, just above one of the terraces. By-and-by, I recognized the head that was under the hat as that of a Christian Brother whom I knew—and I found that he had been walking up and down there, study-

ing his sermon for the afternoon. He had not noticed us, except that he had heard some sounds that seemed to him like prayer and praise. Many of you might be in an olive garden, but, unless you made some sign of recognition to your friends, they would scarcely know that anybody else was there! And under the thick, yet light foliage, with the glints of sunlight shining through, or at night under the kind of ashy, gray color, with the moonlight glimmering through with its silvery beams, I cannot imagine a more delightful place of retreat—a place where one would feel surer of being quite alone, even though somebody might be near you—a place where you might feel free to express your thoughts and your prayers because, at any rate, to your own consciousness, you would seem to be entirely alone.

I cannot help thinking that our Savior also loved to get among the olive trees because of the very congenial form of the olive. It twists and winds and turns about as though it were in an agony. It has to draw up oil out of the flinty rock and it seems to do so with labor and travail. The very shape of many olive trees seems to suggest that thought. So, an olive garden is a place of painful pleasure and of fruitful toil, where the oil is rich and fat, but where much effort has to be expended in the extraction of it out of the hard soil on which the olive stands. I believe that others have felt about this matter as I have felt, namely, that there is no tree which seems more suggestive of a fellow-feeling with the sufferer than an olive—no shade that is more sweetly pensive, more suitable to the season of sorrow—and the hour of devout meditation. I marvel not, therefore, that Jesus sought the Garden of Gethsemane that He might be quite alone—that He might pour out His soul before God and yet might have some companions within call without being disturbed by their immediate presence.

One reason for His going to that particular garden was because He had gone there so often that He loved to be in the old familiar place. Do you not feel something of that in your own special place of prayer? I do not like reading out of other people's Bibles as well as out of my own. I do not know how it is, but I like my own study Bible best of all, and if I must have a smaller one, I prefer one that has the words on the same page as in my Bible so that I may easily find them. And I do not know whether you feel the same, but I can usually pray best in one place. There are certain spots where I delight to be when I draw near to God—there is some association connected with them of former interviews with my Heavenly Father that makes the old armchair to be the very best place at which one can kneel. So, I think the Savior loved Gethsemane because He had oftentimes resorted there with His disciples and, therefore, He makes that the sacred spot where His last agony of prayer shall be poured out before His Father.

II. That, however, is only the introduction to the main matter of our meditations. So, now, LET US VIEW THE SAVIOR IN GETHSEMANE, THAT WE MAY IMITATE HIM.

And, first, our blessed Lord is to be imitated by us in that *He frequently sought and enjoyed retirement*. His was a very busy life. He had much more to do than you and I have, yet He found abundant time for private prayer. He was much holier than any of us are, yet He realized His need of private prayer and meditation. He was much wiser than we shall ever be, yet He felt the necessity for retiring into solitude for communion with His Father. He had much power over Himself, He could control and compose Himself far more readily than we can, yet, amid the distractions of the world, He felt that He must frequently get away alone. It would be well for us if we were more often alone. We are so busy—so taken up with this or that committee meeting, working-class, Sunday school, preaching, talking, visiting, gossiping—all sorts of things, good, bad, or indifferent—that we have no leisure for the due cultivation of our spiritual life! We rush from pillar to post without proper time for rest, but, Brothers and Sisters, if we want to be strong, if we mean to be like Jesus, our Lord and Savior, we must have our Gethsemane, our place for secret retirement where we can get alone with our God. I think it was Luther who said, "I have a hard day's work before me today—it will take me many hours and there will be a stern struggle, so I must have at least three hours prayer, that I may gain the necessary strength for my task." Ah, we do not act in that wise fashion nowadays—we feel as if we cannot spare the time for private prayer, but, had we more communion with God—we would have more influence with men.

But our blessed Master is especially to be imitated in that *He sought retirement when He was about to enter upon the great struggle of His life*. Just then, when Judas was about to give the traitor's kiss—when scribes and Pharisees were about to hound Him to the Cross—it was then that He felt that He must get away to Gethsemane and be alone in prayer with His Father! What did you do, my dear Brother, when you apprehended trial? Why, you sought out a sympathizing friend! I shall not blame you for desiring the consolations of true friendship, but I shall not commend you if you put them into the place of communion with God. Are you, even now, dreading some approaching calamity? What are you doing to meet it? I will not suggest that you should neglect certain precautions, but I would admonish you that the first and best precaution is to get away to your God in prayer! As the feeble conies find their shelter in the solid rock, and as the doves fly away to their home in the dovecot, so should Christians, when they expect trouble, fly straight away to their God upon the wings of fear and faith! Your great strength does not lie in your hair, otherwise you might feel as proud as Samson was in the days of his vic-

tories! Your great strength lies in your God! Therefore, get away to Him with all speed and ask Him from help in this, your hour of need!

Some of you pray when you are, as it were, at Calvary, but not at Gethsemane. I mean you pray when the trouble comes upon you, but not when it is on the road. Yet your Master here teaches you that to conquer at your Calvary, you must commence by wrestling at your Gethsemane. When as yet it is but the shadow of your coming trial that spreads its black wings over you, cry to God for help! When you are not emptying the bitter cup—when you are only sipping the first drops of the wormwood and the gall, begin, even then, to pray, "Not as I will, but as You will, O my Father!" You will thus be the better able to drink of the cup to its very dregs when God shall place it in your hands.

We may also imitate our Lord—as far as it would be in our line, *in His taking His disciples with Him*. At any rate, if we do not imitate Him in this respect, we may certainly admire Him, for He took the disciples with Him, I think, for two purposes. First, for their good. Remember, Brothers and Sisters, that the next morning was to be a day of trial for them as well as for Himself. He was to be taken to trial and condemnation, but they were to be severely tried, in their fidelity to Him, by seeing their Lord and Master put to a shameful death. So He took them with Him that they also might pray—that they might learn how to pray by hearing His wondrous prayers—that they might watch and pray, lest they should enter into temptation. Now, sometimes in your special hour of trouble, I believe that it will be for the good of others for you to communicate to them the story of your distress and ask them to join you in prayer concerning it. I have often done this, so I can urge you to do the same. I found it a great blessing, on one dark day of my life, to ask my sons, though they were but lads, to come into my room and pray with their father in his time of trouble. I know that it was good for them, and their prayers were helpful to me, but I acted as I did in part that they might realize their share in domestic responsibilities—that they might come to know their father's God—and might learn to trust Him in their time of trouble.

But our Savior also took His disciples with Him to Gethsemane that they might assist to comfort Him and, in this respect, He is to be imitated by us because of His wonderful humility. If those disciples had all done their best, what would it have been worth? But what they really did was most discouraging to Christ, instead of being at all helpful to Him. They went to sleep when they should have watched with their Lord and they did not assist Him with their prayers as they might have done. It is noteworthy that He did not ask them to pray with Him—He bade them watch and pray, lest they should enter into temptation. But He said to them, "What? Could you not watch with Me one hour?" He did not say, "What? Could you not *pray* with me one hour?" He knew that they could not do that. What mortal man could pray at such a time as that, when great

drops of bloody sweat punctuated every paragraph of His petition? No, they could not pray with Him, but they might have watched with Him—yet that they did not.

Sometimes, dear Friends, when a very great trial comes upon you, it will be well for you to ask some Brothers and Sisters, who cannot do much, but who can do something to come and watch with you and pray with you. If it does not do any good to you, it will be good for them—but it will do good to you, also, I feel sure. Often—I have to confess it—I have got two Brothers to kneel with me in prayer when I have been depressed through this late illness of mine. And their honest, earnest, hearty prayers in my study have often lifted me right up into joy and peace! I believe it has also done them good. I know it has done me good and I feel sure that you might often be a blessing to others if you did not mind confessing to them when you are depressed and sad at heart. Say, "Come into my room and watch with me one hour." And you may add to that request this other one, "Come and pray with me," for some of them can pray as well as you can, and even better. So imitate the Savior in endeavoring not only to pray yourself, but to call to your assistance the praying legion of God's elect ones when a great trial is impending.

Still, our Lord's example may mainly be followed in another direction, namely, when we do pray in the presence of a great trouble, *it is well to pray with much importunity*. Our Savior prayed in Gethsemane three times, using the same words. He prayed with such intensity of desire that His heart seemed to burn with anguish. The canals overflowed their banks and the red streams came bursting down in bloody drops that fell upon the earth in that rightly-named "olive-press." Ah, that is the way to pray—if not actually unto a bloody sweat, as we may not have to do, or be able to do, yet with such intensity of hearty earnestness as we can—and as we ought—when God the Holy Spirit is working mightily in us! We cannot expect to be helped in our time of trouble unless it is intense prayer that we send up to Heaven.

But imitate Christ also *in the matter of your prayer*. I feel sure that He only softly whispered the request, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." You also may present that petition, but mind that you say it very softly. Yet I feel certain that it was with all His might that our Savior said, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as You will." In the presence or in the prospect of a great trouble, make this your prayer to God, "Your will be done." Brace up your soul to this point—having asked the Lord to screen you, if it should seem good in His sight, resign yourself absolutely into His hands and say, "Nevertheless, O my Father, not as I will, but as You will!"

It is prevailing prayer when one gets as far as that! A man is prepared to die when he knows how to present that petition! That is the best preparation for any cross that may come upon your shoulders. You can die a

martyr's death and clap your hands even in the midst of the fire if you can, with all your soul, really pray as Jesus prayed, "Not as I will, but as You will." This is the objective which I set before you, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ—that if you are expecting sickness—if you are fearing loss—if you are anticipating bereavement—if you are dreading death—let this be your great ultimatum, go to God now, in the time of your distress and, by mighty prevailing prayer, with such prayerful sympathy as others can give you, breathe out this one petition, "Your will be done, O my Father! Your will be done! Help me to do it! Help me to bear it! Help me to go through with it all to Your honor and Glory. Let me be baptized with Your Baptism, and drink of Your cup, even to the dregs."

Sometimes, dear Friends, you may wish, in your hearts, that the Lord would make great use of you and yet, perhaps, He may not do so. Well, a man who holds his tongue when Christ tells him to do so, is glorifying Christ more than if he opened his mouth and broke the Master's commandment. There are some of the Lord's people who, by a quiet, holy, consistent manifestation of what the Lord has done for them, glorify Him more than they would do if they went from place to place telling out His Gospel in a way which would make the Gospel itself disgusting to those who heard it. That is quite possible, for some people do it. If my Lord puts me in the front rank, blessed be His name for it, and I must fight for Him there as best I can. But if He says to me, "Lie in bed! Be bed-ridden for seven years, and never get up!"—I have nothing to do but to glorify Him in that way. He is the best soldier who does exactly what his captain bids him.

III. Now, in the third place, and only briefly, LET US VIEW THE DISCIPLES IN GETHSEMANE, BY WAY OF INSTRUCTION TO OURSELVES.

Probably, the disciples *had often been with their Master to Gethsemane*—I suppose, sometimes by day, and oftentimes by night, in secret conclave they had been instructed in the olive garden. It had been their Academy! There they had been with the Master in prayer—no doubt, each one praying and learning how to pray better from His Divine example. Dear Brothers and Sisters, I recommend you oftentimes to get to the place where you can best commune with your God.

But, now, the disciples came to Gethsemane *because a great trouble was impending*. They were brought there that they might watch and pray. So, get to the place of prayer, at this time of trouble, and at all other times of trial that shall come upon you throughout your whole life. Whenever you hear the knell ringing out all earthly joy, let it ring you into the garden of prayer! Whenever there is the shadow of a coming trouble looming before you, let there also be the substance of more intense communion with God! These disciples were, however, at this time, called to enter into fellowship with their Master in the thicker, deeper darkness that was coming over Him—far denser than any that was com-

ing over them. And you are called, dear Brothers and Sisters, each in your own measure, to be baptized unto Jesus in the cloud and in the sea, that you may have fellowship with Him in His sufferings. Be not ashamed to go even to Gethsemane with Christ, entering into a knowledge of what He suffered by being made, according to your capacity, to suffer in the same manner. All His true followers have to go there. Some have only to stand at the outside gate and keep watch, but His highly-favored ones have to go into the denser gloom and to be nearer to their Lord in His greatest agonies. If we are His true disciples, we must have fellowship with Him in His sufferings.

Our difficulty is that the flesh shrinks from this trial, and that, like the disciples, *we sleep when we ought to watch*. When the time of trial comes, if we get depressed in spirit about it, we are apt not to pray with that fervor and vigor which greater hopefulness would have begotten. And when we come to feel something of what the Savior endured, we are apt to be overwhelmed by it rather than stimulated by it and so, when He comes to us, He finds us, like the disciples, "sleeping for sorrow." The Master gently said, "The spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak." But I do not suppose that one of the disciples made any excuse for himself. I feel, if I may judge them from myself, that I would always have said, "I never can forgive myself for going to sleep that night! How could I fall asleep when He said, 'Watch with Me'? And when He came again, with His face red with bloody sweat, and with that disappointed look upon His Countenance, said, 'What? Could you not watch with Me one hour?' how could I go to sleep a second time? And then, how could I go to sleep a third time?" Oh, I think that Simon Peter must always have remembered that his Savior said to him, "Simon, could you not watch with Me one hour?" That question must have stuck by him all his life—and James and John must have felt the same.

Brothers and Sisters, are any of you sleeping under similar circumstances—while Christ's Church is suffering—while Christ's cause is suffering—while Christ's people are suffering—while a trial is coming upon you to help you into fellowship with Him? Are you, instead of being aroused to a higher and more intense devotion, sinking into deeper sleep? If so, Christ may, in His great love, excuse you, but I beg you not to begin making excuses for yourself! No, awake, Brothers and Sisters and "watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation."

That slumber of theirs must have been *greatly rebuked by their Savior's kindness to them.* As I understand the narrative, our Lord came to His disciples three times and, on the third occasion, He found them still heavy with sleep, so He sat down beside them and said to them, "Sleep on now, and take your rest." There He sat, patiently waiting for the traitor's arrival—not expecting any help or sympathy from His disciples, but just watching over them as they would not watch with Him, praying for

them as they would not pray for themselves—and letting them take another nap while He made Himself ready to meet Judas and the rabble throng that would so soon surround Him. Our Master, in His great tenderness, sometimes indulges us with such sleeps as these, yet we may have to regret them and to wish that we had had sufficient strength of mind and earnestness of heart to stay awake and watch with Him in His season of sorrow. It appears to me that of all the 11 good disciples, there was not one who stayed awake. There was one vile traitor and he was wide-awake. He never went to sleep—he was awake enough to sell his Master and to act as guide to those who came to capture Him.

I think also that at least partly in consequence of that slumber of the disciples, within a short time, "*they all forsook Him and fled*." They seem, for the time, to have slept away their attachment to their Lord and waking, as from a disturbed dream, they scarcely knew what they did, and helter-skelter, away they fled! The sheep were all scattered and the Shepherd was left alone, thus fulfilling the ancient prophecy, "Smite the Shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered." And that other word, "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me." Wake up, Brothers and Sisters, otherwise you, too, may forsake your Master—and in the hour when you ought most to prove your fidelity, it may be that your slumbering state of heart will lead on to backsliding—and to forsaking of your Lord. God grant that it may not!

IV. Now I close with a word of warning which I have almost anticipated. LET US, IN THOUGHT, GO TO GETHSEMANE TO TAKE WARNING FROM JUDAS. Let me read to you the latter part of the text—"Judas who betrayed Him, also knew the place: for Jesus ofttimes met there with His disciples."

"Judas who betrayed Him, also knew the place." Yes, *he had probably, many times, been there all night with Christ*. He had sat with the other disciples in a circle round their Lord on one of those olive-clad terraces and he had listened to His wondrous words in the soft moonlight. He had often heard His Master pray there. "Judas who betrayed Him," had heard Him pray in Gethsemane. He knew the tones of His voice, the pathos of His pleading, the intense agony of that great heart of love when it was poured out in prayer! He had, no doubt, joined with the other disciples when they said, "Lord, teach us to pray."

"Judas who betrayed Him, also knew the place." He could have pointed out to us the very spot where the Savior most loved to be—that angle in the terrace, that little corner out of the way, where the Master was known to find a seat when He sat down and taught the chosen band around Him. Yes, Judas knew the place, and it was because he knew the place that he was able to betray Christ, for, if he had not known where Jesus was, he could not have taken the guard there.

It does seem, to me, very dreadful that familiarity with Christ should have qualified this man to become a traitor. And it is still true that, sometimes, familiarity with religion may qualify men to become apostates. Oh, if there is a Judas here, I would speak very solemnly to you! You know the place. You know all about church government and church order, and you can go and tell pretty tales about the mistakes made by some of God's servants who would not err if they could help it. Yes, you know the church members. You know where there are flaws of character and infirmity of spirit. You know how to go and spread the story of them among worldlings and you can make such mischief as you could not make if you had not known the place! Yes, and you know the Doctrines of Grace, at least with a measure of head-knowledge, and you know how to twist them so as to make them seem ridiculous, even those eternal Truths of God which ravish the hearts of angels and of the redeemed from among men! Because you know them so well, you know how to parody them and to caricature them—and to make the Grace of God, itself, seem to be a farce!

Yes, you know the place. You have been to the Lord's Table and you have heard the saints speak of their raptures and their ecstasies—and you pretended that you were sharing them. So you know how to go back to the world and to represent true godliness as being all cant and hypocrisy—and you make rare fun out of those most solemn secrets of which a man would scarcely speak to his fellow because they are the private transactions between his soul and his God!

I can hardly realize how terrible will be the doom of those who, after making a profession of religion, have prostituted their knowledge of the inner working of the Church of God and made it the material for novels in which Christ's Gospel is held up to scorn! Yet there have been such men who have not been content to be like birds that have fouled their own nests, for they have also gone forth and also tried to foul the nest of every believing heart that they could reach. What a dreadful thing it will be if any one of us, here, should know the place and, therefore, should betray the Savior! Do you know the place of private prayer, or do you think you do? Do you know the place where men go when the shadow of a coming trial is looming before them? Do you think you know something about fellowship with Christ in His sufferings? But, what if the greed of gold should override in you, as it did in Judas, such natural attachment as you feel towards Christ and better things? And what if even Gethsemane should, like a pit, open wide its mouth to swallow you up? It is terrible to contemplate, yet it may be true, for, "Judas who betrayed Him, also knew the place."

I cannot bear to think that anyone of you should be familiar with the ins and outs of this Tabernacle and yet should betray Christ—that you should be one of those who gather around this Communion Table, that

you should be familiar with all the loving and tender expressions which we are known to use here, and yet, after all, should forsake our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! Pass the disciples' question around and each one ask it, "Lord, is it I? Is it I?"—

"When any turn from Zion's way,
(Alas, what numbers do)!
I think I hear my Savior say,
'Will you forsake Me too?'
'Ah Lord! With such a heart as mine,
Unless You hold me fast, I feel I must, I shall decline,
And prove like them at last.'"

Therefore, hold me up, O Lord, and I shall be safe; keep me even to the end, for Your dear Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 15:1-8.

On the way from the supper table to the Garden of Gethsemane, or while still lingering in the upper room, our Lord spoke this wondrous parable.

Verse 1. *I am the true Vine.* All other vines are but shadows of Christ. They represent Christ, but He is Himself the substance, the essence, the one great reality. He is the Truth of all things that exist. "I am the true Vine." Does anybody ask which is the true Church? All who are vitally joined to Christ are in the true Church, for He says, "I am the true Vine."

1. *And My Father is the Vinedresser.* He cares for the Church with infinite wisdom and love. No one else can care for that true Vine as the Father—the Vinedresser—does.

2. *Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away.* If there are any who are only nominally in Christ and who, therefore, bear no fruit, their doom is certain, for, in order to final perseverance and eternal safety, there must be fruit-bearing.

2. *And every branch that bears fruit, He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit.* Pruning, then, is for fruit-bearers. If the branch were dead, what would be the good of pruning it? Say not, dear Friends that your afflictions must be caused by your sins—no, rather they may come in consequence of your *virtues*! Because you do bear fruit, it is worthwhile for the Vinedresser to use His knife upon you, that you may bring forth more fruit!

3, 4. *Now you are clean through the word, which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you.* Give good heed to that sweet word, Beloved Brothers and Sisters, "Abide in Me." Do not seem to get into Christ and then depart from Him. Pray for constancy to all your other Graces.

4, 5. *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in Me. I am the Vine, you are the branches. He that abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit, for without Me you can do nothing.* You know how the branch is in the vine, it is a component part of the vine. But do not forget that the vine is also in the branch—that the sap, which is the very life of the vine, flows into every living branch. So we are in Christ, and Christ is in us, and He says to us, as the marginal reading has it, "Severed from Me, you can do nothing." What? Not even a little, Lord? Can we not do something good, something acceptable apart from You? No, "Without Me, you can do nothing."

6. *If a man abide 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.* That is all that can be done with fruitless vine-branches. You cannot make anything of them. Other trees yield timber and are useful for various purposes, but with the vine, it is as the Prophet Ezekiel says, "Son of man, What is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest? Shall wood be taken from them to do any work? Or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel on it? Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel; the fire devours both the ends of it, and the midst of it is burned. Is it meet for any work?" It is useless if it is fruitless and so is it with us—if we do not bear fruit unto God, we are of no service to Him whatever.

7. *If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done for you.* Here is the secret of prevailing prayer! It is not every man who chooses to pray who shall have whatever he asks of God! But the successful pleader is the man who abides in Christ and in whom Christ's words abide. God will not hear our words if we disregard His words! We cannot expect our prayers to be prevalent if we are severed from our Lord.

8. *Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciples.* "Much fruit" should be produced by the disciples of the much-doing Christ. The true Vine was full of fruit and it scarcely can be believed that we are branches of that Vine if we exhibit only a little fruit. It is "much fruit" that proves our union to this Vine.

HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK—319, 271, 278.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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

DEBTORS AND DEBTORS
NO. 2768

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 2, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON.
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 13, 1883.

"There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty."
Luke 7:41.

I TRUST that the Lord has "somewhat to say" upon this subject to some who are like Simon the Pharisee. And if He has, I trust that those persons will be led by the Grace of God to say, as Simon did, "Master, say on." Be ready to hear what the Lord Jesus Christ will speak to you! There are some who cover up the windows of their hearts with the shutters of prejudice—they are only prepared to hear what will please them—they cannot endure to listen to that which will grieve them and humble them. How many there are who want the preacher to prophesy smooth things! If he will say what they can agree with, they will go away and sing his praises, which is a poor result in any case. But let us be of a nobler sort than that! Let us be like the Bereans, who, after they had heard Paul and Silas preach, "received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed." Let us say, as Eli bade young Samuel do, "Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears." Let us say to Him, "Even if You speak that which will lay me in the dust, I will hear it. If You say that which will condemn me to Hell, I will give heed to it, for it is best for me to know the Truth of God, that, by knowing it, I may be stirred up to flee from the wrath to come. Let me know the worst of my case, O Lord God of Truth! '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.'"

So far, I think, Simon the Pharisee may be an example to us. The Master said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And his answer was, "Master, say on."

I am not going to expound the whole parable at this time. We may, perhaps, go on with it on another occasion. I intend now to take only this one verse—"There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty." There are two lessons for us to learn from this text. The first is that *all sinners are debtors to God.*

And the second is that *some sinners are greater debtors to God than others are*—"The one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty."

I. First, ALL MEN ARE DEBTORS TO GOD. He is that "certain Creditor" mentioned in our text, of whom, I fear, many debtors think very little.

We are all indebted to God, first, in the matter of *obedience to Him, as His creatures*. He is our Creator, our Preserver, our Provider, our Benefactor. "It is He that has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture." He is "the living God" who gives us richly all things to enjoy." We owe to Him our continued existence. Every breath of our nostrils is His gift. Therefore, by our very creation, we are bound to serve Him according to the righteous demands of His holy Law, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve." And that other "first and great commandment"—"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This Law is not exacting. It does not go a hair's breadth beyond the righteous claims of Divine Justice.

But, as we have not rendered to God the obedience which is due Him, we have become further indebted because of *the penalty incurred by us as sinners*. All the Ten Commandments stand up in the court as witnesses against us, for we have broken them all. We have been guilty of sins of omission altogether innumerable—and of sins of commission more than the hair of our head. We are under obligation to obey God's command even though we are unable to obey it. Though we have not the power to keep God's Law perfectly, that inability by no means removes from us the liability to do so. If a man is in debt and cannot pay, the fact that he is unable to pay does not exonerate him from the duty of paying. He is still in debt. Debts are not discharged by pleading that you cannot pay them—that is no valid excuse and we are, all of us, bound to obey God perfectly, notwithstanding all that has happened in the past. What a debt, then, we must owe Him—a debt that is increasing every day—a debt that is already past all reckoning—a debt that will go on swelling as long as we live unless it can be removed by some power higher than our own!

That debt of penalty involves tremendous results to the body and the soul of man. "Fear not them which kill the body," said Christ, "but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell." You know that among all the terrible words spoken concerning the penalty of sin, the most terrible are those which were uttered by our Lord Jesus Christ, the most loving and tender of all teachers. Measure not a man's true tenderness of heart by his avoidance of the subject of "the wrath to come." It may be only tenderness to him, or a willingness to pander to the evil desires of sinful men that prompts him to such action as that. But the Christ who weeps over Jerusalem does not hesitate to predict its dreadful doom! And He who loved men so much as to lay down His life for them was the one who spoke again and

again of the place "where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched." Many such words fell from those loving lips that never would have invented an unnecessary terror, so we may be sure that the penalty of sin is a very terrible one.

Every one of us who is out of Christ is under the death penalty—"He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." "The soul that sins, it shall die." And what that death involves, what that existence must be which is but life in the midst of death—the life of an immortal being that is stripped of all possibility of well-being forever—I will not attempt to describe. But that is the penalty of sin and that is due to God, to whom we are debtors, indeed.

And, my dear Friends, it gives me great joy to add that *if we are pardoned sinners*, we owe to God a deep debt of gratitude! If, through the blessed processes of Grace, through the atoning Sacrifice and mediation of our Divine Redeemer, we are delivered from the debt of sin and the handwriting that was against us is taken away and nailed to His Cross. If, through the death of Christ, we are delivered from the death penalty of sin—as we certainly are, for Christ has forever cleared all Believers by bearing their punishment in His body on the tree, then are we debtors to the Infinite Love and boundless compassion of our Covenant-keeping God, His well-beloved Son and the ever-blessed Spirit! In this debt let us be continually willing to sink deeper and deeper. I would that, in this respect, my own soul were like a boat that had foundered at sea—and the sea should be the Love of God—and I would go down into it over the masthead till I was completely submerged in the abyss of Infinite Love. And, in truth, that is just where we are if we are in Christ Jesus! And each one of us, slightly altering the poet's words, can say—

"O love! You bottomless abyss!
My soul is swallowed up in you."

Which of us can ever fully tell what we owe to God for our election, our redemption, our effectual calling, our justification, our sanctification and our promised glorification? Who can tell how much we owe for being preserved from sin, for being restored after we have fallen into sin and for being enabled by Grace to rise above sin? Who can tell how great is our debt for all the blessings laid up in store for us which we shall enjoy, by-and-by, but which are just as surely ours before we receive them—that Grace we have not tasted yet, and that Glory which we have scarcely dreamt of yet—that infinite happiness which is hidden in the closed hand of God until the day shall come when He shall manifest it to our wondering eyes? "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh"—but debtors to the Covenant Love of God and, therefore, debtors to our fellow men, realizing our obligation to show to them, according to our ability, the great Love of God and to testify to them concerning the way of eternal life.

So, you see, in some form or other, we are all debtors. I am not about to speak of that last kind of debt, now, for it is not included in our Savior's parable. But I want to speak of the debt of obedience which has not been rendered and the debt of penalty which has been incurred in consequence of our disobedience. I intend, as God shall help me, to say something about debtors. And if, in the use of the illustration, I should seem to utter hard words about people who are in debt, I am not meaning to do that and I hope they will not take it so. I am simply intending to use the illustration. If it happens to hit anybody, I cannot help that. If the cap fits anyone, let him wear it.

Now, first, a sinner is very much like a debtor in this respect—*he is very apt to get more deeply into debt*. If you owe a pound today, there is a great tendency to owe two pounds tomorrow. Getting into debt is a slippery process and when your feet begin to slide, you are very apt to go deeper and deeper into the mire. And I am sure that this is the case with the Lord's two debtors—with the Lord's unnumbered millions of debtors—with all the Lord's debtors! People say, "Money makes money," and I suppose it does, but, certainly, sin makes sin. There is a cumulative force in evil so that a sinner finds that it gets easier to sin, instead of becoming more difficult. While the man grows old, his sin does not—rather, it seems to grow younger and to become more vigorous! Often times a sinner will become more adept in guilt and more inclined to evil, the further he advances in years. Certain sins may decline through the weakening of the flesh, but the sins of the heart do not. The power to sin may grow less, but the will to sin continues to increase as the sinner grows older. This is one of the terrible things about iniquity—that it breeds so fast. A man can never say to sin, "You may only come this far, but no further—and here shall your proud waves be stayed." When the great flood tide of evil comes rolling in, there is no telling where it will stop! As debt leads to more debt, so sin leads to more sin and, therefore, it is that there is a parallel between the sinner and the debtor.

Further, *sin, like debt, causes uneasiness in a man if there is a spark of honesty about him*. Some men, who have no sense of honor, are quite happy while in debt. You may have read of a sale that was to be held in Rome, on one occasion, when there were to be sold the goods of a man who had been for many years greatly embarrassed by debt. The emperor said to one of his chamberlains, "Go to the sale and buy that man's bed, for I cannot sleep at night and, surely, I should be able to sleep on his bed if he, being in debt, has been able to sleep so comfortably as I hear he has." Debtors ought not to have good sleep if they have wantonly plunged themselves into debt. Honest men are troubled, vexed, perturbed if they feel that they cannot meet their obligations. Now, when a sinner is thoroughly awakened to his true position, this is just his case. He says, "I am in debt to God and I cannot pay even a farthing in the pound. If He comes to call me to account and asks me, 'How much do you owe unto your Lord?' what can I answer Him? I am full of confusion

and full of fear." Thus, you see, a sinner is like a debtor because he has no rest.

And further, *debtors and sinners shun their creditors*—they do not want to meet them—they try to get out of their way. Some of us know what it is to have cleared ourselves of rather troublesome friends by lending them money. We have never seen them since, so we reckon that perhaps it was a good investment. A man who is in debt does not want to see the person to whom he owes money. He would rather go down another street than meet him. If there is a knock at the door and the person who wants to come in is one who has called for a debt which the debtor cannot discharge, he would sooner jump out of the back window and make his escape, than he would meet him. And this is precisely the case with the sinner. He is in debt to God and he does not like to meet his great Creditor. He will not regard the call of the church bell and he will not keep holy the Sabbath. He would rather forget about all such things. To read his Bible, to attend a service where he shall be reminded of his obligations is most objectionable to him. He does not want to be reminded of them. If there should come one, in the dead of night, and cry in his chamber, "Prepare to meet your God!" it would be more terrifying to him than an earthquake or the most terrific thunderstorm. He does not want to meet his God! He says in his heart, if not in so many words, "No God! No God for me! I do not want a God!" And if it could be satisfactorily proved to him that God was dead, it would be one of the most joyful pieces of news that he had ever heard. He is so deeply in debt to God that he cries, "Where shall I flee from His Presence?" He would take the wings of the morning, if he could, and fly to the uttermost parts of the earth if he thought that he could find some lonely spot where he would not be troubled by the fear of the Presence of God. That is every sinner's condition. That is the condition of every unconverted person here! That was once my condition and the condition of everyone who is now a child of God.

The sinner, too, like the debtor, is in great danger. I do not know what the laws of England are, just now, concerning debt. Putting them into very simple English, I think they mean that nobody needs pay anybody unless he likes—and we have plenty of people who are getting rich by paying nobody at all. When they fail altogether, they break, and so make themselves. But I shall talk of the laws of England as they used to be. When a man was in debt in the olden times, he was always in fear of arrest. He could not tell when the sheriff's officer would lay his hand upon him. That is just your case if you are an unforgiven, unpardoned sinner. You cannot tell when God will arrest you, but it is certain that, sooner or later—and even the later will not be long—you will have to stand before His Judgment Seat and answer at the bar of inflexible Justice for all your sins against Him. I would not like to have been a debtor who, wherever he went, was likely to be arrested. I have heard of one who was so often in debt and so frequently in prison in consequence, but who so regularly

ran into debt after he was let out of jail that, on one occasion, when his coat-sleeve caught on an area railing, he supposed it was the touch of the sheriff's officer and, thinking that he was again arrested, he exclaimed, "At whose suit?" It was only an iron bar that held him, but he imagined that one of his many creditors had claimed him. That must be a wretched kind of life for anyone to live—to be always afraid of arrest!

You smile at the idea, but if you were really in that condition, I do not suppose that you would smile then. And if you realized that at any moment you might be arrested by the cold hand of death, smiles would be far enough from your countenance! A man may be sitting in one of these pews and, before the clock ticks again, he may be in the world of spirits before his God! I am often hearing of persons, whom I have lately met apparently in robust health, who have been suddenly called away. They are gone, but we are still spared. In thought, I saw a procession passing before me. At first I imagined that it was flesh and blood marching down the street, but, as the procession passed me, I discovered that all who composed it were but shadows. I, who was looking on, am also a shadow and I, too, shall pass away. O debtor to a righteous God, this thought should cause disquietude within your careless spirit—that, at any moment, you may be arrested at the suit of your great Creditor!

And then, mark you, according to the Law of God, when arrested by death, you are cast into prison. You remember how our Savior put it—"Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver you to the judge, and the judge deliver you to the officer, and you be cast into prison. Verily I say unto you, You shall by no means come out from there till you have paid the uttermost farthing." Oh, what a dreadful prison that is into which souls will be cast who die in debt to God! And since they can never pay even a farthing of their debt, there can be no release for them! How long shall they lie there? Till they have paid the uttermost farthing? Why, that can never be! So, mind what you doing, you who are indebted to God, lest you be cast into that dreadful dungeon! Trifle not away your time, I pray you, but fly to Jesus who alone can deliver you from this weight of debt, for your danger is imminent at this very moment!

There is this about our debt to God—that it will never be forgotten by Him. I once knew a man who was much troubled by a debt, but his creditor was not, for many years had passed and he had never mentioned it. In fact, it had entirely slipped from his memory! I do not think such a case as that often happens, but I remember that one—but it will never happen with God. Nothing will ever slip from His memory! Sin is irrevocable and eternal. There is one process that can blot it out, or cast it into the depths of the sea and make it cease to be—there is but one such process—and the Christ of God can tell you what that is. But, apart from His atoning Sacrifice, there is no hope that the debt will ever be forgotten or forgiven.

And there is no protection for those who are in debt to the great Creditor. Protection is sometimes given to an insolvent debtor and, in the olden times, there used to be places of sanctuary to which men fled and so were free from liability to be arrested. Even now, men flee across the seas to avoid arrest. They cross the narrow channel that parts us from the Continent and there they are secure. But there is no such way of escape for those who are in debt to God! If you are one of His debtors through sin, there is no protection for you unless you flee to Christ! There is no distance of space or lapse of time, no repentance or tears that can blot out your transgressions. There they stand, indelible! Neither can you escape from the righteous hand of God in the day when He shall visit you for them.

This makes our indebtedness to God assume a very terrible shape—and if we have not been delivered from it by Christ, what can we do? No composition can be taken in part payment of our enormous debt. Even if it could be, we could not offer it—and there is no friend who can give to God a ransom for us, or stand in our place. No, let me correct myself. There is one Friend—and never let us forget Him—One who became Surety for His people and who was made to smart for it in that day when He paid their debts, to the uttermost farthing, by laying down His life for them. But, dear Friends, if there is anyone among us here who is still in debt to God on the matter of obedience, and who cannot present to Him the righteousness of Christ on His own behalf and who, in the matter of penalty, cannot bring to God the substitutionary Sacrifice of Christ, and plead that it was offered for him, his case is a very sad and wretched one, indeed. The Lord deliver all such in His great mercy! I have been speaking figuratively, but there is truth at the back of it all. It is no figure, no emblem, no fancy, but a dread and terrible reality, that all sinners are in debt to God.

II. Now comes the second thought which will have much soul-searching power about it if God the Holy Spirit blesses it, and that is, that SOME SINNERS ARE GREATER DEBTORS TO GOD THAN OTHERS ARE—"The one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty."

We have all sinned, so we are all debtors to God. But we have not all sinned to the same degree, therefore we are not all debtors to the same extent. There are some sins that are greater than other sins and, both in this world and in the next, punishments are to be measured out proportionately. There are some to whom it will be more tolerable in the Day of Judgment than it will be to others. Our Lord said even to Pontius Pilate, "He that delivered Me unto you has the greater sin." So, clearly, one sin is greater than another. Every sin is great enough to ruin a soul forever, but there are some sins that have a peculiar crimson about them, a special venom and heinousness of offense against the Majesty of God. What constitutes, then, the five hundred pence debtor? Who are the people that are greater sinners than others?

I answer, first, that there are *some who have greater capacity than others*. There are some men and women who have but very little intellectual power. Their minds are narrow, their power of thought is limited—they cannot, under any circumstances, commit the transgressions which are easy enough to men of great, though imperious, masterly minds, with much inventive power and strong passions. Judge you as to your own condition in this respect. Some of you may know that you are very differently constituted from some of your neighbors. You may even have been tempted, in a moment of pride, to look upon them as very commonplace sort of folk—and you are quite aware, without any pride, that you are a person of far greater ability than they are. Very well, then it is possible for you to be a far greater sinner than they can be! You can throw more force and energy, more devilry into your life than they can. I have no doubt that there are many people who slip through life with little mind, little mental force and with comparatively little sin. They know but little, and think but little, and their condemnation will be little compared with that of greater sinners.

Some are great sinners *because they are placed in positions of great trust*. He who has but one talent can only sin with regard to that one talent. But he who has 10 talents, is 10 times as unrighteous in the sight of his Master. A man who is but a house servant, or a day laborer, may be unfaithful to his worldly master and, so far he will be wrong. But think of the position of a minister of the Gospel, the man to whom the souls of men are committed. If he is unfaithful to his Master, what terrible consequences are involved! And, as his reward is higher than the wages of the man that tills the soil, so shall his punishment be greater. Mark the difference of the sacrifice for a priest compared with the offering for a woman's purification. She might come with a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons, but not so the sons of Aaron! Their office was higher and, if they sinned, their iniquity was, in consequence, all the greater—and there must be presented, in the type, a costlier sacrifice in recognition of the greater guilt in their case. You fathers and mothers can sin more than your children can. Masters, you can sin more than your servants can. Men of wealth, you can sin against every pound you have if you use it wrongfully. Men who occupy high places, your sin may be like that of David, who greatly disgraced the name of God before men. Because of your exalted position, you can do so much more mischief and your sin, therefore, is reckoned at a proportionately higher rate.

Sin, too, becomes greater *in proportion to a man's light and knowledge*. A young man, blessed with godly parents, brought up from his childhood in the midst of prayer and holiness, can sin much more than poor children taken out of the back slums and who, from their very babyhood, have heard words of blasphemy and seen deeds of filthiness. Oh, when some of us, whose privilege it was to hear the name of Jesus mingled with the first hush of our lullaby—when we sinned against God, there was an intensity of blackness about our sin that could not be found in

the poor heathen, or in such sinners in this land as are left in ignorance! The more you know—the more you understand of the mind and will of God—the greater is your transgression when you sin against Him!

Sin, too, is very largely increased *by tenderness of conscience.* There are some persons who must know that this assertion is true if they have looked into their own hearts and lives, for they were very tender-spirited in their youth and, as they grew up, they retained much of that tenderness. There are some coarse, rough, brutal men who could almost commit murder and not feel it—but some of us can remember the horror which came upon us when, for the first time, we used or heard an ill word. You remember how the breach of the Sabbath cut you to the quick when it was only a small matter about which others thought nothing. You also remember how, when you found yourself out in having told a lie, perhaps, unintentionally, you could not sleep, you felt so mean and miserable! Well, now, if you have forced yourself to sin in spite of such a check as this—if you have, as it were, gone over hedge and ditch in order to get to Hell—if you have throttled and strangled your better self with stern resolve that you would do evil—then you have sinned, indeed!

There are some such sinners, and there may be some such here, *who have suffered through sin and yet have gone back to it.* In the summer and autumn evenings it is one of the miseries of a man who sits writing to find how the poor gnats and the "daddy long legs" will fly to the lamp and get burned to death. You try to drive them away. You take the trouble to pick them up after they have burnt themselves—but back they come—and their folly is a true and melancholy picture of the way in which some men return to their vices, again and again, even after they have suffered greatly through indulgence in them! Even delirium tremens will not suffice to save some men from continuing to be drunks—and the rottenness of their bones has not been sufficient to keep others back from the house of the strange woman. Oh, how horrible is this! And how it adds to the guilt of sin and puts upon it a certain degree of presumptuousness which provokes God beyond the ordinary transgressions of common sinners.

Does this truth come home to the conscience of anyone whom I am now addressing? Then I go back to my preface, and ask such an one to say, with Simon the Pharisee, "Master, say on." There is always a great intensity about sin when it is practiced for a long time. The sinner who is 60 years old is a greater sinner than a mere youth can well be. And the man who has spent three-score years and ten without remembering his God—the man whose life lease has run out and yet who, all the while, has spent his vigor in the service of Satan—has become one of the greatest of sinners—one of the five-hundred pence debtors!

Yes, there are degrees of sin! Sometimes a man recognizes that he has *distinctly sinned against God in an especially personal way.* David seemed to feel his sin thus when he said to the Lord, "Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight." Usually, unenligh-

tened men think most of an offense against their fellow men. It is very curious that it should be so, but so it is. If I were to charge any man here with the commission of a crime against his fellows, he would probably knock me down if he could. But if I charged him with a sin against God, he would say, "Oh, yes, yes! We are all sinners," and think that it was nothing to be a sinner because it was only against God! Thus men turn things upside down and an offense against our fellow man is reckoned to be a greater evil than an offense against the Judge of all the earth! But it is not so. It is that sinning distinctly against God that has the most evil about it and, therefore, it is that there is but one sin that is unpardonable—and that is a willful sin against the Holy Spirit, one Person of the blessed Trinity. It is because it is so especially and so designedly against Him that no repentance ever comes to the man who has committed it, for he has sinned the sin which is unto death and he remains in his death-state, so that he never repents of the iniquity and finds no forgiveness for it. Beware, I pray you, of sins distinctly against God, especially such sins as that of blasphemy, of murmuring against God, of infidelity, of a denial of His existence, of Socinianism, which is a robbing of Christ of His Deity and so of His highest Glory! For those sins which are most distinctly against God stand first in the dread catalog of iniquity. Remember how the Prophet Samuel said to Saul, "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry." Witchcraft was thought to be one of the worst of sins—and rebellion against God is put side by side with it.

And, last, I do believe that the greatest sin of all—that which, like a giant, rises head and shoulders above the rest—is *the sin of unbelief, or rejection of the mercy of God in Christ Jesus*. If any man here shall say, "I am no drunkard. I am no whoremonger." Well, Sir, suppose you are not—but are you an unbeliever in Christ? Then you shall have the same portion as they have, for, when God says, "I will give My only-begotten Son to die to save sinners," and yet men say, "We will not have Your Son as our Savior, but we will reject Him. 'This is the heir; come, let us kill Him, that the inheritance may be ours'"—when God takes out of His own bosom the darling of His heart, the very Glory of Heaven, and sends Him here in human flesh and blood to bear shame, suffering and death for guilty men—and they say that they will not believe on Him, then this is the sin that turns the key of Heaven against them and dooms them to eternal destruction!

Remember the solemn words of our Lord Jesus, Himself—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." Listen again to these familiar words—"He that believes not is condemned already." Why is he condemned already? He is living, he is laughing, he is sporting, he is merry-making—yet he is condemned already, "because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." That is the sin which, above all others, drops the black wax

upon his death warrant and sets the seal of Divine Wrath there so that he must die!

O my dear Hearers, our text says that one of the debtors owed 500 pence and, surely, that is the man who has heard the Gospel and yet has refused it! It is you who have been coming to this place, or to other houses of prayer, and who have been warned, invited and entreated for months and years—I know not how long—to believe in Jesus. If such is the case with any of you, put yourself down, not as a 50-pence debtor, but as a 500-pence debtor! No, I think I must liken you to him who owed his master ten thousand talents. How can you ever repay it? There is no hope of your ever repaying it. You can have it all frankly and freely forgiven! If you go to Christ and plead perfect poverty, you shall then be set free at once through faith in His dear name! But if not, you must be delivered over to the keeper of the terrible prison of which I spoke to you, and you can never come out of it! God grant that it may not be so with any of you, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 15:13-33.

Verses 13-27. *Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit. And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the Grace that is given to me of God. That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the Gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. I have therefore reason to glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not worked by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ. Yes, I have strived to preach the Gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: but as it is written, To whom He was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand. For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you. But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; whenever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way there by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company. But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it has pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It has pleased them verily; and their debtors they are.* For these Achaeans and Macedo-

nians had received the Gospel from the saints in Jerusalem. The Gentiles had been made partakers of their spiritual things, so it was their duty to minister to the poor Christian Jews in carnal things.

27, 28. *For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit.* That is, "when I have delivered the money, and obtained a receipt in full for it; when I have discharged my duty in this matter."

28, 29. *I will come by you into Spain. And I am sure that when I come unto you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ.* He was sure of that, but he did not know how he would go in other respects. He did not know that he would go to Rome as a prisoner. He could not foresee that he would be sent there as an ambassador in bonds; and little, I think, did he care in what manner he would go, so long as he had the absolute certainty that he should go "in the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ."

30, 31. *Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them in Judea that do not believe; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints.* For there were some saints in Jerusalem who were very narrow-minded and who hardly thought it right to accept anything from Gentiles. They had not got clear of their Jewish bonds and Paul was a little afraid lest what he was taking to them might not be acceptable, so he asked the Romans to pray about that matter. Is there anything about which Believers may not pray? If there are, then we have no right to have anything to do with it! Bring everything before God in prayer, for all right things may lawfully be prayed about. So Paul asked the Christians in Rome to pray about that matter of his journey to Jerusalem and also to pray for his return.

32, 33. *That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.*

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, 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 WEAKENED CHRIST STRENGTHENED
NO. 2769

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 9, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 5, 1881.

"And there appeared an angel unto Him from Heaven, strengthening Him." Luke 22:43.

I SUPPOSE that this incident happened immediately after our Lord's first prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. His pleading became so fervent, so intense, that it forced from Him a bloody sweat. He was, evidently, in a great agony of fear as He prayed and wrestled even unto blood. We are told, by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, that He "was heard in that He feared." It is probable that this angel came in answer to that prayer. This was the Father's reply to the cry of His fainting Son who was enduring an infinity of sorrow because of His people's sin and who must, therefore, be Divinely upheld as to His Manhood, lest He should be utterly crushed beneath the terrible weight that was pressing upon His holy soul.

Scarcely had our Savior prayed before the answer to His petition came. It reminds us of Daniel's supplication and of the angelic messenger who was caused to fly so swiftly that as soon as the prayer had left the Prophet's lips, Gabriel stood there with the reply to it! So, Brothers and Sisters, whenever your times of trial come, always take yourselves to your knees. Whatever shape your trouble may take—if, to you, it should even seem to be a faint representation of your Lord's agony in Gethsemane—put yourselves into the same posture as that in which He sustained the great shock that came upon Him. Kneel down and cry to your Father who is in Heaven, who is able to save you from death, who will prevent the trial from utterly destroying you, who will give you strength that you may be able to endure it and will bring you through it to the praise of the glory of His Grace.

That is the first lesson for us to learn from our Lord's experience in Gethsemane—the blessing of prayer. He has bidden us pray, but He has done more than that, for He has set us the example of prayer and, if example is, as we are sure it is, far more powerful than precept, let us not fail to imitate our Savior in the exercise of potent, prevalent, repeated supplication whenever our spirits are cast down and we are in sore distress of soul. Possibly you have sometimes said, "I feel so sorrowful that I cannot pray." No, Brother, that is the very time when you *must* pray. As the spices, when bruised, give forth all the more fragrance because of the bruising, so let the sorrow of your spirit cause it to send forth the more

fervent prayer to the God who is both able and willing to deliver you! You must express your sorrow in one way or another, so let it not be expressed in murmuring, but in supplication! It is a vile temptation, on the part of Satan, to keep you away from the Mercy Seat when you have most need to go there—but do not yield to that temptation! Pray till you can pray and if you find that you are not filled with the Spirit of supplication, use whatever measure of the sacred bedewing you have—and so, by-and-by, you shall have the baptism of the Spirit and prayer shall become to you a happier and more joyful exercise than it is at present. Our Savior said to His disciples, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death," yet then, above all times, He was in an agony of prayer and, in proportion to the intensity of His sorrow was the intensity of His supplication.

In our text, there are two things to note. First, *our Lord's weakness.* And, secondly, *our Lord's strengthening.*

I. First, then, let us meditate for a little while upon OUR LORD'S WEAKNESS.

That He was exceedingly weak is clear from the fact that an angel came from Heaven to strengthen Him, for the holy angels never do anything that is superfluous. They are the servants of an eminently practical God who never does that which it is unnecessary for Him to do. If Jesus had not needed strengthening, an angel would not have come from Heaven to strengthen Him. But how strange it sounds, to our ears, that the Lord of Life and Glory should be so weak that He should need to be strengthened by one of His own creatures! How extraordinary it seems that He who is "very God of very God," should, nevertheless, when He appeared on earth as Immanuel, God With Us, so completely take upon Himself our nature that He should become so weak as to need to be sustained by angelic agency! This struck some of the older saints as being derogatory to His Divine dignity, so some manuscripts of the New Testament omit this passage—it is supposed that the verse was struck out by some who claimed to be orthodox, lest, perhaps, the Arians should lay hold upon it and use it to bolster up their heresies. I cannot be sure who struck it out, but I am not altogether surprised that they should have done so. They had no right to do anything of the kind, for whatever is revealed in the Scriptures must be true, but they seemed to shudder at the thought that the Son of God should ever have been so weakened as to need the support of an angelic messenger to strengthen Him.

Yet, Brothers and Sisters, *this incident proves the reality of our Savior's Manhood.* Here you can perceive how fully He shares the weakness of our humanity—not in spiritual weakness, so as to become guilty of any sin—but in mental weakness, so as to be capable of great depression of spirit. And in physical weakness, so as to be exhausted to the last degree by His terrible bloody sweat. What is extreme weakness? It is something different from pain, for sharp pain evidences at least some measure of strength, but perhaps some of you know what it is to feel as if you were scarcely alive—you were so weak that you could hardly realize that you were actually living! The blood flowed, if it flowed at all, but very slowly in the canals of your veins—everything seemed stagnant within you. You

were very faint, you almost wished that you could become unconscious, for the consciousness you had was extremely painful. You were so weak and sick that you seemed almost ready to die. Our Master's words, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death," prove that the shadow of impending dissolution hung darkly over His spirit, soul and body, so that He could truly quote the 22nd Psalm and say, "You have brought Me into the dust of death." I think, Beloved, that you ought to be glad it was so with your Lord, for now you can see how completely He is made like His brethren in their mental depression and physical weakness, as well as in other respects.

It will help you to get an idea of the true Manhood of Christ if you remember *that this was not the only time when He was weak*. He, the Son of Man, was once a Babe and, therefore, all the tender ministries that have to be exercised because of the helplessness of infancy were also necessary in His case. Wrapped in swaddling bands and lying in a manger, that little Child was, all the while, the mighty God, though He condescended to keep His Omnipotence in abeyance in order that He might redeem His people from their sins. Doubt not His true Humanity and learn from it how tenderly He is able to sympathize with all the ills of childhood and, all the griefs of boyhood which are not so few or so small as some people imagine!

Besides being thus an Infant and gradually growing in stature just as other children do, our Lord Jesus was often very weary. How the angels must have wondered as they saw Him, who sways the scepter of universal sovereignty and marshals all the starry hosts according to His will, as He, "being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well" at Sychar, waiting for the woman whose soul He had gone to win and, wiping the sweat from His brow and resting Himself after having traveled over the burning acres of the land! The Prophet Isaiah truly said that "the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faints not, neither is weary." That is the *Divine* side of His glorious Nature. "Jesus, therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well." That was the *Human* side of His Nature. We read that "He did eat nothing" during the forty days' temptation in the wilderness and, "He afterwards hungered." Have any of you ever known what it has been to suffer the bitterness of hunger? Then remember that our Lord Jesus Christ also endured that pang. He, whom we rightly worship and adore as "God Blessed Forever," as the Son of Man, the Mediator between God and men, hungered! And He also thirsted, for He said to the woman at the well, "Give Me to drink."

In addition to this, our Savior was often so weary that He slept, which is another proof of His true Humanity. He was so tired, once, that He slept even when the boat was tossing to and fro in a storm and was ready to sink. On one occasion we read that the disciples "took Him even as He was in the boat," which seems to me to imply even more than it says, namely, that He was so worn out that He was scarcely able to get into the boat, but, "they took Him even as He was," and there He fell asleep. We know, moreover, that "Jesus wept"—not merely once, or twice, but many times. And we also know what completes the proof of His Humanity—

that He died. It was a strange phenomenon that He, to whom the Father has given, "to have life in Himself," should have been called to pass through the gloomy shades of death, that He might in all points be made like unto His brethren and so be able to fully sympathize with us! O you weak ones, look how weak your Lord became that He might make you strong! We might read that familiar passage, "though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you, through His poverty, might be rich," in a slightly different way—"though He was strong, yet for your sakes He became weak, that you, through His weakness might be strong." Therefore, Beloved, "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."

What was *the reason for the special weakness of our Savior when in the Garden of Gethsemane*? I cannot now go fully into that matter, but I want you to notice what it was that tried Him so severely there. I suppose, first, it was contact with sin. Our Savior had always seen the effects of sin upon others, but it had never come home to Him so closely as it did when He entered that garden, for there, more than ever before, the iniquity of His people was made to meet upon Him—and that contact aroused in Him a holy horror! You and I are not perfectly pure, so we are not as horrified at sin as we ought to be, yet sometimes we can say, with the Psalmist, "Horror has taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake Your Law." But for our gracious Savior—listen to the Inspired Words, they are none of mine—to be "numbered with the transgressors," must have been an awful thing to His pure and holy soul! He seemed to shrink back from such a position and it was necessary that He should be strengthened in order that He might be able to endure the contact with that terrible mass of iniquity!

But He had, in addition, to *bear the burden of that sin*. It was not sufficient for Him to come into contact with it—but it is written, "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." And as He began to fully realize all that was involved in His position as the great Sin-Bearer, His spirit seemed to droop and He became exceedingly weak. Ah, Sir, if you have to bear the burden of your own sin when you appear before the Judgment Seat of God, it will sink you to the lowest Hell! But what must Christ's agony have been when He was bearing the sin of all His people? As the mighty mass of their guilt came rolling upon Him, His Father saw that the Human soul and the Human body both needed to be upheld, otherwise they would have been utterly crushed before the atoning work had been accomplished.

Contact with sin and the bearing of sin's penalty were reason enough to produce the Savior's excessive weakness in Gethsemane, but, in addition, He was conscious of the approach of death. I have heard some people say that we ought not to shrink from death, but I believe that in proportion as a man is a good man, death will be distasteful to him. You and I have become, to a large extent, familiarized with the thought of death. We know that we must die—unless the Lord should come soon—for all who have gone before us have done so—the seeds of death are sown in us and, like some fell disease, they are beginning to work within our nature. It is natural that we should expect to die, for we know that

we are mortal. If anybody were to tell us that we should be annihilated—any reasonable and sensible man would be horrified at the idea—for that is not natural to the soul of man. Well, now, death was as unnatural to Christ as annihilation would be to us! It had never come to be a part of His Nature. His holy soul had none of the seeds of death in it and His untainted body—which had never known any kind of disease or corruption, but was as pure as when, first of all, "that holy thing" was created by the Spirit of God—that also shrank back from death! There were not in it any of the things which make death natural and, therefore, because of the very purity of His Nature, He recoiled at the approach of death and needed to be especially strengthened in order to meet "the last enemy."

Probably, however, it was the sense of utter desertion that was preying upon His mind and so produced that extremity of weakness. All His disciples had failed Him and presently would forsake Him. Judas had lifted up his heel against Him and there was not one of all His professed followers who would faithfully cleave to Him. Kings, princes, scribes and rulers were all united against Him—and of the people, there were none with Him. Worst of all, by the necessity of His expiatory Sacrifice and His Substitution for His people, His Father, Himself, withdrew the Light of His Countenance from Him and, even in the garden, He was beginning to feel that agony of soul which, on the Cross, wrung from Him that doleful cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" And that sense of utter loneliness and desertion, added to all that He had endured, made Him so exceedingly weak that it was necessary that He should be specially strengthened for the ordeal through which He had still to pass.

II. Now, in the second place, let us meditate for a little while upon OUR LORD'S STRENGTHENING. "There appeared an angel unto Him from Heaven, strengthening Him."

It is night and there He kneels, under the olives, offering up, as Paul says, "prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death." While wrestling there, He is brought into such a state of agony that He sweats great drops of blood and, suddenly, there flashes before Him, like a meteor from the midnight sky, a bright spirit that had come straight from the Throne of God to minister to Him in His hour of need.

Think of *the condescension on Christ's part to allow an angel to come and strengthen Him.* He is the Lord of angels as well as of men. At His bidding, they fly more swiftly than the lightning flash to do His will. Yet, in His extremity of weakness, He was succored by one of them! It was a wondrous stoop for the infinitely-great and ever-blessed Christ of God to consent that a spirit of His own creation should appear unto Him and strengthen Him.

But while I admire the condescension which permitted one angel to come, I equally admire *the self-restraint which allowed only one to come,* for, if He had so pleased, He might have appealed to His Father and He would at once have sent to Him "more than twelve legions of angels." No, He did not make such a request. He rejoiced to have one to strengthen Him, but He would not have any more. Oh, what matchless beauties are combined in our blessed Savior! You may look on this side of the shield

and you will perceive that it is of pure gold. Then you may look on the other side of it, but you will not discover that it is brass, as in the fable, for it is gold all through! Our Lord Jesus is "altogether lovely." What He does, or what He refrains from doing equally deserves the praises of His people.

How could the angel strengthen Christ? That is a very natural enquiry, but it is quite possible that when we have answered that question as well as we can, we shall not have given a full and satisfactory reply to it. Yet I can conceive that, in some mysterious manner, an angel from Heaven *may have actually infused fresh vigor into the physical constitution of Christ*. I cannot positively affirm that it was so, but it seems to me a very likely thing. We know that God can suddenly communicate new strength to fainting spirits and, certainly, if He willed it, He could thus lift up the drooping head of His Son and make Him feel strong and resolute again.

Perhaps it was so, but, in any case, it must have strengthened the Savior to *feel that He was in pure company*. It is a great joy to a man who is battling for the right against a crowd who love the wrong, to find a comrade by his side who loves the Truth of God as he loves it. To a pure mind, obliged to listen to the ribald jests of the licentious, I know of nothing that is more strengthening than to get a whisper in the ear from one who says, "I, too, love that which is chaste and pure, and hate the filthy conversation of the wicked." So, perhaps, the mere fact of that shining angel standing by the Savior's side, or reverently bowing before Him, may in itself have strengthened Him.

Next to that, was *the tender sympathy which this angelic ministration proved*. I can imagine that all the holy angels leant over the battlements of Heaven to watch the Savior's wondrous life. And now that they see Him in the garden and perceive, by His whole appearance, and His desperate agony, that death is drawing to Him, they are so astonished that they crave permission that at least one of their number shall go down to see if He cannot carry succor to Him from His Father's house above. I can imagine the angels saying, "Did we not sing of Him at Bethlehem when He was born? Did not some of us minister to Him when He was in the desert and among wild beasts, hungry after His long fast and terrible temptation? Has He not been seen of angels all the while He has been on earth! Oh, let some one of us go to His relief!" And I can readily suppose that God said to Gabriel, "Your name means, The Strength of God—go and strengthen your Lord in Gethsemane," "And there appeared an angel unto Him from Heaven strengthening Him." And I think that He was strengthened, at least in part, by observing the sympathy of all the heavenly host with Him in His season of secret sorrow. He might seem to be alone as Man, but as Lord and King, He had on His side an innumerable company of angels who waited to do His will—and here was one of them, come to assure Him that He was not alone, after all.

Next, no doubt, our Savior was comforted by *the angel's willing service*. You know, dear Brothers and Sisters, how a little act of kindness will cheer us when we are very low in spirit. If we are despised and rejected of men. If we are deserted and defamed by those who ought to have dealt differently with us, even a tender look from a child will help to

remove our depression! In times of loneliness it is something even to have a dog with you, to lick your hand and show you such kindness as is possible from him. And our blessed Master, who always appreciated and still appreciates the least service rendered to Him—for not a cup of cold water, given to a disciple in Christ's name, shall lose its reward—was cheered by the devotion and homage of the ministering spirit that came from Heaven to strengthen Him! I wonder if the angel worshipped Him—I think that He could do no less and it must have been something to worship the blood-red Son of God. Oh, that any of us could have paid Him such homage as that! The time for such special ministry as that is now over, yet my faith seems to bring Him back here, at this moment, just as if we were in Gethsemane. I adore You, blessed eternal God—never more Godlike than when You did prove Your perfect Manhood by sweating great drops of blood in the awful weakness of Your depression in the Garden of Sorrow!

Perhaps, too, the angel's presence comforted and strengthened the Savior *as being a sort of foretaste of His final victory*. What was this angel but the pioneer of all the heavenly host that would come to meet Him when the fight was over? He was one who, in full confidence of His Lord's victory, had flown before the rest to pay homage to the conquering Son of God, who would tread the old dragon beneath His feet! You remember how, when Jesus was born, first there came one angel who began to speak of Him to the shepherds, "and suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." The first angel had, as it were, stolen a march upon his brethren, and got there before them, but, no sooner was the wondrous news proclaimed through Heaven's streets, than every angel resolved to overtake him before his message was completed! So, here again is one that had come as an outrider to remind His Lord of His ultimate victory—and there were many more afterwards to come with the same glad tidings—but, to the Savior's heart, that angel's coming was a token that He would lead captivity captive and that myriads of other bright spirits would crowd around Him and cry, "Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be you lifted up, you everlasting doors; that the King of Glory, fresh from His blood-red shame, may enter into His heavenly and eternal inheritance!"

Yet once more, is *it not very likely that this angel brought the Savior a message from Heaven*? The angels are generally God's messengers, so they have something to communicate from Him and, perhaps, this angel, bending over the Savior's prostrate form, whispered in His ear, "Be of good cheer. You must pass through all this agony, but You will thereby save an innumerable multitude of the sons and daughters of men who will love and worship You and Your Father forever and forever. He is with You even at this moment. Though He must hide His face from You because of the requirements of justice that the Atonement may be complete, His heart is with You and He loves You always." Oh, how our Lord Jesus must have been cheered if some such words as these were whispered into His ears!

Now, in closing, let us try to learn the lessons of this incident. Beloved Brothers and Sisters, you and I may have to pass through great griefs—certainly ours will never be so great as those of our Divine Master—but we may have to follow through the same waters. Well, at such times, as I have already said, let us resort to prayer and *let us be content to receive comfort from the humblest instrumentality.* "That is too simple an observation," you say. It is a very simple one, but it is one that some people have need to remember. You remember how Naaman the Syrian was healed through the remark of a little captive girl and, sometimes, great saints have been cheered by the words of very little people. You remember how Dr. Guthrie, when he was dying, wanted "a child's hymn"? It was just like he—great, glorious, simple-minded child-man that he was. He said what you and I must sometimes have felt that we needed—a child's hymn—a child's joyful song to cheer us up in our hour of depression and sorrow!

There are some people who seem as if they would not be converted unless they can see some eminent minister. Even that will not suit some of them—they need a special revelation from Heaven. They will not take a text from the Bible—though I cannot conceive of anything better than that—but they think that if they could dream something, or if they could hear words spoken in the cool of the evening by some strange voice in the sky, then they might be converted. Well, Brothers and Sisters, if you will not eat the apples that grow on trees, you must not expect angels to come and bring them to you! We have a more sure word of testimony in the Bible than we can have anywhere else. If you will not be converted by that Word, it is a great pity—it is much more than a pity, it is a great sin! If your Lord and Master condescended to receive consolation from an angel whom He had Himself created, you ought to be willing to gather comfort from the feeblest speech of the poorest person—from the least of the people of God when they try to cheer you.

I have known an old professor say of a young minister, "It is no use for me to hear him, for he has not had the experience that I have had, so how can he instruct or help me?" O Sirs, I have known many old saints get more comfort out of godly boys than they did from those of their own age! God knows how, out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, to perfect praise and I have never heard that He has done that out of the mouths of old men! Why is that? Because they know too much! But the children do not know anything and, therefore, out of their mouths the praise of God is perfect. So let us never despise God's messengers, however humble they may be.

The next lesson is while you should be thankful for the least comforter, yet, *in your times of deepest need, you may expect the greatest comforters to come to you.* Let me remind you that an angel appeared to Joseph when Herod was seeking Christ's life. Then, later, angels appeared to Christ when the devil had been tempting Him. And now, at Gethsemane, when there was a peculiar manifestation of diabolical malice, for it was the hour of the powers of darkness—then, when the devil was loose and doing his utmost against Christ—an angel came from Heaven to strengthen Him. So, when you are in your heaviest trials, you shall have

your greatest strength. Perhaps you will have little to do with angels till you get into deep trouble and then shall the promise be fulfilled, "He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone." They are always ready to be your keepers, but, in the matter of spiritual strengthening, these holy spirits may have little to do with some of you until you stand foot to foot with Apollyon and have to fight stern battles with the Evil One himself. It is worthwhile to go through rough places to have angels to bear you up! It is worthwhile to go to Gethsemane if there we may have angels from Heaven to strengthen us! So, be of good comfort, Brothers and Sisters, whatever lies before you. The darker your experience is, the brighter will be that which comes out of it. The disciples feared as they entered the cloud on the Mount of Transfiguration, but when they had passed right into it, they saw Jesus, Moses, and Elijah in Glory! O you who are the true followers of Christ, fear not the clouds that lower darkly over you, for you shall see the brightness behind them and the Christ in them! And your spirits shall be blessed.

But if you are not believing in Christ, I am indeed grieved for you, for you shall have the sorrow without the solace—the cup of bitterness without the angel—the agony, and that forever, without the messenger from Heaven to console you! Oh, that you would all believe in Jesus! God help you so to do for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 22:14-46.

Verses 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.* And it is fulfilled, for Christ Himself is the Lamb of our Passover. His blood has been shed and sprinkled. His people have been brought up out of their Egyptian bondage and, by faith, they feed upon Him and are glad. How sweetly the Passover melted away into the Lord's Supper and how graciously did our Savior thus teach us that, as a rule, He does not make violent changes in the development of His people's spiritual life, but He leads them on gradually from one stage to another! There may be, sometimes, very sudden elevations, but, as a general rule, we go from strength to strength, a step at a time, and the Truth of God is revealed to us little by little.

17, 18. *So 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.* This was the Passover cup—the cup with which they concluded the paschal supper. At such times they also usually began to chant a Psalm in happy unison. Just at that point, Christ interjected the first part of the celebration of the new ordinance—the Lord's Supper, into which the paschal supper was to melt.

19. *So 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.* It was clearly impossible that He could have meant that bread to be literally His body, because His body was there at the table! Therefore, the misunderstanding, or misrepresentation of the Church of Rome is altogether without excuse. Our Savior plainly intended to say, "This bread represents My body; it is an emblem, a symbol, of My body." If this had been spoken concerning the bread after Christ had been dead and gone, and not before, there might have been some warrant for the teaching of the Papists, but there cannot be any such warrant, as He used the words while He was sitting there with His Apostles. Let us be careful not to lose the true meaning of Christ's words while we combat the false interpretation that has been given to them.

20. *Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you.* He could not have meant that, literally, that cup was the New Covenant—I never heard of anybody who thought He did. Why, then, take one part of the ordinance literally, if not the other? But our Lord did mean that the contents of that cup represented the blood which seals and ratifies the Eternal Covenant on which our hopes are built.

21. *But, behold, the hand of him that betrays Me is with Me on the table.* Lamentable circumstance—sad index of what often still occurs! The worst traitors to Christ are not outside, but inside the visible Church. There they have the best opportunity for doing mischief. There they can give the unkindest cut of all. God grant that none of us may be among that miserable number!

22. *And truly the Son of Man goes as it was determined, but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed!* The fact that it was determined in the eternal decrees of God, that Christ should die, did not at all diminish the responsibility of all who had a share in bringing about that death. Learn, Beloved, to believe firmly in Divine Predestination without doubting human responsibility. Even though you may not be able to show how these two things agree, do not be anxious about that matter! Be satisfied to believe what you cannot understand. Both these things are true and they are, both of them, in this verse.

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.* What a strange thing that it should have been so! Is there any such strife among us here? If so, how utterly unworthy are we to be the disciples of such a Master as our Lord Jesus Christ!

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.* You know, Brothers, that it always will be so. If a man tries to be great in the Church, somehow or other his Brothers generally think very little of him! But he who is willing to serve—whose one ambition it is to lay himself out for the Glory of his Master, and for the general good—that man

usually has a great deal more honor than he would have expected to receive. The way to be great in the Church is to be serviceable to all around us, to be meek and lowly, to be willing to wait upon others. We have good reason for being the servants of our Brothers and Sisters when we remember the humble position that our Lord Himself assumed.

27. *For which is greater, he that sits at the table, or he that serves? Is it not he that sits the table? But I am among you as He that serves.* He served in the very humblest capacity, for did He not even wash the disciples' feet? And if He, who was the greatest of all, thus condescended to perform the lowliest service, who among us shall be so lifted up as to suppose that no common work is good enough for him? Brethren, we must be humble, or else we shall be humbled! And let me remark that the latter experience is by no means a pleasant one, while the former experience is most sweet and gracious. God give us the Grace to be humble!

28-30. *You are they which have continued with Me in My temptations. And I appoint unto you a Kingdom, as My Father has appointed unto Me; that you may eat and drink at My table in My Kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* Yes, there are thrones and a Kingdom for those who are faithful to the King of kings! But there is something else to think of beside that kind of glory, for notice our Savior's next words.

31. *And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.* And between us and the Kingdom there will be struggles and dangers—and watchfulness and wrestling prayer will be required of us. And here is our only hope of escape from the perils of the way, as it was with poor Peter—

32-34. *But I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your Brothers. And he said unto Him, Lord, I am ready to go with You, both into prison, and to death. And He said, I tell you, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before you shall thrice deny that you know Me.* Though Peter did not really know himself, Christ knew him. That is one of our comforts—that the Lord Jesus Christ foresees all future ill and so provides against it. He looks down into our nature and deals with us as we need to be dealt with. It is well for us that we are in His hands.

35-40. *And He said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked you anything? And they said, Nothing. Then said He unto them, But now, he that has a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that has no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in Me, And He was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning Me have an end. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And He said unto them, It is enough. And He came out, and went, as He was known, to the Mount of Olives; and His disciples also followed Him. And when He was at the place, He said unto them, Pray that you enter not into temptation.* Or, "into trial." We do not often enough present that petition, "Lead us not into temptation." We are not able to bear temptation if it goes beyond a certain point—and it is a greater mercy to

escape temptation than it is to pass through it and to overcome it. I mean, of course, only in some respects. We may ask to be delivered from the Evil One if we must be tempted by him, but our first prayer should be that we may not enter into temptation.

41, 42. *And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying, Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Yours be done.* We can read these words in a calm, quiet tone, but they were uttered by our Lord with an intensity of agony which we can scarcely call up before our mind's eyes. So terrible was that agony that our Savior became utterly weak and faint through the intensity of His pleading.

43, 44. *And there appeared an angel unto Him from Heaven, strengthening Him. And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly.* More and more intense was that brief prayer as His supplication was continued.

44. *And His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground.* Luke was a physician, you know, so he was the most likely one to record this phenomenon. It has happened—so we have been told—to some other persons in intense fright or agony, that their sweat has been tinged with blood. But we never remember reading or hearing of anyone but our Lord of whom it could be said, "His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

45. *And when He rose up from prayer, and was come to His disciples, He found them sleeping for sorrow.* Great sorrow may have quite opposite effects upon different men. You have, perhaps, sometimes noticed that intoxication produces upon some men exactly the opposite effect to that which it produces upon others—some become irritable and noisy, while others become taciturn and quiet. It is also quite a matter of fact that great sorrow has various effects upon different minds. In the Savior's case, it aroused Him to an awful agony of earnestness in prayer. In the disciples case, it sent them to sleep.

46. *And said unto them, Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation.* The great trial for them, as well as for their Lord, was close at hand. It was late at night and they were drowsy and sleepy, yet no time is amiss for supplication. Prayer is never out of season and never unnecessary. We never know when temptation is near, so let us pray without ceasing to Him who is able to preserve us from temptation, or to deliver us out of it.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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

"GO IN PEACE"
NO. 2770

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 16, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 23, 1883.

"And He said to the woman, Your faith has saved you; go in peace."
Luke 7:50.

THERE appears to have been four stages in Christ's dealing with this woman. I know not what had preceded the narrative as we have it recorded in this Chapter—I need not enter into that question now. There had, doubtless, been a work of the Spirit of God upon that woman's heart, turning her from her sin to her Savior, but when she stood at our Master's feet, raining tears of penitence upon them, wiping them with the hairs of her head, giving to them kisses of love and anointing them with the ointment from the alabaster box, there were four stages in His gracious dealings with her.

The first was when He silently accepted her manifestations of love. When the copious tears from her eyes fell upon His feet, He did not withdraw them. When those feet were wiped with the luxuriant tresses of her hair, still He did not withdraw them. And when she ventured upon a yet closer familiarity and not only kissed His feet, but did not cease to kiss them, He still did not withdraw them, but quietly accepted all that she did. And when the precious ointment was poured in lavish abundance upon those precious feet of His, He did not upbraid her, He did not refuse her gifts, but tacitly accepted them, though without a word of acknowledgment just then. And I think it is a very blessed thing for any of you to be accepted before God, even though no word has come from His lips assuring you that it is so. When your tears, cries, secret love, and earnest seeking—when your confession of sin, your struggle after faith and the dawning of your faith are just accepted by the Lord, though as yet He has not said to you, "Your sins are forgiven you," it is a very blessed stage for you to have reached, for the Lord does not begin to accept anyone, even by a silence which means consent, and then draw back!

He accepted this woman's love and gifts, though, for a time, He gave her no assurance of that acceptance and that fact must have greatly cheered her. Manoah's wife said to him, "If the Lord were pleased to kill us, He would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands." And I feel sure that if the Lord had not meant to bestow His mercy upon this woman, He would not have submitted to her washing of

His feet with her tears, and wiping them with the hairs of her head—and the subsequent continual kissing of them and anointing of them with the precious ointment.

Our Lord's favorable inclination towards this woman was still more marked in the second stage of His dealings with her, when He began to defend her against her accuser. When Simon's evil thoughts had condemned her and also her Lord, Jesus spoke that wonderful parable which set forth the greatness of this woman's love and justified the extraordinary way in which she manifested it. Christ did not speak to her, but He spoke up for her—and such action as that should be quite sufficient to satisfy the soul of a Believer in Him. So what if my Lord has not revealed Himself to me? He has revealed Himself to the Father for me! What if He has not spoken to me? Yet, if He has spoken to God on my behalf—if He has spoken in the Scriptures in defense of poor sinners and advocated their cause in the High Court of Heaven, then how thankful I may be—and how thankful they may be!

In the third stage, our Lord did still more for this woman, for He spoke to her these gracious words, "Your sins are forgiven." Oh, how they must have dropped like dew into her poor soul! How she must have been refreshed by them! She, who was a sinner—a great sinner, a public sinner—yes, a professional sinner—hears her Savior say to her, "Your sins are forgiven." The absolution pronounced by the man who calls himself a priest is utterly worthless! But it would be worthwhile to give a thousand worlds, if we had them, for absolution from our Great High Priest! Yes, He who knew all about the woman's sin, He who had power on earth to forgive sins, had said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." Was not that enough for her? Would not that short sentence set all the bells of her heart ringing as long as ever she lived?

Yes, but there was still more to follow, for the Lord spoke to her a second time and said, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." So she was not only delivered from the guilt of sin, but she was also delivered from the power of sin! Her faith had saved her! She was a saved woman, so she might go in peace! Now she is enjoying the sunlight of full assurance, the bright clear noontide of acknowledged acceptance—"Your faith has saved you; go in peace." Some of us have this great blessing and we rejoice in it, but if others of you have not come quite so far on the heavenly road, do not begin murmuring or doubting! Bless the Lord Jesus Christ for any favor that He has shown to you, a poor unworthy sinner, and if you have even the faintest ray of the Light of God, pray Him to make your path like that of the just which "shines more and more unto the perfect day." If you have received any token for good from your Lord, be thankful for it and expect, before long to hear in your soul the sweet music of this gracious word—

"Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

So we have come to our text, in which two things are very clearly revealed. The first is, an assurance—"Your faith has saved you." And the second is, *a dismission*—"Go in peace."

I. First, then, here is AN ASSURANCE: "Your faith has saved you."

That assurance teaches us, first, that *salvation is a present thing*—"Your faith *has* saved you." This is something that is already accomplished. You are saved—not, you *shall* be saved—but you are even now in possession of the priceless gift of salvation. "Your faith has saved you." All through the Scriptures and especially in the New Testament, it is plainly asserted that believers in Christ are already in possession of salvation. I will not stay to prove that it is so, but will rather explain it. If anyone says to me, "In what respect are Believers saved?" I answer that they are saved in the price, in the promise, in the principles and in the pledge of salvation. The alliteration will help you to remember these four points.

First, they are saved *in the price of salvation*. All that was necessary to save them from the result of sin has been endured by the Lord Jesus Christ. He has ransomed them by His death upon the Cross. He has stood in their place and borne their sin in His own body on the tree—and suffered the full penalty for it. He has finished the transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity and brought in for them everlasting righteousness so that they are saved! The great work of their salvation was completed by Christ upon the Cross when He laid down His life for them and now they are, " bought with a price," even "the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

Next, they are saved *in the promise of salvation*. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who cannot lie, has declared that "whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." God's promise is certain of fulfillment, so that every believer in Jesus may be absolutely sure of salvation. We often take the check of a man who is known to be in a good financial position, and we consider his check to be as good as if it were hard cash. And, in like manner, we accept God's promise of salvation as being just as sure as the salvation itself. Paul tells us that God's promise has been confirmed by an oath, "that by two Immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

Then, thirdly, we have salvation *in the principles of it*. That is to say, all those Graces which constitute the essentials of a perfect character, are in every true child of God. There is given to us, when we are regenerated, the very same life which we are to live forever in Heaven. We have now the root, the bulb, the seed out of which immortality and perfection will most surely grow—we may not yet be perfect, but we have that which will come to perfection! We have within us a new nature which cannot sin because it is born of God and this will gradually overcome the old nature, as the Israelites drove out the Canaanites, and we shall be perfect before the Throne of the Most High. A man may have, in a very small room, a whole field of wheat lying in embryo in the seed which is to be sown in the springtime, and reaped in the autumn! And we have, in the gift of God's Grace, all Heaven in embryo in the seeds of faith and love, and the work of the Holy Spirit within our souls. Thus, we have salvation in the principles of it.

And, once more, we have salvation *in the pledge of it*, for, when the Holy Spirit enters our heart, His coming there is the pledge and the earnest of Heaven! There is a difference between a pledge and an earnest and what I really mean is rather an earnest than a pledge. A pledge is taken back, but an earnest is retained. A man who has his wage to take at the end of the week, may get some earnest money in the middle of the week and, if his master is what he should be, that will be a pledge that he will get the rest. So the Holy Spirit is the Divine Person who virtually puts Heaven into us and makes us fit to be in the Heaven, which Christ has gone to prepare for us. What a mercy it is to have the witness of the Holy Spirit, the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God our Heavenly Father—to have aspirations after holiness which we never had in our unregenerate state! All this is the pledge of Heaven and in having the pledge, we have practically the salvation itself. The Holy Spirit would not have come into our hearts and given us all these blessings if He had not meant to "perfect that which concerns us," and to save us in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.

Salvation, then, is a present thing, in price, in promise, in principles and in pledge. But the important question for each of you to answer is—Have you obtained that salvation? If you have not, you are in a truly terrible condition, for you are "condemned already" because you have "not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." But if you have obtained this salvation, then you are indeed rich to all eternity! Perhaps you live in one poor room and have to work very hard for a livelihood, yet you are much richer than those emperors and kings who have much earthly pomp and state, but who are not the subjects of God's Grace—for *you* are saved! The Lord has given you that salvation which can never be taken away from you. So rejoice in this salvation and, if you have little else to cover you, let this salvation be your royal apparel! Let this salvation load your table with heavenly dainties! Let this salvation smooth your path, however rough it may be, and cheer your heart, however great your trials may be!

So, this assurance means that salvation is a present thing.

Next, it teaches us that *salvation is obtained by faith.* "Your faith has saved you." "But," says someone, "Was it not the Lord Jesus Christ who saved her?" Yes, certainly it was, but do you see what Christ does? He is so fond of Faith that He takes the crown from His own head and puts it on the head of Faith, as He says to the woman, "Your faith has saved you." Is that a safe thing for Christ to do? Oh, yes! Because Faith at once removes the crown from her own head and puts it back upon Christ's, saying, "Not unto me, not unto me, but unto Your name be all the Glory." Christ loves to crown Faith because Faith loves to crown Christ! As for boasting—Faith cannot tolerate that for a moment! She hurls it out of the window and will have nothing further to do with it. Our Savior speaks thus, "Your faith has saved you," because He knows that it will be understood that Faith is only the connecting link with Himself—that He really works the salvation, but that the faith of the Believer is the means of obtaining it.

There are four things, concerning this faith which I want you to notice, and I will put them under the same letter that I used before, so that it may be the easier for you to remember them. First, this woman's faith was a *personal* faith—"*Your* faith has saved you." O dear Friends, I implore you to give up all idea of being saved by anybody else's faith! You must believe in Jesus for yourself or you will be lost forever! What a dreadful lie it is when men stand up as sponsors for a child and promise and vow various things, none of which are within their power to perform! As to anything that anybody ever promised with regard to your soul, what can another person do for you in such a matter as that? The most earnest faith in your parents can never bring you to Heaven unless you, also, have faith in Jesus! There *is* a great blessing which may come to us through the faith of others, if they exercise it in prayer on our behalf, but, still, *salvation* can never come to us apart from our own personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you"—not Peter's faith, nor James's faith, nor John's faith, but her own! And you, also, must have faith for yourself, or you will assuredly be lost! "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." But if you do not personally believe on Him, you cannot be saved!

Notice, next, that this woman's faith was a *practical* faith. She was saved by faith, and not by works, but she was not saved by a faith which did not produce works. Think of her works—she washes the Master's feet with her tears and wipes them with the hairs of her head. She kisses them repeatedly and anoints them with her precious ointment. I may truly say of her, "She has done what she could." All that her affection prompted, her devotion performed—for she had the faith which works by love—and if you, dear Friends, have a faith that never works for Christ, I beg you to get rid of it at once, for it will turn out to be a bastard faith! The faith that never kisses His feet is a faith that He will tread under His feet! The faith that never anoints Him is a faith that will have no fragrance in His esteem and He will not accept it. We are not saved by works and faith combined, much less by works alone, but, nevertheless, the faith which saves is not a barren faith—it *produces* the good fruit of love and service for Christ.

So this woman's faith was personal and practical. It was also a *penitent* faith. While she stood at Christ's feet, behind Him, her eyes showered tears upon them as she wept over her sin. I am always doubtful of the genuineness of a dry-eyed faith. The longer I live, the more I am afraid of those people who profess to leap into faith without any repentance! And there seem to be some, in these days, who do not believe in the old-fashioned sorrow for sin. I would rather see some men less confidant than they are if they were more humbled on account of their past transgressions. This woman manifested a truly penitent faith.

And, once more, it was a *pure* faith—I use that word, *pure*, to help your memory. I mean that her faith was perfectly simple. She wept, but she did not trust in her weeping. She anointed Christ's feet with the ointment, but she did not rely upon her self-sacrifice. She kissed His feet, but she did not depend upon her kisses. Where was her trust all

placed? Why, upon Christ—and upon Him alone! I do not know that she had ever read the Old Testament. Certainly, she could not have read the New Testament, for it was not written then! She may not have known much about the Bible, but she knew Him who is the very sum and substance of the Bible! I have heard people talk about a Body of Divinity, but there never was but one in the highest sense of the term, and Jesus Christ is that Body of Divinity! He is, in the true sense, "the Word of God." This woman had seen Him, she had learned to know Him—He had forgiven her sin and she had come into that house full of love to Him, full of trust in Him and now, from His own lips, she receives this gracious assurance, "Your faith has saved you." It was faith in Him and in nothing else! There was not and there could not have been, in her case, anything to trust to but Christ. She was, in a very emphatic sense, a sinner. She had not set herself up as being a person of good character. There were, no doubt, scores of people in the city who could have borne lamentable evidence of her sinfulness. But she trusted herself absolutely to Jesus Christ, the sinners' Savior, and she trusted Him alone—and so her faith was proved to be of that pure kind that saves all who exercise it. Let yours be like that, dear Friend—personal, practical, penitential and pure!

Further, upon this first point, note that *salvation may be a matter of assurance*. This woman had the assurance from Christ's own lips, "Your faith has saved you." Those of you who were at the Prayer Meeting here last Monday night, will remember that one of our Brothers, when he was giving an address, made you smile when he said, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life," and then added, "h-a-s—that spells, 'got it.'" "That is a strange mode of spelling which is not taught at the Board School, yet it is a heavenly way of spelling and it is perfectly correct. "H-a-s—that spells, 'got it.'" If you have the blessing of salvation, there is a possibility of knowing that you have it. "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." He has got it! He has got it now!

"I would believe it," one says, "if Jesus Christ spoke to me and said so." My dear Friend, He *has* said it in His Word! Is that Word a lie, or is it true? If it is true, then what more do you need? Christ has written it in His Word and I like a thing that is written even better than that which is spoken. You know how a man says, when he wants a guarantee about a bargain, "Give it to me in writing, for some people will swear that they never said what we heard them say, so give it to me in black and white." Well, here it is in black and white—"He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." And again, "There is therefore now"—"*now*," mark you—"no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." And yet again, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Now, cannot you also say, "got it"?

"Oh, but!" says someone, "I need *evidence* that it is so." Very well, you shall have evidence! You shall have the Witness of the Spirit who has renewed you. You shall have the witness of your changed life. You shall have the witness of your new character, but, first of all, is not Christ's Word sufficient for you? Is not Christ's written Word enough? Is not this Book, which you believe to have been Inspired by the Holy Spirit and

which reveals the Word of the Lord, enough for you? It is enough for me! If all the men in the world were to come, one after another, after I had read something in the Bible—and they were all to say, in their different languages, "That is a lie," I would not believe it an atom the less! And suppose they were all to stand up and say, "It is true"? I would reply, "Of course it is! But I do not need *your* word to confirm what Christ has said." I am perfectly satisfied if He has said it. And there it stands—and all the powers of Hell cannot prevail to overthrow it! Here is the solid rock for a soul to rest upon! Christ says, at this moment, to everyone who believes in Him and trusts in His blood and righteousness, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

II. So we come to the latter part of our text, which is A DISMISSION—"Go in peace." What did our Lord mean by saying this?

I think He meant, first, "Leave this place of controversy and go in peace." Did you notice that it was when those who sat at the meal with Him began to say within themselves, "Who is this that also forgives sins?" that He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace"? I See the black looks of those Jews, those Pharisees, round about Simon's table. Why, they are as sour as vinegar and full of all kinds of skepticism! So the Savior says to the woman, "Go home, good Soul, away from all of them." So, dear Friends, whenever you meet with a book that is full of skepticism and unbelief—especially you who have lately found the Savior—you had better throw it away! "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." Unbelief will be no help to you—your faith has already saved you—what more do you need? You have the assurance within your own soul that you are saved—do not go anywhere, or do anything to damage that assurance! I do not think it is worthwhile to go through a horse pond and get covered with filth, just for the pleasure of being washed afterwards!

It may be that some strong man, like another Samson, may have to go in among the Philistines and pull their temple down about their ears, but poor Hannah could not do that, and those who are like her—the women of a sorrowful spirit—had better go home and get out of the way of that set of wranglers! They may even be wrangling professors, squabbling about this doctrine and that—and perhaps not understanding any of them properly—so the Savior says to you, "You have the assurance of salvation; do not let anybody worry you out of that. Go in peace." This is what the Apostle means when he says, "Him that is weak in the faith receive you, but not to doubtful disputations."

Then, next, I think our Savior meant His words to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace," to be *a kind of dismissing of her case from the Court*. Here is Simon, in thought, accusing her and thinking that she ought not to be permitted to come and touch the Master's feet. And here is the Lord Jesus Christ not only becoming a pleader for her, but deciding the case in her favor as He says to her, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." This was in effect saying, "Your case is dismissed; there is nothing against you. The Court clears you; go home, good Soul." What a mercy it is when the Lord speaks thus to anyone! "Who shall lay

anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." Christ has dismissed us from the Court of Justice, so let us "go in peace."

May not our Lord also have meant something more than we see upon the surface of these words? May He not have meant, "*Go home in peace to your daily avocations*"? Ah, she had done a deal of mischief in that home of hers by her sin, for there never was a fallen woman who brought a blessing to her family while she lived in sin. And now that the Savior has given to her the assurance of salvation, He says to her, "Go home, and attend to your ordinary household duties. Go and act as a woman should. Fulfill your part as a mother, or a daughter, or a servant, or whatever your calling may be. Go in peace."

Do you not also think that this *dismissing word would last her as long as she lived*—and that all her life, she would seem to hear the Savior saying to her, "Go in peace"? Perhaps she was to go upstairs and lie there ill—but she was to "go in peace." Possibly she was to come down and to confront opposition and persecution—if so, she was still to hear this message, "Go in peace." I think that word would come to her every morning as soon as she awoke. And when she was about to close her eyes and go to sleep, she would still hear it. With such a gracious message as that, she could even go through the Valley of the Shadow of Death and "fear no evil." It may be that is just what the Lord meant it for—that when she came to die—and she may have died a martyr's death, we cannot tell—at any rate, whenever she came to die, this message was ringing in her ears, "Go in peace."

The practical point that I want to bring home to you Christian people, to you who are saved, is this. Beloved Friends, as you go to your families, as you go through life, as you go into eternity, I pray you to "go in peace." It is Heaven begun below to possess "the peace of God, which passes all understanding." Peace should be the continual portion of all Believers. This is what the angels sang when our Lord Jesus appeared on earth, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, goodwill toward men." And as it was at the beginning of our Savior's life, so it was at the end, for this was our Lord's legacy to all His disciples, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." That which gives one of His titles even to God Himself—for He is called "the God of Peace"—should be very precious to your soul.

Peace is the fit result of what the Savior has done for you. Has He forgiven you? Then you have peace. Has He saved you? Oh, then, feel an inward peace which none can take from you! Did He die for you? Then you can never die, in the full meaning of the word, so be at rest about that matter! Has He risen for you? Then, because He lives, you shall live also! Therefore, let not your heart be troubled, but be at peace. Will He come again to receive you unto Himself? Oh, then, let your peace be like a river flowing from the very Throne of God!

This peace within your heart is the blessed fruit of the Spirit of Peace. Where the Spirit of God is, there must be peace, for He is the Sacred Dove. The fruit of the Spirit within us should be "quietness and assurance forever." Do not despise this priceless gift of peace, but, as saved souls, covet more and more of it. Do you know what I mean by talking thus to you? Suppose you are thinking to yourself, "Alas, I am going home to an ungodly husband"? Never mind, dear wife, "go in peace." "Oh, but, tomorrow I have to go out among ungodly men." Never mind—"go in peace." Do not go among them disturbed and fluttered, but sing to yourself softly—

"My heart is resting, O my God!"

"Go in peace." Perhaps you are going to the sickbed of one of your dearest friends. Possibly there is one at home who is so depressed in spirit as to depress you, too. Never mind! "Go in peace." It will strengthen you to have your own heart at peace.

I remember once seeing an accident on a hill. I feared that a man had broken his leg and I know that someone ran to fetch a doctor. And when he came, to my surprise, he walked coolly up to where the man was. If I had been sent for, I would have run myself out of breath to get to the poor man! And when I reached him, I would have been all of a tremble, and would not have been able to do anything properly. But when the doctor heard that there was a man with his leg broken, he walked quietly to the spot and the result was that he was able to do his work properly. Our Lord Jesus Christ was never in a hurry. It is marvelous to contemplate the leisure of the greatest Worker who ever lived! He always moved along with a holy calm and quiet dignity and He, therefore, did everything well. Do you likewise—"go in peace"—for it shall be your strength. Sometimes, your strength is to sit still and, always, the joy of the Lord shall be your strength.

This is the way in which you are to glorify God in your life—by going in peace. When this woman went back to her home—that same woman who had been such a poor, trembling, broken, bruised reed, because of her sin—those who knew her enquired, "What has happened to Mary?"—if that was her name. I do not know. "What has happened to her? Why, she looks so placid, so calm, she is not like the same woman that she used to be." I have no doubt that she was rather quick-tempered, for most very loving spirits are like that. "But now," say her friends, "she takes things so differently. She is so still, quiet and restful." Just so—and then they took knowledge of her, that she had been with Jesus, and had learned of Him, for that was His style and His manner, also!

Ah, dear Hearts, if Christ has saved you, you have the best reason in all the world for being the quietest, happiest people who ever lived! One said, one day, to a person who had spoken of his salvation in tones of assurance, "You ought to be the happiest man that lives." And he answered, "So I am." It was well known that he was very poor, that he did not know where he would get a second coat for his back, but, then, he thought that he did not *need* a second coat till he had worn out the first one! They said that he did not know where he would get his next break-

fast, but he had had his supper, so he was quite content to wait till God should give him his breakfast. He had such simple faith in God that though he was so very poor, yet he said he was the happiest man in all the world!

Go in for that, Beloved, for surely you have a right to it if you are a believer in Jesus! Your greatest sorrows are over, your heaviest burdens Christ has carried, the most terrible disaster that could ever happen to you has been averted by Him, the most fearful calamity that you once had cause to dread can never come to you! You are an heir of God and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ! You shall have all you really need in this life and you shall have the Heaven of God in the life to come! The supreme act of God, by which He eternally blesses, has already been performed upon you! The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have all united to bless you—and the Covenant of Peace is signed, sealed, ratified and you must and shall conquer at the last! So, "Let not your heart be troubled; neither let it be afraid," but say to yourself—

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

God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
EPHESIANS 2.

Verse 1. *And you has He quickened.* You, who were dead by nature, are now made alive unto God by the Holy Spirit. If you had nothing else to think of, all day long, but just these five words, they might suffice to lift you up to the very heights of grateful adoration of your quickening Lord—"And you has He quickened."

1. *Who were dead in trespasses and sins.* These were your grave clothes, or the charnel-house in which you would have continued to lie if the quickening power of God the Holy Spirit had not brought you out into newness of life!

2. *Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience.* This is what happened to us all in our unregenerate state—we were carried along by the world, loving what it loved, judging from its views and acting according to its maxims. No, worse than that, the devil himself had dominion over us, as he had over the rest of the world. "The prince of the power of the air" was the spirit that worked in us as well as in the rest of "the children of disobedience." What a glorious deliverance it was to be saved from the power of death and the dominion of Satan—and to be made partakers of everlasting life!

3. *Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.* That is the highest point to which human nature can attain—left to itself, it makes us "children of wrath." Even those who are now most assuredly the children

of God were once the children of wrath! There was no difference, in that respect, between them and the rest of mankind. It is only the marvelous mercy and Grace of God which have made us to differ from our fellow creatures who are still "dead in trespasses and sins."

4, 5. *But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ.* Again let us praise the Lord with all our hearts for what He has done for us. It is truly wonderful that He should have loved us when we were "dead in trespasses and sins"—with no feeling, no holy desire, no repentance—while indifference, heartlessness, powerlessness covered everything! We were dead in sin, yet He loved us, and therefore it was that He "quickened us together with Christ.

5. *(By Grace you are saved).* Not by human merit, not by the energy of our own will, but, "by Grace you are saved."

6. *And has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.* We are not only alive, you see, but we are elevated into the highest position of the new life—made to live *with* Christ and *in* Christ—made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

7, 8. *That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His Grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by Grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.* Both the salvation and the faith that makes it ours are the gift of God! Twice over the Apostle tells us that we are saved by Grace, yet men will not believe it. They will, somehow or other, get away from this humbling, but true and precious Doctrine. They will contrive, by some method or other, to squeeze in their own works and their own will—and so rob Christ, if not of His crown, yet of some of its brightest jewels.

9, 10. *Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship.* If we have good works, as I trust we have, yet even *they* are the production of God's Grace! Praise and glory for them belong to Him, and not to us—"For we are His workmanship."

10. *Created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.* This is the great objective of our election—we are elected that we may be holy and that we may walk in *ordained* good works—who can rightly quarrel with such a Divine Purpose as this?

11, 12. *Therefore remember that you, being in time past, Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.* That is the condition of every unbeliever at this time—"having no hope, and without God in the world." Mr. Hume once made the remark that he knew many Christians who were afraid to die, but he was not. The Christian man, to whom he said this, pointed to an ox grazing in the meadow and said, "You have reached about as high as that bullock has, for he, also, is not afraid to die. But pray tell, Mr. Hume," enquired the good man, "have you any hope after death?" At that question, the philosopher

shook his head, for he knew nothing of such a hope as that! The utmost point he could reach was, by indifference, to raise himself above fear. "Having no hope," is a true description of every man who has no faith in our crucified and risen Savior.

13. *But now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are made near by the blood of Christ.* That is the great attracting power which draws us from our natural distance and brings us into nearness to God! How we ought to prize that precious blood which does so much for us! It cleanses us from sin. It pleads for us before the Throne of God and here, you see, having made a way of access for us, it also conducts us along that way and brings us near to God.

14. *For He is our peace, who has made both one and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us.* There are now no privileges for the Jew from which the Christian is shut out, for Christ "has made both one." There is now neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, for all Believers are one in Christ Jesus.

15-22. *Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of two, one new man, so making peace; and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the Cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you who were afar off, and to them that were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone in whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto an holy Temple in the Lord: in whom you also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.* May we realize that the Holy Spirit is inhabiting His own Church at this moment and, especially, may all of us who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, realize our own position in that spiritual Temple which is the "habitation of God through the Spirit," for Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK—708, 550, 548.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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

PETER'S FALL AND RESTORATION
NO. 2771

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 23, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 22, 1882.

"And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times. So Peter went out and wept bitterly." Luke 22:61, 62.

PETER'S fall, as we noticed in our reading, is four times recorded, at considerable length, but it is not once excused. There is not, in any one of the records, a single word said by way of palliation of his great guilt. John pictures Peter's sin in colors of an almost neutral tint, yet he does not lessen its gravity.

Why, do you think, is this sad record thus given four times? Is it not in order that we should give it fourfold attention? It deserves this special mention, first, because it must have greatly increased the grief of the Lord Jesus Christ to know that while He was enduring untold indignities on His people's behalf, His most prominent disciple was denying Him with oaths and curses down at the lower end of the hall. Surely, this must have cut Him to the quick! I cannot imagine that any of the tortures that He endured from His enemies could have caused Him so much pain as this wicked denial by one of His closest friends. Let your pity and love to Jesus flow in deep and broad streams while you behold him that ate bread with Him thus lifting up his heel against Him and even declaring that He knows not the Man! Blessed Master, there is not one tint of all the colors of grief that is lacking in the picture of Your passion! It is not possible to depict sufferings more acute and intense than was Yours when You died, "the Just for the unjust," to bring us to God.

But, next, I think that Peter's fall and restoration are thus fully recorded to set forth the greatness of our Redeemer's saving power in the immediate prospect of His cruel death upon the Cross. Is it not wonderful to think that before He dies, He restores this great backslider—I had almost said, "this open apostate," for so he was, according to his own language, though he was not so in heart? I can, in imagination, see poor Peter bending before the Cross of Calvary and looking up, through tears of grief and joy, as he mourns his great guilt and sees it all forgiven!

Then comes the dying thief, to represent another class of characters who bring great Glory to our dying Lord. Peter is the backslider restored—the dying thief is the sinner saved at the 11th hour. He was on the very brink of Hell, yet the Master stretched out His hand to rescue him,

saying, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." I cannot imagine two incidents revealing greater Divine Grace than these two, which so richly adorn and embellish the Cross! As captives chained to the wheels of the returning conqueror's chariot make his triumphal procession the more illustrious, so is Christ upon the Cross the more manifestly triumphant in His Infinite Grace as He leads the restored Peter back to his Apostleship and takes the penitent thief, plucked from Perdition, up with Himself into the Paradise of God!

Moreover, do you not think that there is, in this fourfold record, an instructive lesson for us concerning the frailty of the best of men? Holy Scripture does not tell us much about the best of men who lived in the olden times—its history of the saints is somewhat scanty—but it is particular in recording their faults, as if its special purpose was to remind us that the best of men are but men at the best! This Peter, who seemed to lead the van, was yet so frail and fallible—so far from being the first "Infallible Bishop of Rome"—that he even denied his Lord and Master! That is about the only point, so far as I can see, in which the Pope of Rome is like Peter, for he, too, has great presumption and he can, with his bulls and his curses, go about as far as Peter did in denying his Lord! Peter's fall seems to say to each of us, "You, too, are weak. You, too, will fall if you are left to yourself. Therefore trust wholly to your Master, but never trust in yourself. Look always to Him and rely not upon your own experience, or the firmness of your own resolutions—for you will assuredly fall, as Peter did, unless the almighty hand of Christ shall hold you up."

These lessons might profit us even if we learned no others, but I think we may find some more as I now proceed to speak to you, first, concerning *Peter's fall*. Next, concerning the *means of his recovery*. Thirdly, concerning the *signs of his restoration* and, afterwards, if we have time for them, I hope to make a few general remarks upon the whole incident of Peter's fall and restoration.

I. First, then, concerning PETER'S FALL.

It was a very sad fall because it was *the fall of one of the most favored of Christ's disciples*. We know that there is such a thing as election and that there is such a thing as election out of election and, in the case of Christ's disciples, the principle was carried still further, for there were some who were the elect out of the elect of the elect! Christ had many disciples, yet He said to the Apostles, "I have chosen you twelve." Out of those twelve, he had evidently chosen three—Peter, James and John—who were privileged to be with Him on various occasions when all others were shut out. Peter had been especially favored, so that probably not even John surpassed him in the honor which his Master had put upon him. After his declaration concerning Christ's Messiahship and Deity, Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but My Father which is in Heaven." So you see that Peter was a highly favored man—and for him to deny his Master was a very terrible sin. The higher our privilege, dear Friends, the greater is our responsibility! The nobler our vocation is, the more horrible is our sin when we fall into it.

Secondly, Peter's fall was especially sad because he had been faithfully warned concerning it. Our Lord had said to the eleven, "All of you shall be offended because of Me this night." And then, when Peter declared that he would not be offended, our Lord plainly foretold his triple denial. When Jesus, after the first part of his agony in the garden, came back to the three especially favored disciples and found them all asleep, he said to Peter, "Simon, do you sleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch you and pray lest you enter into temptation." So that Peter knew the danger to which he was exposed. He was not, as some inexperienced persons are, surprised all of a sudden—carried off their feet by a fierce tornado of temptation. If he did not watch and pray, he ought to have done so, for he had been expressly warned, yes, and told that in that very night, not only would he be in danger, but that he would actually fall into the snare which Satan, the great fowler, was setting for him! After that warning, he was not like a bird caught in a trap which it has not seen, but like one that flies boldly into the snare. Solomon says in Proverbs, "Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird"—yet Peter ran into it in spite of all the warning that he had received. This made his sin all the greater! And if any of you sin against the Light of God, your sin will be all the more gross and aggravated.

Further, the guilt of Peter's sin is enhanced by the fact that it *came so soon after his claim of fidelity to his Master*. He had said to Jesus, "Though all men shall be offended because of You, yet will I never be offended." Now, mark that declaration was made in the evening and the sun had not risen—the cock had not crowed—before he had thrice denied his Master! It may have been quite late in the evening when he uttered his boastful declaration and the night had only darkened down to midnight, or an hour or two after, before he had, with oaths and curses, denied that he even knew his Lord. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, if we eat our words as soon as that—if we go home from this House of Prayer and fall into sin. Or if tomorrow, while yet the sacred bread of the Communion Table is scarcely digested, we shall so act as practically to deny Christ—it will be a very terrible thing! It would have been bad enough if Peter had sinned thus 20 years after making his profession of love to Christ—but to deny his Lord an hour or two after such a vehement declaration—this was wicked, indeed!

Observe, also, that *Peter's sin had degrees in it*. This makes it the more interesting to us, especially if we have, ourselves, gone any part of the same evil way, for, the first time he denied his Master, it was not in the same style as the third time. Being let into the High Priest's palace, the damsel who opened the door looked him in the face and, afterwards, when Peter was sitting with the servants and officers around the fire, this somewhat busy lady came up to him and, gazing into his face, said, "You, also, were with Jesus of Galilee." Peter made a kind of evasive answer. There was a sort of subterfuge in it—"I know not what you are saying." As much as if he had said, "I do not understand you." This was really a denial of Christ, but he had so worded it as to quiet his conscience to some extent—he had not positively, in so many words, denied his Master. He was trying to do a little dodging, as some people nowadays do,

and he thought, perhaps, that he might be able to draw back from the position into which he had been led by his curiosity. There was no oath the first time, no cursing—but a simple evasive answer—really, in God's sight, a denial of his Lord, yet not so pronounced as it afterwards became.

The second time, he seems to have got up from where he sat by the fire. He was evidently not comfortable there and he had gone out to the porch, a good way off from the rest. And then, still wanting to see the end of the matter, he had come back. He did not press his way into the inner circle around the fire, and sit there, but he stood and leaned forward just to warm his hands. And then it was that this woman, noticing how restless he had been, came up with a companion of hers and, looking at him, began to say to the other woman, "I know that he is one of them, I am sure that he is." And then she and the other both broke out saying, "You were with Him! We are sure you were with Him." And the men joined in the cry, perhaps most of them said, "Oh, yes, he is one of them!" And then Peter "denied with an oath, I do not know the Man." Oh, how dreadful for him to call Christ, "the Man," when he had boldly declared that He was the Son of God! What a terrible fall was this!

After this, Peter gets up and goes away from the fire altogether. It is a large place, so he still keeps within the enclosure, but he gets up into a corner where the light does not fall upon him. And there he remains for about an hour, not very easy, you may be sure. At last, he begins to talk to those around him. He thought that they would not find him out, now, because the firelight did not reach so far, but he did not remember that his tongue would tell tales, for those near him said, "Listen! That fellow has the accent of Galilee! He is a Galilean and all the people who were with Jesus were Galileans. Depend upon it, he is one of them! We are sure that he is, for his speech betrays him." The accent of his countrified speech showed Peter up as being one of the fishers from the Lake of Galilee—so now they come all around him and they said to him, "We know that you are a disciple of Jesus." Then there was the High Priest's servant, whose kinsman's ear Peter had cut off—he said, "Did not I see you in the Garden with Him? I carried a lantern and I know that you are the man that chopped my relation's ear off. I am sure that you are!" Then Peter, worst of all, not only denied his Master, but, as if he knew that a true Christian would not swear and, therefore, the way to prove that he was no Christian was to curse and swear, therefore he did it! He cursed and swore to convince them that he was not a disciple of Jesus Christ. Oh, but this was dreadful! This was terrible! No excuse is given for Peter in God's Word, nor will we try to think of any, but we will, each one of us, pray, "Hold You me up and I shall be safe."

There is another aggravation of Peter's sin which I must mention, that is that *all this was done very close to where his Lord and Master was suffering at that time*. I think that this Tabernacle might very well picture the kind of place that palace was. Take away those galleries and leave this upper portion—here is Christ, with the High Priests and all the rest of them, in this upper part. Perhaps it was not so much raised above the rest of the hall as this platform is, but, still, it was a raised place. And

there were the servants sitting down below where they could see everything, and also be seen, in the open square with a big fire blazing up in the midst—sending its volumes of smoke up to the midnight sky. And there is the Christ, His back turned towards Peter, but He is within hearing. Oh, I think that fact alone ought to have checked Peter's tongue and inspired him with such love, pity and sympathy that he would have found it impossible to deny his Master. And for you and me to sin in the very Presence of the Majesty of Heaven, (and all sin does that), is an enormous crime.

What was the reason why Peter thus sinned? I answer, first, that it was because of his fear of man. Bold Peter became a raving coward! And, ah, how many have denied their Master because they have been afraid of a jest or a jeer! It was but a silly maid and another gossip with her, and a few idle women and men around the outdoor fire, but Peter was afraid of them and, therefore, he was not afraid to deny his Master.

Perhaps the chief reason for Peter's denial of his Lord was his confidence in himself. If Peter had felt himself to be weaker, he would really have been stronger. But, because he felt so strong in himself, he therefore proved to be weak as water and so denied his Master.

We know, also, that it was caused by a lack of watchfulness and prayer on the part of Peter. He was off his guard when he was sitting or standing comfortably by the fire and, therefore, he fell so sadly. His fall was caused, I expect, by a general lack of steadfastness in his character. He was impetuous, impulsive, quick, ready, brave, courageous, but, at the same time, he lacked backbone. He did, even after this, lack that essential element of a strong character, for Paul had to "withstand him to the face, because he was to be blamed." But, in this time of testing, he manifested a sad lack of solidity of character. He was carried away by surrounding circumstances and even when they happened to be against his Lord and Master, he was still carried away with them! Those of you who have abundance of life in you, and plenty of force of character, must make sure that you also have the force of Grace, lest your vivacity—the very thing which makes you to be leaders among us—should become your ruin in the time of trial! He is well kept whom God keeps and he it is also who, with prayer and watchfulness, guards himself against all the dangers that surround him. Thus I have tried to describe to you Peter's fall.

II. Now, secondly, notice THE MEANS OF PETER'S RECOVERY. They are worth notice.

The first means was, *the crowing of the cock*. It seemed strange that it should crow, the first time, before the period that was known among the Jews as "the cock-crowing." That happened after Peter had denied his Master once, but he does not appear to have taken any notice of it, for he afterwards denied his Master again and yet again. And just as he was speaking the third time, while the words were in his mouth, shrill and clear over that palace wall came the clarion of the cock. Oh, that crow must have gone home to Peter's heart! We cannot preach half such impressive sermons as that bird then delivered, for its message forced its way into Peter's conscience! God has many ways of reaching man's con-

science. I have known Him touch the conscience by very singular means—very frequently by the observation of a little child—by the sudden death of a neighbor or a friend—even by some sentence in a newspaper. There are many birds that God can cause to crow when He bids them, and they startle the sinner as much as that one in Jerusalem startled Peter! But that was not enough, nor was it half enough to bring him to repentance.

The next thing that touched Peter, and the main thing, was *the look of Christ*. It is not possible for any of us to give such a look as that. It was such a look as Jehovah gave to the primeval darkness when He said, "Let there be light," and the darkness was dissipated by one glance of Jehovah's eyes. So the darkness, which the devil had cast over Peter's soul, was made to fly by one flash from the eyes of Jesus! There were volumes of meaning in that look. "Is that Peter, who declared that he would never deny Me? Remember, Peter, what I said, and what you answered—and see which of us turns out to be right." That look also said to Peter, "All these griefs and all this shame that I am enduring do not pierce Me so keenly to the heart as your denial does." Yet was it not also a look of inexpressible tenderness, as if the Master said by it, "I still love you, Peter, so come back to Me and I will yet restore you!" I think it was a heart-piercing look and a heart-healing look all in one—a look which revealed to Peter the blackness of his sin and also the tenderness of his Master's heart towards him. That look did the work—that was the great means of Peter's recovery. First, the crowing of the cock, or something in Providence, and then the look of Christ, or something of Grace.

Then, what came in next was Peter's *remembrance of Christ's words*, for that look awakened his memory and his memory reminded him of all that his Master had said to him—and of all the happy fellowship he had had with the dear Master and what wonders he had seen Him do. I daresay that Peter remembered how he had once walked upon the water and how he began to sink until Jesus stretched out His hand to save him. At any rate, memory did its work, for, "Peter called to mind the words that Jesus said unto him, Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times. And when he thought about it, he wept." So those three things co-operated in producing Peter's recovery.

But there was one thing, at the back of all these, which we must never forget—that is, the prayer of Christ for Peter. He said to him, "I have prayed for you," and the effect of that prayer was made apparent in the Apostle's restoration. That look was effectual upon Peter because the Lord Jesus had, in private, made prevalent intercession for him. So his faith was not to fail him and he was to come out of the devil's sieve with not one particle of the genuine wheat that was in him, fallen to the ground, but only the chaff taken away! That was the great means which Christ used for Peter's recovery and I beg you, dear Friends, to emulate your Savior's example in this respect. Pray for the fallen, look lovingly and pitifully upon the fallen, for your very look may do them good. Speak to the fallen, seek to guide the fallen back to Christ and who knows how many of them you may be helped to restore?

III. Now, in the third place, I am to speak very briefly upon THE SIGNS OF PETER'S RESTORATION. What are those signs?

First, *he went out*. There was something suggestive in that action of his. It might be very cold outside, but Peter left the warmth of the fire. His heart was hot within him, so he could stand the cold and, therefore, he went out. It is always a sign of repentance in Christians who have fallen when they leave the company where they were led astray. If any of you were once professors of the faith and you have turned aside through the evil associations that you have formed, cut yourselves loose from those associations at once! "Oh," someone says, "but I might be a loser if I were to do so." You cannot lose as much as you will if you lose your soul! "Oh, but I do not see how I can escape." You must find a way of escape somehow—you must do as Lot did. Though he had all his wealth in Sodom, he had to flee from it—and the message to you professors who are among the ungodly is, "Come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." Thus Peter went out and it was a wise thing for him to do.

He not only went out, but *he wept*. As he kept on turning over his sin, it appeared to him in all its blackest hue. We are told that *he wept bitterly*. Convulsive weeping came upon him—he could not stand himself—his very heart seemed as if it would flow away in rivers of repentant tears.

It is a blessed sign of the work of Grace in the soul when the man who has sinned quits his evil companions and mourns over his sin as one who is in bitterness for his first-born. If any of you have sinned like Peter, go and weep like Peter. If you have fallen like Peter, then let your soul bitterly bewail your transgression. Many talk about the greatness of David's sin, but if they knew the depths of David's repentance and the heartbreak that came with it, they would not so glibly speak of it. There is a tradition that Peter never heard a cock crow, or thought of this incident, as long as he lived, without weeping. And although that is only a tradition, I can well believe it was the case, for that is just what would be likely to happen to a true penitent.

IV. Now I close with A FEW GENERAL REMARKS UPON THE INCIDENT.

My first remark is—*Christian, it is bad for you to be in evil company*. It was bad for Peter to be among those who were standing or sitting round that fire. On a cold night everyone likes a nice comfortable fire. Yes, but you had better suffer discomfort and inconvenience rather than associate with wicked men. Peter was sitting in the seat of the scorner, so we do not wonder that, at last, he used the scorner's language! Keep out of evil company if you possibly can. If you are obliged to go where bad language is used, do just as you do when you have to go out in a shower of rain—carry an umbrella to shield you from the rain and go through it as quickly as you can. When, in your daily calling, you have to mix with ungodly men, carry the spirit of watchfulness and prayer with you—and slip away from their society as quickly as you can.

My next remark is that *it is idle for a true disciple to try to disown his discipleship*. Peter says, "I am not one of Christ's disciples," but, even by the firelight, he looks like one of them. He swears that he is not and gets

away up in the corner where there is no light. But, as soon as he begins talking, they say, "You are one of them!" His very speech causes him to be discovered—and if you are a genuine Christian, you can no more hide yourself than can the violet in the grass, whose perfume tells the passer-by that it is there! There is something about you which will cause people to find you out. I should recommend those of you who have believed in Christ, but have not joined the Church, or made a confession of your faith, to do so speedily because, whether you do so or not, the ungodly will be down upon you! When once Christ sets the mark of His Cross upon your forehead, all sorts of people will see it and they will say, "You are one of Christ's followers! Your very speech betrays you. There is something about you that is different from the rest of us, and which tells us that you have been with Jesus." Do not try to hide this distinguishing mark if you have it—and even if you do, you will not be able to do so.

The next general remark is—when *you have to depict your own character, always use the black pencil*. Never try to extenuate anything. We shall never have any biographies, written by uninspired men, after the fashion of these Bible biographies. I am sure that if Peter had been the minister of a neighboring Baptist Church and had died, and I had been asked to write his biography, I should not have mentioned his denial of his Lord. Or if I had done so, I would have had his wife down on me if she was alive! And, if not, all the members of the congregation would have said, "What a shame it was to say anything about that matter after the man was dead! Mr. Spurgeon has written a brother-minister's biography and he has put in all the details of that sad incident which ought to have been suppressed." Very likely it ought to be, but it never is suppressed in the *Bible* narratives—we get all that happens recorded there. When Mark wrote, as we believe, under the guidance of Peter, he did not keep back anything, but put all down as black as it really was!

But, next, *when you are writing of a Brother's character, try to describe it as fairly as possible,* for that is what John does in his description of Peter's fall. It is very mildly drawn compared with Peter's own account of it. We must never say what is false, but when there has been something that is wrong, let us always put the kindest construction we possibly can upon it. There are always two ways of telling a tale and they may both be true. The one is to lay heavy stress upon all the faults. The other is to do as John does—to mention them, but to say no more about them than he feels really obliged to say. Let us be truthful, but let it never seem as if we had any grudge against the wrongdoer. The sacred writers often teach us this lesson and here, Peter gives the worst account of himself, and John gives a more favorable report concerning his erring Brother.

Another remark I have to make is—*observe the power that is in people's eyes*. You must often have noticed this. What a power there was in that maid's eyes when she gazed earnestly upon Peter! It was that earnest gaze of the girl that made Peter deny his Master. But, then, see the power for good that there was in Christ's eyes. "The Lord turned and looked at Peter." Eyes can say far more than lips can! Often there is more heart-affecting eloquence in the eyes than there is in the tongue. Sometimes you Christian people, members of the Church, may be by the side

of a man who utters a wrong word—but you need not tell him of it—just look at him, that will be enough. If an ungodly man shall even swear in your presence, do not give him a supercilious look, as much as to say, "O you wicked sinner, to do such a thing in the presence of such a holy man as I am!" But there is another kind of look, as if you felt so grieved and were amazed that he could so take in vain the name of the ever-blessed God—that is the sort of look to give him. If the Lord will manage your eyes for you, you will find that they will be potent messengers of love for Him. God give you to have those sanctified eyes which can work wonders for Him!

My last remark is this—*what a mercy it was that Christ did not treat Peter as Peter treated Him*! Peter said, "I know not the Man." Ah, me, but if the blessed, meek and lowly One had said, "I know not the man," it would have been all over with Peter! May God grant that Christ may not say of anyone of us, at the Last Great Day, "I know not the man"! He *will* say it of all who know Him not, and whom He does not know—they are not acquainted with one another—and if they continue as they are, He will say, "Verily, I say unto you, I know you not." Though He has eaten and drunk in your presence and taught in your streets, yet will He say, "I know you not. Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity." The mercy is that He never said that to Peter. And He will never say that to you, or to me if we come and cast ourselves in penitence at His feet, bemoaning our sin, and putting our trust in Him alone! May God grant this blessing to each one of you, dear Friends for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 26:31-35, 57, 58, 69-75; MARK 14:53, 54, 66-72; LUKE 22:54-62; JOHN 18:15-18, 25-27.

The story of Peter's denial of his Master is recorded in all four of the Gospels. There are some differences of expression in each version, so it will not be repetitious if we read all four of them. And if we read them attentively, we shall get a clear view of the whole incident.

Matthew 26:31-33. *Then Jesus said unto them, All you shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. Peter answered and said unto Him, Though all men shall be offended because of You, yet will I never be offended.* This was a very presumptuous speech, not only because of the self-confidence which it displayed, but also because it was a flat contradiction of what the Master had just said. "All you shall be offended because of Me this night." Peter thought he knew better than Christ did, so he said, "Though all men shall be offended because of You, yet will I never be offended."

34. *Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto you, That this night, before the cock crow*—The cock-crowing was a recognized mark of time; it was just before the rising of the sun. "This night, before the rooster crows"—

34, 35. *You shall deny Me thrice. Peter said unto Him, Though I should die with You, yet will I not deny You.* Here, again, he contradicts his Master straight to His face!

35. *Likewise also said all the disciples.*

57, 58. *And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. But Peter followed Him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.*

69-75. *Now Peter sat outside in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, You also were with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what you say. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the Man. And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely you also are one of them; for your speech betrays you. Then he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the Man. And immediately the cock crew. Then Peter remembered the words of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times. And he went out and wept bitterly.* Now let us read Mark's account, which will especially interest you if you remember that, probably, Mark wrote under the direction of Peter and, no doubt, received many of his facts from Peter. You will notice how severe is this description of the whole scene—it is just such an one as the chief actor in it would be sure to give as he recalled his fall and restoration.

Mark 14:53, 54. *And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes. Then Peter followed Him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.* Thus we learn what a cold night it was—that night in which the Savior's "sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Often, at Jerusalem, the days are extremely hot, yet the nights are as cold as if it were winter through the abundant dews that fall and cause a dampness everywhere.

66, 67. *And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there came one of the maids of the high priest: and when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him.* I think I see her, with her eyes fixed upon him, as he was warming himself at the fire: "She looked upon him."

67, 68. *And said, And you also were with Jesus of Nazareth. But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what you say. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew.* This first time was not the regular time of cock-crowing, but those birds crow when they please. Before the fixed period called the cock-crow, Peter was to deny his Master three times—this was the first time.

69, 70. *And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely you are one of them: for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows it.* "You have the peculiar brogue of that part of the country. 'You are a Galilean, and your speech shows it.'"

71, 72. *But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this Man of whom you speak. And the second time the cock crew. Then Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crows twice, you will deny Me three times. And when he thought about it, he wept.* He does not say that he went out and wept bitterly, as Luke says in his version of the incident.

This is Peter's own account of it, so he says as little as he can to his own credit, while he tells all that is to his discredit. You notice that there seem to be some slight differences between these two accounts and it is quite natural that it should be so. If any two honest men here were to describe any scene that they had witnessed, the two would be sure to differ in some particulars, yet both accounts might be true. Matthew tells us that Jesus said to Peter, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times," but Mark tells us that He said, "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." Yes, but there is no real contradiction, and the incident introduced by Mark shows how, to the very letter, both of those utterances of our Savior were fulfilled, So is it with regard to those who spoke to Peter. When we come to another account, you will see that they differ very considerably, yet they are all true, for all that.

Luke 22:54-56. *Then took they Him, and led Him, and brought Him into the high priest's house. Then Peter followed afar off. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire.* The flickering light helped to reveal his features to this maid "as he sat by the fire."

56-58. *And earnestly looked upon him 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. Then Peter said, Man, I am not.* Both Matthew and Mark say that it was a maid, and another maid who spoke to Peter. And now Luke mentions a man—but there is no reason why all three of them could not have united in bringing this charge. One maid began the accusation, and the others joined with her, so the whole story is correct.

59-61. *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. Then Peter said, Man, I do not know what you are saying. And immediately, while he yet spoke, the cock crew. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter.* The Savior had been standing in the upper part of the room which was, probably, roofed over, while Peter and the rest were down below in the courtyard, which was open to the sky and, therefore, they needed a fire to warm them. Jesus had been standing before His judge, but all of a sudden, as the cock crew, He "turned and looked at Peter."

61. *Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, Before the cock crow, you will deny Me three times.* That cock-crowing had come at the very moment Christ had foretold, for Peter had already denied his Master thrice.

62. *So Peter went out and wept bitterly.* Now hear what John has to say about this matter. He wrote after the other three Evangelists and he

generally supplies their deficiencies. He it is who tells us how Simon Peter got into the hall.

John 18:16. *And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple.* You know who that was, for John always hides his own name as much as possible.

15, 16. *That disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door outside. Then went out that other disciple, who was known unto the high priest, and spoke unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.* No doubt she had a lamp in her hand, that she might watch the features of those who were admitted. So, when Peter came in, she had a good view of his face and, afterwards, when he was at the fire, this is the woman who went and showed him up.

17. *Then the damsel that kept the door said unto Peter, Are not you also one of this Man's disciples?* She evidently knew that John was one of them, so she put this question to Peter, "Are not you also one of this Man's disciples?"

17, 18. *He said, I am not. And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.* Matthew tells us that, at first, he sat with them, but now he is standing, as though he was uneasy, or going out and coming in again. And now he is questioned again.

25-27. *And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Are not you also one of His disciples? He denied it and said, I am not. One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, said, Did not I see you in the Garden with Him? Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew.* John does not say anything about Peter's oath, or about his cursing because that had been told by the others, and John had no desire to write anything that would reflect upon Peter. Indeed, he tells us that it was he who went and spoke to the maid that let Peter in—he seems as if he wished us to know that he had been the means of introducing Peter to the place of temptation! And it is interesting to remember that he was the man who was with Peter on the morning of the Resurrection, so that no doubt he had been the first to find him after his fall.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, 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 MINISTER'S TRUMPET BLAST AND CHURCH MEMBER'S WARNING
NO. 2772

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 30, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DURING THE WINTER OF 1859-1860.

"Set the trumpet to your mouth. He shall come as an eagle against the house of the LORD, because they have transgressed My Covenant, and trespassed against My Law. Israel shall cry unto Me, My God, we know You!"
Hosea 8:1, 2.

WE do not use instrumental music in the worship of God because we consider that it would be a violation of the simplicity of our worship. We think it far better to hear the voices of Christian men and women than all the sounds which can be made by instruments. Yet I am sure there is no Christian here who would object to a minister who can play well upon an instrument and, indeed, a minister is good for nothing if he does not know how, spiritually, to give forth instrumental music! A true minister of Christ should know how to blow the ram's horn so that the walls of Jericho may be made to tremble and fall. He should understand how to play the harp, so that when any of you are disquieted, he may be to you as David was to Saul, and may drive away the evil spirits that trouble you. He should be able, also, to play upon the timbrel, and to lead you forth, sometimes, in the sacred song of joy and thanksgiving. He should be able to go forth like Miriam and cry aloud to you, and ask you to follow him while he says, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously."

His sermons should often seem to you to fulfill that exhortation of David, "Praise you the Lord. Praise Him upon the loud cymbals: praise Him upon the high-sounding cymbals." The minister of the Gospel should also understand how to blow the silver trumpet to proclaim that the year of jubilee is come and that the ransomed debtors may once more receive their lost inheritance. And there is one instrument upon which he should be well skilled and which he should often use, namely, the trumpet. I do not mean the silver trumpet, but the war trumpet—that clear, shrill-sounding instrument that gives the certain sound whereby men prepare themselves for the battle.

I have to use that trumpet tonight and, in explaining my text, I will speak of several things that are hinted at here. First, there *is a command to the Gospel minister*—"Set the trumpet to your mouth." There is, secondly, *the particular reason for this command*, in order that he may warn God's people—"Because they have transgressed My Covenant, and trespassed against My Law." Then, thirdly, there *is another special reason appended*, because God was about to execute judgment upon these sinners—"He shall come as an eagle against the house of the Lord." In the second verse we find our fourth point—*the blessed result of the blowing of this trumpet*—"Israel shall cry unto Me, My God, we know You!"

I. First, then, here is A COMMAND TO THE GOSPEL MINISTER—"Set the trumpet to your mouth." The Hebrew has it, "Set the trumpet to the roof of your mouth." Set it to your mouth. Keep it there—do not put it up sometimes and then take it down again—but have it always in readiness, so as to sound the note of alarm. Set it to the roof of your mouth—blow with all your might and let men hear that the alarm comes not merely from your lips, but from within your mouth—from your very heart! With such earnestness shall you sound the trumpet of warning.

What is meant by the minister setting the trumpet to his mouth? I think just this. In the first place, that when the minister is dealing with the souls of men, the tone which he uses should be very decisive. He should not set some little Jew's harp to his mouth, so that people hardly know whether he is making a noise or not—he should blow a trumpet and produce a decisive sound so that men may know what sin is reproved—what virtue is commended. They should never have to ask themselves, "What does the minister mean? Does he really intend to condemn sin, or does he palliate it?" The declaration should be decisive, as the sound of the war trumpet is. When men hear that trumpet sounded in the East, they do not ask themselves, "Does that mean dancing? Is that the sound of them that make merry?" But they say at once, "That means war! We are sure it does. Let us prepare ourselves for the battle." So should it be with the message of God's servant. He has not to say, "If this," or, "if that," but to set the trumpet of Gospel warning to the roof of his month and give out a note that none can mistake.

For the text means not only a decisive sound, but a clear sound. Of all sounds, perhaps that of the trumpet is the clearest and so should it be with the message of Christ's servant. It should not be indistinct and full of hard words that cannot be understood. It should not be a piece of music, the tune of which is so difficult that no man can possibly follow it or even know what is meant by it, but it should be the one, two, three notes of, "Awake! Awake you sleepers! What are you doing?" Or this yet more solemn note, "Awake, you dead, and come to judgment!" "Prepare to meet your God!" There should be something so clear that the moment the minister's statement is heard, those who are willing to understand it should have no difficulty in knowing its meaning.

Again, in setting the trumpet to his mouth, the minister should not only give a decisive and clear testimony in all his ministrations, but it should also be a loud and startling testimony! You know some preachers who send their congregations to sleep—not only because of their monotonous style of address, but because their matter, itself, is sleepy! The people seem to say, "Well, if that is all the man has to talk about, we may as well be asleep as awake." Sometimes they preach the doctrines which teach men to sit still and do nothing. And then the people say, "Well, let us sit still and do nothing—only let us sleep by the way and enjoy ourselves." There are too many droning preachers that Satan employs to rock the cradle of immortal souls while he is standing by waiting till the time shall come for him to carry them off. "You play," says Satan to the minister, "and I will dance to them. And between the two of us, we will lead them to Hell."

There will be a fearful amount of blood upon the skirts of a man whose ministry has startled nobody. When a trumpet is blown in a besieged city, there are many persons with weak nerves who are quite frightened and many children, too, and many timid souls that are greatly alarmed. And someone might come to the trumpeter and say, "Why did you sound the clarion? Weak women are made to tremble." "Yes," he says, "but better that weak minds should be made to tremble than that stout-hearted ones should perish! It is better these should be alarmed, now, than go quietly on until the enemy infests the city and puts them all to the sword." A startling time is often to come to the minister—he is not to be content to keep to ordinary subjects and deal with them in an ordinary manner. He must go out with a, "Thus says the Lord" and, like a new Elijah, he must speak with fire from Heaven hanging on his lips and the thunders of God rolling around his brow! He will never fully discharge his office if he is always playing on the harp with its soft dulcet notes—he must take down the war trumpet and sound an alarm—that all men may be warned!

I think I may add that *when the minister of Christ blows this trumpet aright, it is one that is pretty sure to be heard further than he, himself, is seen*. Men do not always see a trumpeter when they hear the sound of his trumpet—and let the minister of Christ fearlessly proclaim his Master's Word and his line shall go out through all the earth. Let him be honest and faithful, and he need not fear that he shall lack hearers. That trumpet sound, it may be, shall be heard all over England—across the Channel shall it be heard upon the Continent—it shall go beyond the Alleghenies and make the Rocky Mountains echo with the sound! Let him but preach the whole Gospel and set the trumpet to the roof of his mouth, and all the world shall hear or, at least, if they hear it not, he shall have performed his duty—but many will hear it, for God will always find ears willing to listen to the sound that comes from an honest mouth!

II. "Set the trumpet to your mouth." That is the command to the Gospel minister and I mean to obey it while I deal with the second head, THE

PARTICULAR REASON ASSIGNED FOR IT. The reason why Hosea was to become a trumpeter at this particular time was this—the children of Israel had broken God's Covenant—they had gone astray and transgressed His Law. Therefore God was angry with them and was about to smite them with sore judgments. Before, however, He smote them, He warned them. God does not usually give a word and a blow, but He gives a word and another word, and another word and then yet another word and, after all that, there comes the blow! He warns before He strikes. The axe of God, like the axe of the Roman dictator, is bound up in a bundle of rods—He smites first with the rod and if that suffices not, then He draws out the axe and smites with it—and its strokes are enough to destroy the soul.

Now, with regard to this Church—God, I think, has put it into my heart to speak to you about your transgressions and your sins. And, in this matter, the trumpeter includes himself—and while he addresses the Church and congregation, he intends, thereby, not to exempt a single person unless there is one, indeed, who can claim exemption. Well, my Brothers and Sisters, to begin with ourselves—the members of this Church—is there no good reason that the minister should always have the trumpet to his mouth to warn us of our particular sins? God has blessed us very greatly as a people. We have lived in the sunshine of His Countenance. He has been pleased to give us success in our labors beyond our most sanguine anticipations. Whatever way we turn our hands, God seems to prosper us—if not in our worldly business, yet certainly in our business for Him. There is nothing that I am aware of which this Church has undertaken but God has been pleased to give us success in it. But have we not, with all this blessing, very great sins to confess before God?

When I sit down and think of myself, I am, to my own self, a wonder and a marvel that God has not cast me off—that He has not said to me, "I will no more speak My Word through you. I will leave you to yourself. You shall be like Samson when his hair was gone." And, oh, if He should say that to any of us, where should we be? Brothers and Sisters in the Church, may you not, personally and collectively, cover your faces and mourn and weep by reason of your own private and individual sins? Are you perfect? Are you quite clear of guilt? Are your garments unspotted and unsullied? God forbid that you should say they are, for this were, indeed, to vaunt yourselves in pride! No, every man may weep apart, and his wife apart, and his children apart, for, with us, even with us, there are sins against the Lord our God! I sometimes fear lest, as a people, we should be tempted to pride. Lest we should conceive that the success with which God favors us is owing to something in ourselves—lest we should begin to say, "We are the men, and wisdom shall die with us." We stand in a position in which God has made us eminent by His blessing, but let us take heed lest, by exalting ourselves, we become like Capernaum, once lifted to Heaven, but afterwards brought down to Hell!

There have been many churches which God has left because of their sin. Riding through the country, we can see, every now and then, a chapel, and when we enquire how the cause prospers, we are told that it is in the worst position possible. "But was it always so?" "No," it is said, "there was once a servant of God there and the people gathered round him—and they walked well for a time and there were many conversions." But, alas, they fell into sin, and God left them—and there is "Ichabod" written on every piece of mortar in the walls! If you could see it, there is the great "Tekel" of Belshazzar put upon the pulpit and upon the pew! Pastor and people alike have been weighed in the balances and they have been found lacking! Shall it be so with us as a Church? Shall we be found lacking in the time of testing?

Shall I tell you—and here I speak without the slightest tone of severity—one thing in which some of our friends are lacking? *A conscientious regard to social prayer*. There are some who are always at the meetings for prayer, but I cannot conceal from myself the fact that there are many whose faces I never see there. Or, if I see them once a year, it is indeed a treat. I doubt not but that their business is so urgent that they could not constantly attend, but then I know there are others, who regularly attend, who have business that seems to me to be equally as urgent and I think these absentees might come *sometimes*, at any rate. Now, if we begin by some of us neglecting the meetings for prayer, and if our neglect should increase, we shall then be on the high road to the loss of God's favor and to the prevention of all future prosperity!

Besides, may I not also say that *there are some, I fear, in the Church, who have lost their first love*? It is remarkable to me that there are so few in this church who have turned out to be deceivers. Sorrowful are the meetings when we have to excommunicate, here and there, one. But out of so vast a number we have great reason to thank God that they are comparatively few. But, oh, may there not be many among us who, if they cannot be made amenable to church discipline, are nevertheless rotten at the core? Have we not some that are like trees, fair on the outside, but inwardly their hearts are but fit to be tinder for the devil's tinderbox? Have we not too many among us who are secretly living in sin, whose practice in trade would not bear strict investigation, but who, nevertheless, cannot be laid hold of because there is no gross vice, no open, public and flagrant sin? And, oh, Brothers and Sisters, if these things increase, if this leprosy breaks out in the garments, it will spread and God will come to abhor His own inheritance and will say of this Church, "I will leave this place—I will abide here no longer—I will find a people who shall be more faithful to My Word, who shall live more true to the promises and vows which they have made."

I will set the trumpet to my mouth tonight, on behalf of every member of the Church, and on behalf of myself, also. O Brothers and Sisters, the time past should suffice us to have worked the will of the Gentiles! Let us seek Divine Grace that we may be purged from all our former conversa-

tion in the days of our flesh, that we may come out from the world, that we may be more and more separate from it, that there may be a greater distinction between us and the ungodly sons of men, that we may prove to be what we profess to be—Israelites, indeed, in whom is no guile! O Christian Church, if you shall fall from your integrity, you will soon fall from your prosperity! Suspend prayer and you will suspend success! Break down our hedges, let in the hypocrites—or let them even come in by stealth—and the wild boar out of the forest will soon waste this Church! And where are the goodly clusters now? Where are the grapes of Eschol and where are the winepresses gushing with new wine? Famine has devastated the land! Black death has covered all the vineyards and the vines lament and are burned up with fire. If God forsakes us—and He will do so if we turn aside from Him as a Church—then this must be the result. The lamentation that I have taken up must be the lamentation of this Church unless God shall keep us true to Him in prayer, diligence and holiness. God does not cast away His people forever, but He often casts away a separate Church from its degree of usefulness. He does not put out His lamps, but He does let them burn very low, indeed, so that there is scarcely anything but a smoking wick left. May it never be so with us!

Having set the trumpet to my mouth for the members of the Church, I blow another blast of it to every one of you. Brothers and Sisters in Christ, in the days of Jesus, there was found a Judas in the midst of His twelve Apostles. "I have chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil." Is there not reason to fear that among the many hundreds in this Church there are to be found some who are like Judas? O traitor, if you are still in the ranks, tremble to hear your doom! O you deceiver, the day is coming when judgment must begin at the house of God! Though chaff is mingled with the wheat, the rushing, mighty wind is rising now! I hear it—I hear it in the distance and soon it will come and winnow this Church and then, where will you be? Where will you be when Christ shall take His fan in His hand and thoroughly purge His floor? Do not think, my dear Friends, members of the Church, that you will be saved if you are out of Christ because you are members of the Church. Remember what happened to Joab—he ran right into the tabernacle and caught hold of the horns of the altar. Solomon said to Benaiah, "Fetch him forth." And Benaiah said, "Come forth from there," and he said, "No, but I will die here." And Benaiah told Solomon what he said—but did the king spare Joab because he had his hands on the horns of the altar? No! He said, "Go and slay him there," and Benaiah thrust his sword through him even while he had his hands upon God's own altar! So will it be with you. You may put your lips to the communion cup, you may come and sit round this table—you may be a deacon, you may even enter this pulpit as a preacher—but, unless your heart is right with God, even with your hands upon the horns of God's altar, you must be damned! From the pulpit you must go to the Pit! You must descend from the table to

commune at the feast of fiends! Go from the general assembly and Church of the first-born, to the general assembly and congregation of the lost in Hell! I can blow my trumpet no louder than this to each one of you. Oh, hear it, hear it, hear it, Church members! Listen to it and regard it—and search and try yourselves, and see whether you are in Christ or not!

Yet one more blast from my trumpet and this is for those who are not members of the Church, but who constantly attend the ministry of the Gospel. O ungodly Hearers, the day is coming when you shall have no man to warn you, when you shall have no one to invite you to come to Christ! Sabbaths will not last forever. Eternity is drawing near and bears in its hand the stamp that must seal your doom. I remember a sermon of William Dawson's on Death—the three heads of which were, "First, Death is following after us. Secondly, he will certainly catch us. Thirdly, we don't know when." That third head is a very solemn one—we don't know when. And what if it should be tonight? Hear the blast of my trumpet—"Consider your ways!" "Prepare to meet your God!" "Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still." "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little."

Sinner, while the lamp holds out to burn, turn to Christ and live! Otherwise know that when that lamp is quenched, God's mercy will be quenched, too, for you, and you will be cast away into the outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth! Remember that ancient message, "He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon his own head." If all that is said is of no avail to you, then shall he that blew the trumpet be clear, but on your own head shall be your doom forever and ever!

I have to mourn because I cannot sound this trumpet as I should. Oh, that I had a voice powerful enough to find its way into the poor, dead, stony hearts of sinners dead in trespasses and sins! It were easy work to preach if we preached to none but the living in Zion, but to have to talk to hard stones that will not break, and to speak to icebergs that will not melt—that is a work that requires large faith and often depresses our spirit! Yet must we come back to it again, for the thought of eternity rises upon us. We see sinners plunging down to Hell in one awful stream! We see the grave glutted with their corpses and Hell swollen with their blood! We mark how every night sucks in its prey and how every day shuts its devouring jaws upon the helpless thousands of our race—and we cannot be still—especially when we have before us some who will go from these galleries and from these pews to help to feed the everlasting burnings!

Did I say there would be some such? I mean, "Except they repent, they shall *all* likewise perish." If we could but look any one man in the face and know that he would be in torment within a year, oh, what pity we should feel for him! We could scarcely rest under such a burden. I am quite sure I should not sleep tonight—I should lie tossing on my bed, cry-

ing to God for mercy on that poor man—and I would not stop a moment before I would go to him and tell him the way of salvation. Ah, but there is not only one, but scores, perhaps hundreds, in this place of worship who have no hope! They are prayerless men and women—those whose knees never bend in prayer before their Maker—hard-hearted people who have never trembled under conviction of sin, and who have never sought and never found Christ as their Savior. Ah, poor Friends, poor Friends, we may well weep for you, and sigh for you, and all the more because you will not weep and will not sigh for yourselves!

To be on the high road to Hell and yet to be trifling with eternal things—to be on the brink of Perdition and yet to be jesting at religion! To be nearing the everlasting burnings and yet to be breaking the Sabbath and treading the blood of Christ beneath your feet—oh, this is mad work! Bedlam has not within its walls a man more insane—a more mad, manacled wretch—than the man who knows that the wrath of God abides on him and yet makes merry and dances to the sound of his own funeral knell—who goes leaping to the gallows and, chanting a song, bows his neck to the death-block and the gleaming axe! O Spirit of God, it is Yours to wake the dead and Yours to change the heart! Do it, we pray You, for all the blasts of our trumpet cannot do it unless You take the work in hand.

III. Having gone through two parts of the text—the command to the minister and the reason found among his people—I shall next ask your attention to the third point, THE REASON WHY HOSEA SHOULD, AT THAT TIME, ESPECIALLY SET THE TRUMPET TO HIS MOUTH, NAMELY, THAT JUDGMENT WAS IMPENDING UPON THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL—"He shall come as an eagle against the house of the Lord."

Different expositors have given various interpretations of this verse and applied it to the peculiar plague which was, at that time, about to fall upon the Israelite people. Some say it was one thing and some, another. I do not care to enter into these diverse interpretations—it is enough for me to believe that there is a visitation threatened here against the Church of God. What does it say? Look at the text again. "He shall come as an eagle against the house of the Lord." But will the Lord let anything come against His own house? It cannot be so, surely! Ah, but it *is* so—and the emphatic name of God, Jehovah, is used, for you see the word, LORD, is in capitals—"He shall come as an eagle against the house of Jehovah." If sin gets into God's house, He will no more spare sin in His house than He will spare it in the devil's house. God hates sin everywhere and if sin gets into His own Church, He will flog it out. It is of no use at all for this traitor to go and hide himself in the house of God's children—the Lord will drag him out to execution, even though he creeps into our bedchambers! There shall be no sparing him! He may hide under the camel's furniture, but every Rachel shall be made to stand up and God will turn out our bronze images and cast them away from us!

It seems, then, that a visitation is threatened against the Church of God—against God's own house. Notice the form of this visitation—"He shall come *as an eagle*." Now, an eagle comes in two ways. First, it comes *all of a sudden*. Poised high in the air, so far aloft that you cannot see it, it keeps its wings fluttering as birds of prey are known to do and, with its sharp eyes so powerful that at that tremendous height it can see the smallest fish in the water, it marks its prey and all of a sudden down it dashes, as if it had fallen from Heaven like a meteorite, or like the lightning flash! It is up there where we cannot see it and suddenly it swoops down and bears away its prey! Now, such is often God's visitation upon His Church—He comes suddenly, like an eagle, and chastens His children.

Besides, here is an allusion to the strong flight of the eagle. When the eagle once stretches his wings to fly, who can stop his wings? He bears up against the wind. He buffets the storm. He cuts through it as a ship sails through the billows or a fish swims through the sea! On, on, like an arrow from the bow, he shoots to his desired target. So shall God's judgments be to His Church—they shall come on His Church irresistibly—and there shall be no escape, there shall be no deliverance! The eagle shall come with such force that none shall stay his might!

How true this has been of the Church of Christ in many ages! As I have said before, God has never left His chosen people, but He has often left separate churches, when those churches have become mixed with the world. Look at the Seven Churches of Asia. It would be an interesting and an instructive journey for any of us to make, to go to Sardis and to Pergamos, and to Thyatira, and to the other spots where there once were the Churches to which John the Divine wrote a part of the Book of Revelation. We would see that some of them have no inhabitants whatever—only the bittern and the owl, and the ruins of a long-past grandeur. In others a few huts, and Bedouin Arabs pasturing their flocks, with, perhaps, not a dozen Christians to be found within a circuit of a dozen miles! God has taken the candlestick out of its place and quenched His Light in darkness. Just so is it with the Church of Rome. What prosperity there was there once! Paul had, doubtless, a large number who used to gather together in his hired room to listen to him. And if Peter ever went to Rome, and he may have done so, he would, doubtless, have gathered a goodly band around him.

We have good evidence that there was a very large number of Christians there, for, in the catacombs under Rome, all along the corridors, many miles in length, there are inscriptions to the memory of Christians. You look on one and another, and there you see the name—one man with an anchor to show his hope, or another with a dove—and on most of them are these words, "He rests in peace," or, "She rests in peace." And there are thousands of these! The Church in the catacombs must have numbered a great many members, and there they flourished, down there in the darkness of the earth, worshipping God by candlelight when the

sun was shining above them and his brightest rays could never reach them in those gloomy caverns. That Church seems to have been a very eminent one—the inscriptions bear the proofs of the very highest and most spiritual forms of piety. And now, the mother of harlots sits upon her seven hills and the ancient candlestick is taken out of its place.

Again, to give you another picture, which will, perhaps, strike you still more forcibly, look at Germany. In the days of Luther it was the stronghold of the Gospel! You know how Luther used to preach the Word and what crowds gathered to hear that mighty thunderer, while in simple language he proclaimed the Truth of God and defied the Pope and the devil, too! Things are improving now, I hope, but it might have been said, some years ago, "How are the mighty fallen!" The Lutheran churches had become nearly all Unitarian or Rationalist. They had forsaken the fountain of living waters. They forgot the Lord who bought them and turned aside to damnable heresy. And why should it not be so here! Unless the Lord will continually preserve unto us a remnant, we will become like Sodom and be made like Gomorrah! That descent may come in an instant—the eagle may even now be watching in the air—and his swoop may be without any warning. There may come sudden destruction, as pain upon a woman in travail, and we may not escape!

As long as we walk with God, as long as we are true to the faith, as long as we labor for the salvation of souls, so long we are secure. But as surely as sin is permitted to spread among us—if the spirit of lukewarmness, of laxity of doctrine, of prayerlessness should creep in here, it will be all over with us. The Lord will say, "Let me go from there." There will be heard, in this place, what was heard in the Temple just before the time of its destruction by Titus. It is said that there was heard within the veil a rushing of wind and the high priest who was officiating declared that he heard a Voice say, "Arise, let Us go from here." That Voice has been heard in many places. I could point to chapels where that Voice must have been heard—houses of prayer where once there were crowds of hearers but which are now covered with dust and cobwebs, where scarcely anybody cares to enter—and where those who enter are cold, dead, dull and careless. Shall it ever be so with this Church? God forbid!

O God of Benjamin Keach, Your suffering servant! O God of Gill, Your servant who declared Your Truth in all its fullness! O God of the sainted Rippon, whom You have taken to Yourself—You who has been the God of this Church for, lo, these many years! You who has kept us beneath the shadow of Your wings and brought us into a position of high privileges and responsibilities—be You our God even until the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—and then forever and ever!

IV. I think I need not say any more with regard to this great and solemn reason why the trumpet is to be blown. Let me, in closing, just dwell for a minute or two upon THE VERY BEAUTIFUL AND BLESSED EFFECT OF THIS BLAST OF THE TRUMPET—"Israel shall cry unto Me, My God, we know You!"

In the Hebrew, this expression is very remarkable, indeed, it runs thus—"They shall cry unto Me, My God, we know you—Israel." I do not know whether you perceive the meaning of this expression. It is, perhaps, difficult for me to say it so as for you to perceive the pith of it. They say, "My God, we know You"—then, as if God did not know who they were, they say, "Israel." "My God, we know You—Israel." They mention their name and plead it before Him. Or else it may be, as another excellent translator says, that they thought perhaps the Lord would not remember them, but He would remember the man with whom He had made a Covenant, namely, Jacob, Israel, for they say in the Hebrew, "My God, we know You—Israel." Remember Israel. Think of him who wrestled with You and became a prevailing prince.

We will be content, however, to take the passage as it stands. "Israel shall cry unto Me, My God, we know You!" Can you sincerely utter that cry, Brothers and Sisters? If so, a blast of the trumpet will have had a blessed effect if you can say, "Lord, we know You!" What do you know about Him? There is one point in His Character I want you especially to remember. If you know God aright, you will know that He is a jealous God. That is one of the first things which He said when He spoke to His people in the wilderness, "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God." I do not know that we fully understand the meaning of that word, "jealous." You know what it means in common life—how, if there is one who has a right to another's love, if that person suspects that the other's heart is given away, there is jealousy. Well, now, there is jealousy in God's heart if His people give to others love that is due to Him. And do you know when we are most jealous? It is an object of utter indifference to me who certain people may love, because I have no affection for them—but if there is one on whom my whole heart is set, if that person's heart were given to someone else, I should feel jealousy.

Now, God is not jealous of sinners—He is jealous of saints, of His own people, especially the people He loves best. I remember that an old Divine says, "It is an awful thing to be one of God's favorites"—I have turned that over in my mind many times and shuddered at the thought—"for," he says, "God does not deal with all His children on precisely the same rule. There are some of His people whom He makes more His favorite's than others. He takes them out and makes them His eminent servants, puts them in the first rank of the battle, and makes them very useful and very serviceable. He is more jealous of them than He is of any others. He is jealous of all His children, but especially of those children upon whom He has bestowed most of His favors."

You remember the story of the poor king of England? When there had been a rebellion against him and he had put it down, He promised that he would give pardon to all who were concerned in it. He had brought to him the list which contained the names of those whom he was to pardon. He read the name of his son, Richard, and he wept—"Is Richard a rebel?" He read the name of his son, Henry, and he wept again—"Is he a rebel?"

But he had one favorite son, his son, John, and he saw in the midst of the paper the name of his son John as one whom he had to forgive. He forgave him, but it broke his heart and he died. The more favor there is, the more jealousy there will be. Now, as a Church, we may truly say, not in pride, but in thankfulness, that God has been very gracious to us. He has distinguished us by His Grace. He has caused our candle to shine brightly. He has heard our prayers, but He will be very jealous of us if we begin to ascribe the good work to ourselves. If we take any honor to ourselves and leave off praying to Him. If our zeal diminishes, if we become lax in our lives, if immoral characters are tolerated among us, God will be very angry with us and we must expect that though He will not cast away His own people, yet, as a Church, He will take away our beauty and cause it to fade away like the moth! And the fine gold shall become dim, and the Glory shall depart from this portion of His Israel.

Now what is the lesson of all this? It is just this, Brothers and Sisters, that I would stir you up to continue in prayer! To some of you, perhaps, the exhortation is not needed, but to others I am sure it is. Thank God we have many in the church who know how to wrestle with God, but, oh, we need more of these! We want not merely to have the few like Gideon's men that lapped, but we want to have you all among the lappers—to have you all wrestlers with God, all diligent in His service and seeking to extend His Kingdom! Let us be, from this day forward, more prayerful than we have ever been before.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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

FOR OR AGAINST?
NO. 2773

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 6, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING MARCH 24, 1878.

"And the guards shook for fear of him, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, for He is risen, as He said." Matthew 28:4-6.

THIS twofold incident, the trembling of the guards and the comforting of the women, seems to me to have a great deal about it in the form of a type. I think it may be looked upon as an illustration of what has often occurred and will probably occur again and again. And it teaches us how Divine and angelic manifestations have their dark and threatening side for the ungodly, and their bright and cheering side for the people of God. Just as the pillar of cloud which came between the Israelites and the Egyptians, was dark to the Egyptians but gave light to the children of Israel, so, in this case, the appearance of the angel of the Lord made the Roman soldiers shake and swoon away while it brought comfort and encouragement to the humble women who were the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It will be thus all through the history of the world—the most cheering subjects to saints will be the most gloomy subjects to sinners and, at the last, "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ," "He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." When He shall be welcomed by the joyful acclamations of all His faithful followers, the wicked shall say to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." That face, which will be to His own people as the rising of the sun which will usher in the everlasting day, will be to the wicked as the flaming sword of certain vengeance smiting them to their eternal overthrow!

I bring this incident, therefore, before your notice for the purpose of showing you that the swooning men, on the one side, in the presence of the angel, represent the terrifying effect of many a glorious Truth of God

upon the ungodly. While the women, comforted by the cheering words of the angelic messenger, set forth the way in which many a Truth of God, terrible to the wicked, has, nevertheless, its sweet and cheering side to seeking souls.

My first division will be this, *all things have a black look for ungodly men*. And the second will, naturally, be that *all things have a smile for seekers after Christ*.

I. First, I have a stern duty to perform in reminding everyone who is not reconciled to God by Jesus Christ and who, therefore, is still living in sin, that ALL THINGS HAVE A BLACK LOOK FOR HIM.

Whether you know it or not, you who are enemies to God are out of gear with the entire universe. If God did not hold His creatures in with a strong leash, they would turn upon you and tear you in pieces. The very earth groans under the burden of having to bear you up and the bread you eat is unwilling to feed an enemy of God. The wind, air, sun, moon, stars would, if they could, decline to be of service to you as long as you remain at enmity against Him whom they so gladly serve. The Believer in God is informed that he shall be in league with the stones of the field and that the beasts of the field shall be at peace with him. All things work together for good unto him—but to you who are a rebel against your God, nothing is working for good! The great wheels of Divine Providence are continually revolving and the day is coming in which they will grind you to powder! Whatever little discomfort or inconvenience you may have suffered in the past—and, perhaps, you have fretted and fumed, and even blasphemed against God because of it—it is nothing compared with what you will have to suffer in that day when God shall permit the forces of Nature to work their just and righteous will upon you—and to inflict upon you the due penalty for your evil deeds.

If an unconverted man were really in his right senses, so that he could accurately understand the position in which he stands, he would be alarmed to the last degree. Though he may not have outwardly transgressed the Law of God by enormous crimes against the law of man, yet it is guilt enough for him to have lived in rebellion against his God—guilt enough to have forgotten God—guilt enough to have no love for Him! I think I see you now, O ungodly man! You are standing above the pit of everlasting wrath upon a single plank and that plank is snapping beneath your feet—you are hanging over the awful precipice by a single rope and each moment the strands of that rope are breaking—and the last one of them will snap before long! And if you are then unsaved, you will learn what eternal destruction from the Presence of the Lord and the Glory of His power will mean. O God, save us all from being any longer opposed to You! Deliver us from the guilt of the past and the sin of the present, and reconcile us unto Yourself through the death of Your Son. This is the one great need of each unsaved soul in the whole world!

Every unconverted person ought to learn, from the connection of our text, *that the great throes of Nature are always against the ungodly*. These

Roman soldiers who were on guard at the door of the sepulcher, were probably not any worse than most other men of their time. Possibly they were better than a good many others but they were not Christians, so they were opposed to God and they were doing the devil's work. While they were at their post, the earth suddenly began to rock under their feet. They may have had some experience with earthquakes before, for they had lived in regions where earthquakes were not uncommon, but this was "a great earthquake" and, as they felt the ground moving beneath them, as though they were on the sea rather than on the land, they were full of fear. There is, in most men, a consciousness of the power of that which is supernatural. You may hear them swear, or talk in atheistic fashion until there comes a sudden flash of lightning so vivid that they start—and as it is followed by a tremendous thunderclap, they are alarmed and they cry out, "O God!" If they happen to witness such a violent phenomenon as a tropical tornado or an earthquake, they are so alarmed and distressed that they know not what to do.

Men on board ship, in times of terrible storm and peril, who never thought of praying before, believe in God straight away and cry to Him for mercy when the yawning wave threatens to swallow up the vessel in which they are sailing. I think that there are few sailors who really remain atheists. At any rate, I cannot imagine that they will continue to be so if, on some lonely night, when the ship is gently moving over the sea, there should happen to be one of those strange lights that will sometimes come and which I have seen, lighting up every spar and sail with wonderful magnificence for a moment, and then all sinking into darkness again. The man who witnesses such a sight as that, stands aghast and all his doubts concerning the existence of God are driven away by the inward conviction that, somehow or other, the great and terrible forces of Nature are ranged against the man who is living in opposition to his God!

Another thing is also very clear from this narrative and we may state it as a fact, that *all mysterious beings are against the ungodly*. These Roman soldiers evidently though so, or they would not have trembled and become as dead men. They had never seen an angel before, though they may have had some sort of belief that there were such mysterious beings. But, on this occasion there appeared to them the angel of the Lord—"his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow"—and they were so astonished and alarmed at the sight of him that they quaked and became as dead men! It has become a custom, in this evil age, for certain persons to attempt to communicate with familiar spirits. If it can be done, it is strictly forbidden in this Book, yet there are some who try to have dealings with those who are in the land of spirits. Well, if they will trespass on that forbidden ground, it is possible that, one of these days, somebody will appear to them. I should not greatly wonder if their father, the devil, came up and ran away with them! They go so near his door and do their utmost to enter that they ought not to be surprised if he should appear and claim his own!

But let every unconverted person be sure that whatever spirits there may be in the unseen world—and there are good angels and bad ones—they will, none of them, work for the good of the ungodly! The evil angels may tempt and mislead, and help to destroy, but they can do no good, even if they wished to do so, to the ungodly. And as for the pure and holy spirits that behold the Father's face in Glory, I think that their flaming swords must often be ready to start from their scabbards as they hear God's holy name profaned and see how mortal men, puny creatures as they are, dare to provoke the majesty of Heaven! If angels are capable of experiencing horror, I think they must often be horrified into burning indignation at the transgressions which they behold among the sons and daughters of men! Ah, you who try to pierce the veil which hides these mysterious beings from view, be sure of this, that whatever of mystery there is in the world of spirits, it is all arrayed against you! Even if you can see the hand that is writing on the wall, you cannot see the body of the writer who is inscribing the letters of fire upon the wall, and though those letters are a mystery to you, you need not think twice as to the purport and meaning of the message, for you may be sure that it is against you. Whenever there is a manifestation from the spirit world at all, God cannot have sent it in your favor as long as you remain His adversaries. There is a black and threatening side of every angelic face towards everyone who will not be reconciled to God.

The same is true concerning *the Resurrection of Christ*. These Roman legionaries saw the Savior rise from the dead, or, at least, they witnessed as much of that great act as could be beheld by men. And it made them tremble as they saw the dead man, whose corpse they were guarding, suddenly emerge from the grave in life and resurrection beauty! Well might they be alarmed at the Resurrection of Christ—and there will be another resurrection, both of the just and of the unjust—and that great Truth of God has a dark side to everyone who is the adversary of God! You might be glad to get rid of that body of yours and to suffer only in your spirit, but you cannot do so and, therefore, I charge you to "fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell."

"Those are hard words," someone says. I know they are, but they are not mine—they are the words of the tenderhearted Christ who never said anything more harshly than it was necessary to. You cannot get rid of that body of yours—you will have to wear it in another world and it will have to smart if you die unsaved. The members of your body that you have made members of unrighteousness and servants of sin, will have to bear the fury of Divine Wrath even as the spirit which now inhabits that body will have to bear it! Yes, the truth of the resurrection has a dark side to the ungodly. If you could creep into your beds of dust and be there and rot—if there were some dens and caves where you could hide yourselves from the face of God—or if there were for you the annihilation which some false teachers promise you, then you might continue in sin without fear of consequences. But now you have but one way of hope

and that is repent and be reconciled to God, for if you will not, neither Heaven, nor earth, nor Hell can hide you from the face of Him that sits upon the Throne, nor can either time or eternity find you a place of shelter from the wrath of the Lamb!

Rest assured that you must rise again and that you must appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ and receive from His lips the righteous sentence for the things which you have done in your body. I beseech you to give heed to this message and to be warned by it, all you who are living ungodly lives! The Second Coming of Christ will be a time of terror to you, whatever of bliss there may be about it for His own people. I am not going to enter into any details of the great conflagration, when the heavens and the earth shall pass away in flaming fire, or of the wondrous renovation in which there shall be new heavens and a new earth. I will not attempt to describe what the coming of Christ will be like, but I will just remind you that the Day of the Lord will be one of darkness—not light—to everyone who remains out of Christ!

To those who bow the knee and kiss the Son, and accept God's Grace in His Son, Jesus Christ, everything about Christ's coming will be joyous. But to those who reject the Mediator and trample on His precious blood, everything about His coming will be black as a sackcloth of hair. Their sun shall be turned into darkness and their moon into blood! Their stars shall wither like unripe figs and their sky shall pass away like a scroll. There shall be no hope, or light, or comfort left for them in that tremendous day of Christ's appearing! Everything—and I make no exception—from God's all-piercing eyes that shall burn with holy indignation against those who have rejected His Son, even to the glaring eyes of devils in Hell—all shall shed baleful beams of blackness upon those who have refused to believe in Jesus and who have remained the enemies of God!

I have no doubt that these men who kept watch at the Savior's tomb, were strong men—Caesar did not pick dwarfs and weaklings for his armies. I have no doubt that they were also cruel men. Soldiers often are and Roman soldiers certainly were of that character. They were brave men, too. No men who have ever lived have been braver than were the soldiers of old Rome. They were also hardy, I do not doubt. Many of them had passed through arduous campaigns and they were probably all familiar with bloodshed and the sad sights and sounds of the field of battle. They had stood firm amid the shock of arms in deadly combat, but now, just as the morning dawned, they were witnesses of the wondrous spectacle of the Resurrection of Christ and the descent of the angel of the Lord—"and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men." Well, now, if it was so with the bravest of the brave when they saw only one angel, what will be the condition of any of us who remain unsaved, when we shall see the heavens all aglow with myriads of bright spirits? And when we shall not merely see Christ in the Glory of His Resurrection, but in the Glory of His Father and of His holy angels? When the archangel's trumpet shall ring out o'er land and sea and there shall

peal forth that soul-piercing message, "Awake, you dead, and come to judgment"? When the earth shall rock and reel to and fro, and the sea shall give up her dead? Ah, what dismay will seize the unsaved sinner then!

How will he put his hands upon his loins in the bitter anguish of his spirit! How will he wish—all in vain—that he had never been born! But I must stop, for the subject is too great and too terrible for human language. God grant that you may be born-again! Then you will not have to wish that you had never been born! May you, by faith, see Christ on His Cross, or else the sight of Christ on His Throne will overwhelm you with eternal despair!

II. Now, in the second place, I have to speak of something more pleasing. The second part of my discourse is to be upon this theme—ALL THINGS SMILE UPON SEEKERS AFTER CHRIST.

The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus, who was crucified." From these words, I gather that true seekers after Christ *are those who seek Jesus,* "*who was crucified.*" They are those who understand that Christ died upon the Cross as a Sacrifice for sin, and they seek Him in order that He may put away their sin. They have heard that He has made an atonement for sin by the shedding of His precious blood and they want to have blessings bestowed upon themselves, so they seek to have Him as their Substitute and Representative, to stand forever before God on their behalf and to put away their guilt by His great Sacrifice. Now, dear Friends, you know whether you are seeking Christ in that way or in some other fashion. To seek Christ simply as your Example, or as a sort of make weight for your own goodness and merit is no good whatever! That is no better than not seeking Him at all. But to seek Christ as the Crucified One, to recognize Him as the appointed Victim offered up for His people's guilt, and to want to have Him to be a Substitute for you—that is the right sort of seeking and you have no need to fear if you are so seeking Jesus.

I learn, also, from this narrative, that *there are some seeking Jesus, who was crucified, who have known Him long.* Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James and Joses, were old familiar friends of Jesus, but they had lost Him for a little while. He had been hidden away from them in the sepulcher, so they were seeking Him. So, dear Friends, are you seeking Christ, not for the first time, but because you have known Him for many years and you need again to enjoy the light of His Countenance? Then I say to you, as the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, but He still lives and loves you, and will graciously appear unto you."

Possibly, some whom I am now addressing are seeking the Lord for the first time. Happy are the people who are led truly to seek Him! How good He is to those who seek Him rightly! I am speaking now of what I know, for I know how good He was to me when I first sought Him. There was nothing in me that could have won His heart—it was because He was so

good in Himself that He had pity upon such an unworthy one as I was when I began to seek Him. But, oh, He was so tender, so gracious and so good to me that I cannot help telling you about Him, and trying especially to cheer you who are seeking His face! He is not hard to find, for He is not far from any of us. He is not One with whom it is difficult to plead, for He is full of compassion and mercy. He has a great heart and there is an easy way to get at it, for the soldier's spear opened a road right up to it! And any sigh, or tear, or cry, from a heart that truly longs for Him will touch His heart and His soul will go forth in pity towards you who are seeking Him! I am so glad that you have begun to seek Him, for everything will smile upon you, now, if you are really, heartily and earnestly seeking the Savior.

This, then, is the kind of seekers to whom all thing look fair. So, Beloved, if you are a seeker of this sort, if you are really seeking the crucified Savior, then every *mysterious being is on your side.* I do not suppose that you ever saw an angel. You need not wish to do so, but if you did, the angel would say to you, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified." The angels know a great deal about us. I have no doubt they can read our hearts in the way in which one spirit can read another spirit. They certainly rejoice when you begin to pray, and to repent, and to believe in Jesus. Do not be afraid of them, for they will not hurt you. Get rid of all fears concerning mysterious beings, for, in the first place, they do not appear to men, now, unless under very exceptional circumstances, so you need not be at all afraid that they will appear to you. But if they did, would it matter in the least to me or to you if we are in Christ Jesus?

If there were a thousand devils in my way, and I had to go where they were, I would drive them all away. They would fly, like chaff before the wind, from the face of any man who did but mention the name of Jesus! And if all the angels of Heaven stood in serried squadrons in front of you, you must just say to them, "Ah, blessed servitors! I am glad to see you, now go about your business," and they would soon be gone. There is nothing, in angel or devil, for a man to fear who is trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. He shall have the angels to smile upon him and, whatever mysterious beings or things there may be in the heavens above, or on the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth, they are all on the side of the man who is on the side of God!

This is also true concerning *all the mysterious doctrines of Scripture.* "Well," says someone, "there are many doctrines in the Bible that I cannot understand." That is quite likely, for there are a good many things, out of the Bible, that I cannot understand—in fact, to tell the truth, I do not know that I really understand *anything* completely, and I have, a long while ago, given up trying to do so. I can see a great many things and I can believe a great many Truths of God, but *understanding* is another thing altogether from either seeing or believing! And it is my conviction that the most of things that exist in the world are beyond all understand-

ing. I think you must have heard the simple story of the two young men who said that they would never believe what they could not understand. "Well," someone said to them, "let me tell you what I saw as I came here. I passed by a field and I saw some geese there, and they were eating grass. I also saw some sheep, and they were eating grass. And I saw some oxen and they, too, were eating grass! Do you believe that?" "Yes," the young men said, they believed that. "Well," said the other, "but I noticed that on the geese, there grew feathers. And on the sheep, there grew wool. And on the oxen, there grew hair! Do you believe that?" "Yes," said the young men. "Well," replied the other, "seeing that they all eat grass, do you understand how it is that, in one case, it turns to feathers, in another, to wool and in the other, to hair? Of course, you do not, so that, after all, you do believe a great deal that you cannot understand."

It is perfectly clear that every man must believe a great deal which it will remain forever impossible for him to be able fully to comprehend, but, whatever there is in the Bible that you do not understand, you can be sure that if you truly seek Jesus, who was crucified, there is no dark, mysterious decree of reprobation which shuts you out from finding Him! And, on the other hand, there is no bright, lustrous decree of election which blocks your way in coming to Christ! There are many grand and sublime Truths in the Word of God, and among them is the Doctrine of Election, which is most certainly true, but it is not a barrier against any sincere seeker of the Savior. The Lord said, as long ago as the days of Isaiah, "I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek you Me in vain." Nor will He say so to you if you seek Him with all your heart. Whatever secret decree there may be, or may not be, it cannot be contrary to the plain words of the Lord Jesus Christ, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but He that believes not shall be damned." That is the all-important question for you to consider and, if you have believed in Jesus, you may rest assured that all the decrees that are unknown to you must be on your side.

Is there anything else that is mysterious in the world? There are many *mysterious Providences*. Possibly some of you have been the subjects of very remarkable Providences. Ever since you began to seek the Lord, you have had more trouble than you ever had before. You say, "When I was altogether ungodly, I seemed to get on better than I have done since I became a hearer of the Word, and a seeker after Christ." That is one of the mysterious Providences which have puzzled many people, but you may depend upon it that it is wholly on your side. It may be that the Lord sees that there is no way of saving you except by making you pass through what seems like a sea of trouble. The day will probably come when you will thank God that things did not go smoothly and pleasantly with you. You see, as long as you are going downstream, your boat glides along easily enough with the current—but now that you are beginning to pull upstream, it is not a cause of wonder that you find the current to be contrary and the spray breaks over you—and now you have to pull with

all your might to escape from the waterfall, the roaring of which you can distinctly hear! But you will be helped, depend upon it. Do not marvel, however, if the dispensations of Providence should appear to you to be very mysterious. Just say in your soul, "It is all right, for every Providence says to me, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus.'" Every Doctrine of Scripture says to you, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus." And every angel in Heaven says, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus." So all must be well with you!

Yet once more, beloved Friends, *the truth that Jesus Christ has risen from the dead* is altogether on your side if you are seeking Him. The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said." I would like to speak to anybody here who is really seeking the Savior, just as I would have liked to have been spoken to when I was seeking Him. Dear Friend, let me assure you that there is still a living Savior. It is true that Jesus died upon the Cross, but He is not dead now. If you really want a Savior, He is to be found. He has not given up His office, He is still living and working. He is as full of power as He ever was and, by His Spirit, He is still working effectually upon all who seek Him. There is a living Savior! The Lord Jesus Christ still lives and there is great meaning in His Resurrection. You see, He died to pay our debts and He would never have risen again if those debts had not been paid! He died because of our transgressions and He has risen again to declare that we are fully and forever justified! Now that the crucified Christ lives again, the greatest sinners who come to Him will most certainly be justified in the sight of God, since Jesus Christ was not only, "delivered for our offenses," but He was also "raised again for our justification."

Do you seekers know what it is for which Jesus now lives? Paul tells us that "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." The chief thing that He does up there in Heaven is to plead for poor souls such as you are! If you are really seeking Him with all your heart, seeking Him as your crucified Savior, listen, and by faith you will hear Him pleading for you, "Father, forgive him. Accept him. Save him. He is seeking Me—O My Father, bless him!" Such are His pleas before the Throne of God, and you may rest assured that they will prevail for you! So, be of good courage, and be not afraid. "He is not here." Be thankful that He is not! "He is risen." He has gone into Glory where He can serve your turn far better than He could if He were still down here. He said to His disciples, "It is expedient for you that I go away," and He must say the same to you. If you are really seeking Him—if you will come, now, and trust Him—if you will just cast yourself upon Him—then, fear not, for His Resurrection is full of comfort to you.

I think I hear someone say, "My fear is that I shall never find Him." Perhaps you would not if it were left with you, but He will find you! If you are seeking Him and cannot find Him, remember that He is also seeking

you and that He will find you. I hope He will find you this very hour. I wish He would bring you to this pass—that you would say, "I will not rest until I do find Him." I do not think He would let another night go over your head without your discovering that He is very near you. Only trust Him! Only trust Him and you have already found Him! May His mighty mercy bring you to that blessed position! Do not be afraid, for you shall surely find Him if you sincerely seek Him and diligently search for Him with all your heart.

"But I am afraid," says another timid one, "that He is not for me." Do not indulge such foolish fears! Do not say, "He is not for me," until He tells you so Himself. If there is any text of Scripture that declares that your name is left out of the Lamb's Book of Life, then believe it. But there is no such text in the whole Bible. On the other hand, there are many passages that should encourage you to trust in Jesus, like that one I quoted a little while ago—I cannot help repeating it—"Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." And this one, "Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Therefore, there is no justification for you to say, "Christ is not for me," if you truly trust in Him.

"But," says another friend, "I am afraid that He would not receive me now. He may be changed from what He was on earth." If Jesus Christ stood on this platform tonight, poor troubled Soul, would you not come and cast yourself at His feet, and say, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on me"? Well, now, He is the same Christ that He was when He was upon the earth and He is just as really here as if your eyes could behold Him. I do not ask you to do with your body what you would do if His body were here, but do with your *soul* what you would do if you felt that Jesus were here. Will you not say in your heart, knowing that He can hear you even if you do not utter the words audibly, "Jesus, have mercy on me. I believe that You can and that You will save me, and I trust You to save me"? You are saved as soon as you have thus trusted Him—you are saved now! All your transgressions are forgiven you. If you can truly say that this is the utterance of your soul. If you do really cast yourself upon Him, He says to you, "Son, daughter, your sins are forgiven you. Go in peace." "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life."

What is your fear, my Friend? "O Sir, my fear is that if I did find Jesus, I would soon lose Him!" Well, if I were in your place, I would find Him, first, before I began worrying about losing Him! The very best thing in the world, when you are nervous and troubled, is to live by very short periods. "What do you mean by that expression?" asks someone. Why, just this—some people try to live a year ahead, so they always have a heap of trouble. And they often worry themselves about things that never come to pass—

"Day by day the manna fell,
Oh, to learn that lesson well!"

Live by the day, or, better still, live moment by moment. Remember this, if you once find Christ, or, rather, if He finds you, He is not accustomed to lose His people and He will never let you go! He had a strange lot of disciples when He was here, but concerning them all, He said to His Father, "Those that You gave Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled." And as He did not lose one of them, so He will not lose one of you who truly trust Him.

I know that some of you who have come to Christ will have many troubles, but you need not have any fears. You have those fears because you do not think carefully enough upon the matter and examine it in the light of Scripture. The writer of *The Recreations of a Country Parson* tells us of a man who was in great trouble and who very nearly brought himself into a lunatic asylum. He had £500 a year. He was obliged to live in a certain house and in a certain style. He could not increase his income and his expenditure could not very well be cut down. I suppose neither he nor his wife had been much accustomed to economize. He felt bound to have a certain number of servants, everything to match, and he had the fear upon him that he should "overrun the constable," as people say, and that he would die in a debtor's prison, for there was such a thing in those days.

So he put down all his payments in a book and at the end of three months he found that he had actually spent £125. "Now," he said to himself, "four times £125 is £600. I shall be a hundred pounds in debt at the end of the year, and I shall go to prison." And that man, for a long time, troubled, worried and fretted himself, and could not tell what to do, till it struck him, all of a sudden, that four times £125 was not £600, but £500, and that, therefore, he did not owe anybody anything! But although he recovered from his former state of melancholy, the effects of that unhappy experience remained upon him for years all through his not calculating correctly—tand I believe that there is many a person who is in distress for reasons quite as absurd as that!

Now, dear Friend, will you try to calculate and do it correctly? Set down your sins. "Oh, that is a long task!" says one— "I have not a roll of paper long enough." Well, use up all you have and then we will give you some more, but be sure to put them all down. Have you anymore? Put them all down. "Oh, there are so many, I cannot put them all down!" Well, then, put them down in a lump—say that they are infinite if you like. Put them down, in some way or other that will be final. "Oh, the list is too dreadful! It is too black!" I know it is, but I am not going to read it, so do not alarm yourself about that. I am no father confessor! I would not like to make my ear into a common sewer! Well, now, have you written them all down? If not, take the pencil again and complete the list—put down something that will comprehend it all. Have you put it all down? Then, lend me the pencil, for I want to write something, or I shall be very glad if you will write this sentence at the end of the list of all your sins—

The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." It does not matter what the total of your sin was, for it is now all gone!

If I should owe any person here £5, and he will kindly write at the bottom, "Received with thanks," and put his name and the date across the stamp, the debt is paid. Supposing I owed him £500? Well, if he will write the same words, that debt is cancelled. Supposing I owe Him £5,000? If he will write the same, that debt is gone. Supposing I owe Him £50,000—£500,000—£l,000,000—£50,000,000—if he will only put, "Received," that debt is all done with, it is all gone!

That is what our Lord Jesus Christ has done by His precious blood—He has put this receipt at the bottom of the whole list of our transgressions, and they are all gone, and gone forever—"The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin." What cause, then, can there be for fear if you will but trust in Jesus? You will be damned if you will not! You are "condemned already" if you have not believed on the name of the only-begotten Son of God—but if you do come to Jesus—if you believe in Jesus and are baptized on confession of your faith in Him, you are saved! God grant that each one of you may so come and believe and be baptized, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK—427, 550, 599.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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

LOVE PLEDGING FIDELITY
NO. 2774

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 13, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 3, 1881.

Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul."
1 Samuel 18:3.

"And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul."
1 Samuel 11:17.

MANY books have been written concerning that surly old Prophet Jonah, yet here is a man with a name somewhat similar—Jonathan—but scarcely anybody has had much to say about him. Yet there was more sweetness in the little finger of Jonathan than in the whole body of Jonah! A wonderfully noble, lovable, magnanimous man was that heir apparent to the throne of Israel. I admire, beyond measure, the disinterested, unselfish affection which he had for the young shepherd-hero. It must have been perfectly clear to Jonathan that David had supplanted him. Jonathan himself had been the bravest of the brave—accompanied only by his armor bearer, he had gained a notable victory over the Philistines and now, here comes another young man who becomes even more distinguished than he and who takes his place as commander-in-chief of the army. Most young men in such a position as that would have been very jealous of the newcomer—and something of the envy of Saul, the father, might very naturally have been begotten in the heart of Jonathan the son. But it was not so, for Jonathan loved David as he loved his own soul.

Moreover, Jonathan knew very well that David was ordained of God to mount the throne. That throne was his by hereditary right, yet he foresaw that neither he nor any of his descendants would sit upon it, but that David would occupy it. Yet there was no trace of jealousy, or envy, or malice towards David—Jonathan loved him as he loved his own soul. It was a case of love at first sight, for he had no sooner looked upon David than "the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David" and it was also a case of love that was strong as death, for he clung to David to the last—and David, on his part, loved him intensely and, after Jonathan had fallen upon the fatal mount of Gilboa, lamented his death in sweetest strains of poetry.

But I am not going to talk much about the friendship of Jonathan and David. I want rather to use the union of heart that existed between them, and the consequences that resulted from it, as a lesson to those of us who have the sacred fire of love burning within our heart towards the Well-Beloved, even our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, whose love toward us is marvelous, matchless, unspeakable Divine love, the likes of which has never been seen on earth!

There are two observations which I wish to make and to emphasize. They are taken from our two texts. The first is that *great love desires to bind itself to the beloved one*— "Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul." And, secondly, *great love desires renewed pledges from its object*—"Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul."

I. Now, first, GREAT LOVE DESIRES TO BIND ITSELF TO THE BELOVED ONE.

I am going to speak of the greatest love that ever was—the love of Jesus Christ to His chosen—and I want you to notice how the love of Christ to His people made Him desire to bind Himself to them. Think of this wondrous theme with all your hearts, so that, however feebly I may speak, the ardor of your imagination will put life into my poor words.

And, first of all, remember that *Jesus bound Himself to His people by Covenant bonds*. Of old, or before the earth was, our Lord Jesus had set His heart upon a people whom He foreknew. And His delights even at that time were with the sons of men. He delighted to think upon them as a people that should be His forever and, therefore, He accepted them to be His own by a Covenant gift from His Father's hands. His Father gave to Him all those who should thereafter believe on Him and His great heart of love was set upon all the chosen ones who were thus given over to Him to be His portion and heritage forever and ever. This was the first link between Christ and the Church.

Then, in the fullness of time, our Lord's great love to us led Him into visible union with us, for, as He had undertaken, when His Father gave us to Him, that He would save us and keep us, He came into the world to begin that great work by taking upon Himself our Nature. That was a wondrous union with us when He, who had made all things, did hide Himself away in the body of a Baby—when He, whose Presence filled the heavens and the earth, deigned to find a dwelling place in this world in the form of a carpenter's Son, for, "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." For this cause did the Son of God leave His Father's house, that He might be joined unto His Church and they two became one flesh. "This is a great mystery," said the Apostle, "but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." Because He loved us as His own soul, nothing would satisfy Him until He had partaken of the Nature of those who had been given to Him to become His portion and His heritage. "Bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh," is the eternal Son of God now that He is also the Son of Man, "for we are members of His body of His flesh, and of His bones."

This being done, Jesus determined that the Covenant between Himself and His people should be kept up as an indivisible union right through—

"'Yes, said the Lord, with her I'll go
Through all the depths of care and woe.
And on the Cross will even dare
The bitter pangs of death to bear.'"

He had come into the closest possible union with His Church because He loved her as His own soul—and He determined to maintain that union although it involved a life of toil, humiliation, poverty and pain. And although it also involved death, "even the death of the Cross." But He would, at all costs, carry out the Covenant that He had made with His Father to be the Surety and the Substitute for His own people—"Having loved His own, which were in the world, He loved them unto the end."

Because of this close connection with His Church, our Lord Jesus Christ has bound Himself to every believing soul by very definite promises. Christ so loves you, Beloved, that He has said to each one of you, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Up in Heaven, He maintains your right and defends your cause. And He has pledged His honor to secure your eternal safety and has linked His own cause and Kingdom, and His future success, with your being ultimately delivered from all sin and sorrow. It is wonderful to note how Christ, in entering into Covenant with His people, has bound Himself by every conceivable tie to those whom His Father gave Him—and whom He has redeemed with His precious blood!

Then, next, *Jesus would have us bound to Him on our part.* This kind of bond can never be all on one side, for true friendship leads to mutual love. To my mind there is a measure of mystery in both my texts—"Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul." Which is the, "he," and which is the, "him," referred to in this verse? Is the, "he," David, and the, "him," Jonathan? Or is the, "him," David, and the, "he," Jonathan? There is the same indefiniteness in the second text. There is a kind of mixing up of the pronouns and I like that, because a true friend or a true love is one's other self—the two persons are so closely joined to one another that they have become one! So our blessed Lord Jesus, who has linked Himself with us by many strong ties, also would have us link ourselves with Him by many ties. Let us see whether we have bound ourselves to Him in that way. How is it done?

Our first conscious love-union to Christ is when we come and submit ourselves entirely to Him, that He may save us. Have all of you done this? I remember when I first realized that there was nothing I could do to save myself and that Christ had done it all. I was quite content that He should be my Savior on those terms. Content, did I say? No, more than that—I was delighted just to lay myself down at His dear feet that He might save me entirely.

After that submission to Him, there next came into my soul an ardent love to Him. I feel sure that it was so with all of you who have believed in Him—when you realized that He had saved you, you felt so glad and so thankful that you could not help loving Him who had done so much for you! That is the kind of union that Christ desires on our part toward

Himself—that we should be grateful for His redeeming love, grateful for the forgiveness of our sin and then that we should love Him in return. You did feel that love once, did you not? Do you feel it now? Let me stop a minute and ask you to think of Christ as actually being here. He is a real Christ you know—no dream, no mere imaginary person who has simply figured in the pages of fiction. He is a real, living Christ, and if you have submitted yourself to Him to save you, He has saved you! Then, do you not love Him? Give your love an opportunity of expressing itself! Look your Savior in the face and say to Him—

"Do not I love You, O my Lord?
Behold my heart and see."

And if you can truthfully do it, let your soul as well as your voice sing those well-known words—

"My Jesus, I love You, I know You are mine,
For You all the follies of sin I resign!
My gracious Redeemer, my Savior art Thou,
If ever I loved You, my Jesus, 'tis now."

Because Jesus loves you as His own soul, He wants you to avow your union with Him by expressing the love which you really feel in your heart towards Him. That love should constrain us to confess that we belong wholly to Him, with all we are and all we have. There is not anything about us which is not our Lord's—from the crown of our head to the soles of our feet, He has redeemed us with His precious blood! So let us acknowledge that we are "bought with a price." Because Christ loves us, He wants us to acknowledge that we are His as surely as that He is ours—and not only to admit this in our own heart, but also to confess it before men by casting in our lot with His people. Has my Lord Jesus a visible Church anywhere on earth? Then, let me share the lot of those who are its members! What are its fortunes? Let them be mine. Is the Church dishonored and despised, maligned and persecuted? Then let me take the rough side of the hill with her—and bear the brunt of the storm with her rather than, in a cowardly manner, be ashamed of my Master and shrink from saying that I belong to Him. Because He loves you as His own soul, He wants you to openly declare that you are really His! In the presence of men and angels, or even in the presence of legions of devils, be not ashamed to let it be known that you belong to Jesus, just as Jonathan and David were not ashamed to let it be known that they were fast friends to one another.

Then, Beloved, it will delight Christ's heart if you show kindness to all who belong to Him. You remember how David looked after poor Mephibosheth, the lame son of Jonathan? When he found him, he took care of him for Jonathan's sake. So, dear Friends, look after Christ's lame people, Christ's poor people, Christ's despondent people and Christ's sick people. Visit them in their affliction, relieve their distresses, comfort their hearts and do it all for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake.

And because Jesus loves you, He wants you, Beloved, to merge all your life's interests more and more in His and to find your gain in advancing His honor. He wants you to come to this point—that you will be rich when His cause prospers—that you will be poor when His Church

declines—that you will be happy when Christ is honored and that you will be sad when He is not loved. It will be to Him a great joy when He shall see you more and more entering into Covenant with Him, as He has already, to the fullest possible extent, entered into Covenant bonds with you.

If this is our Lord's desire, shall we not fulfill it? I think I hear some of you say, "We know all this and we have done all this." Then keep on doing it! As you sit in your pews, try to feel more than you have ever done before, the bonds of love which bind Christ to you and which also bind you to Christ. Say, with the Apostle, "We love Him because He first loved us."

These bonds are mutual and they are indissoluble. With confidence we may repeat the Apostolic challenge, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" For we know that nothing can make Him leave off loving us and nothing can make us leave off loving Him!

Further, as David accepted Jonathan's presents, we accept, O gracious Savior, all the priceless gifts that You bestow upon us! We see You taking off your royal robe and girding it around us. You laid aside all your bright array, that we might be clothed as princes of the blood-royal of Heaven! "Even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his belt" did Jonathan give to David—and our Lord Jesus has done the same for us, so that we have "the Sword of the Spirit," with which we may "fight the good fight of faith." And from His bow we may shoot upward the pointed arrows of prayer, and that we also may be girt about with the belt of the Truth of God. There is nothing, O Lord, which You have that You have not given to us and with both our hands we do accept of that which is Yours and of Yourself, also, for You, too, are given to us and, in return, we give ourselves to You—"It's all that we can do."

Let it really be so with us now! Let our love embrace the Well-Beloved! Let this be a time of love with us! Look up at His blessed face and then ask, "Was there ever any other so fair as He is?" Then look into His heart and enquire, "Was there ever another heart so tender, so true, so kind, as His?" Then count His royal and Divine honors and see whether any other lover ever wooed with such bejeweled hands and such a crown of Glory as He wears upon His blessed brow! Yes, look Him all over and see if there ever was such Incarnate Love in any other as you behold in Him. Did any other man ever love so intensely, or did any woman ever expend such a wealth of love as He has bestowed on us in stooping from the highest heavens to the lowest depths of misery and shame, and even to the grave, itself, that He might lift us up to sit forever with Him on His Throne?

O Heart! Heart! Heart! You ought to be smitten till you break into a thousand fragments if you do not love the Well-Beloved! What is wrong with you, cold Soul, lukewarm Soul, that you do not burn and glow with such good matter as this when you are speaking of the things which concern the King! Come, Beloved, let us love our Lord, or die! If we really are Christians, our hearts would sooner cease to beat than cease to love our blessed Savior!

Thus much, but all too poorly said, upon the Truth of God in our first text—great love desires to bind itself to the Beloved One.

II. Now, secondly, we learn from our second text that GREAT LOVE DESIRES RENEWED PLEDGES FROM ITS OBJECT—"Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul."

It was not out of distrust, but *by reason of a sort of sacred jealousy* that "Jonathan caused David to swear again." He did not fear that his friend would prove untrue, but he needed to have every possible confirmation of the covenant of love which they had made with one another. And, believing Soul, though Christ does not distrust you, He knows what is in you and He is jealous of you. Our Savior is as jealous of us as His Father is—the immeasurable greatness of the love of Jesus Christ to us moves Him to feel an Infinite jealousy of us. He loves us so much that He will have all our love and, if you are really His beloved ones, He will adopt ways and means of extracting from you the last particle of your love, that He may have it all for Himself. As Rutherford said to a noble lady who had lost a number of children, one after the other, "The Lord Jesus loves you so much that He will not let one drop of your love go in any other direction than towards Himself." And though He may not deal in that way with us, by taking away our friends and kindred, yet I am sure that where He loves us much, He will have the whole of our love. He cannot bear that our heart should be divided, or in any measure taken from Him. So, again, and again, and again, He causes us to renew our vows and our Covenant with Him. So would He have us renew our love to Him.

Further, *this is the only return we can make for His love*. Your little children, on your knee, cost you much care and anxiety—and when they kiss you and fondle you, and tell you how much they love you, they may well do so, for that is all they can do. They cannot help you in your daily toil, or bear any share of your heavy burdens and, in like manner, all that we can do for Christ is to love Him. Alas, that we do so little of that! I fear that sometimes we are more ready to preach, or teach, or give away tracts, or do something in the way of active service for Christ, but, after all, the acceptableness of these things is to be measured by the love to our Lord that is in them. To love Him is the chief thing—it is our love that Christ longs for above everything else. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest Commandment of all and, therefore, does our Savior wish us again and again to renew our vows of love to Him.

Besides, *it is for our highest benefit that we should do this*. Our love is often so feeble and cold that it needs to be stirred up again. The fire in our heart continually burns low so that we need to constantly have the flame fanned and fresh fuel put on, that we may love our Lord more and more.

And chilly as we are in ourselves, *we are often tempted and allured by other loves*, and are apt to lend a listening ear to the charmer's fascinating voice. You know that it is so, Beloved. We are not true to our Lord as

we ought to be and, therefore, He asks us again, and again, and yet again, "Do you love Me? Do you love Me? Do you love Me?" And if we are grieved that He asks us the question a third time, "Do you love Me!" we ought to remember that we have grieved Him many more than three times—it is our unfaithfulness to Him that lays upon Him the necessity of putting this enquiry to us so often.

It is also for our benefit that we should often renew our pledges of love to our Lord *because we cannot be happy unless we are wholly taken up with love to Him*. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," said Solomon. And we may well say the same. There is nothing upon earth that can give solid satisfaction to a Christian apart from Christ. You may make him rich, you may lavish upon him all conceivable delights, but these things will all mock him, like the mirage of the desert, unless his heart is right with Christ, is filled with the love of Jesus and the sunlight of the Divine Presence is there. I am sure that it is so! You unconverted people may be happy enough in your way, without Christ, but a true-born child of God cannot have any bliss apart from His Lord. If you mean to be a Christian, you must remember there remains but one source of true delight to you—but that one Source of delight contains more than all other springs of joy put together! If you do but drink of it, you shall be more than satisfied. But if you turn aside from that Fountain of Living Waters, your soul will thirst and faint. It is God's decree that you shall mourn until you come back to the Beloved and yet again swear allegiance to Him, for He will have you do it because He loves you as He loves His own soul.

I wish that all of us who love the Lord would at once renew our Covenant with Him. It may help us to do so if I remind you of the past times when we have given ourselves up to Him. I remember well the first surrender of my soul to my Savior. Do you not remember the same hallowed season? Turn over the leaves of your diary till you come to the record of it. "On such a day, I was born-again. On such a day, I was married to Christ. My heart was wholly given to Him and I rejoiced in Him." Recollect that solemn surrender and, as you recall it, say over again, as you said then—

"Here, Lord, I give myself away.
It's all that I can do."

Do you remember your Baptism—you who were, in Scriptural fashion, buried with Christ in Baptism? I recollect mine. What did I mean by it? I meant that as I gave up my body to be temporarily buried in the river—as the water rolled over me and I was as one dead and buried, so did I declare that I was dead to sin, dead to the world and buried to it all. And I also meant that as I rose again from the stream, so would I live for Christ, alone, in newness of life, as one who had been dead, buried and had risen again. To me that was the most solemn day of my life! I remember rising early, at the break of day, that I might have some hours of prayer before starting, for I had some miles to walk along a country road. And all the way I was thinking of the public dedication of myself to my Master. I meant that to be my funeral day to all except Himself and the day of my resurrection with Him! And I hope it was, and also hope it was the same with you. If so, I pray you do not belie your Baptism! I charge you

who have been buried with Christ, that you bear in your body the marks of the Lord Jesus, not in one place only, as was the fashion under the old Law—but in your entire body, that you may be wholly Christ's, completely Christ's, henceforth and forever.

Since that time of our Baptism, how often have we renewed our vows of love to our Lord as we have come to His Table! We have partaken of the bread and the wine as the memorials of His love to us and I think that, there, we have often given ourselves up to Him again. Do so again, Beloved, as you come presently to the Communion Table. Come as if you were coming for the first time. Say, "My Savior, I take You to myself, to be my life and the food of my life. And I will, by Your Grace, live to You and to You alone."

Some of us have a further reason for renewing our vows of love to our Lord, because we have lately risen from a sickbed. Shall not the life that has been prolonged be wholly the Lord's? If He has taken away from us the heavy burden of terrible pain—the iron yoke of deep depression of spirit—do we not feel bound to yield ourselves up to Him as though we were beginning our Christian life over again? And I think that others of you who have not been in pain and have not been depressed in spirit, ought to feel as though, because of God's great mercy to you in keeping you out of such trials, you should yield yourselves anew to Him.

Some of you may have reached another anniversary of your birthday, or you may have come to some other period of your life that is memorable. Perhaps you have taken a new business, or have gone to live in another house—well, I hardly like to think of going into a new house, or even sleeping in another room without once more saying, "Come here with me, my Lord. I am Yours wherever I am, on land or sea, in this country or in a foreign land—I am eternally joined to You, and Your servant would I be at all times." It would not be amiss to renew your Covenant with your Lord every morning when the day breaks—and to renew it yet again every night as you fall asleep, for, oh, it is most helpful to the spirit to be often coming to Christ—to be constantly committing your soul into His dear hands!

I am sure that Christ is pleased with you when you do this, for He loves you as He loves His own soul. He is never tired of hearing you tell Him how much you love Him—you can never continue speaking on that theme so long as to weary Him by your confession of love to Him! You can never praise Him so much that He is tired of your song! You can never implore His mercy to the point He is weary of your prayers! That can never happen! And when you come and bring yourself—poor, poor self, as it is—to Christ, He never disdains your love! A little child delights to caress its mother and, as the mother is never happier than when she is receiving the child's love, so, believe me, it is with Christ. Yet some of you seem to think that He does not want your affection. Or you fancy that it does not matter how you express your love—that a few hurried words of prayer will suffice, or a dull, formal hymn of praise—but it is not so. Do you not want to make Him happy? My Brother, in his prayer, thanked God that it was possible for us to add even to the bliss of Christ

in Heaven, and it is so. The shepherd rejoices when he finds the sheep that was lost, but does his joy end when he finds it? Oh, no! The father had great joy when the prodigal returned, but did his joy end when his boy came home? Oh, no! And, likewise, Christ is always glad of conversation and communion with His beloved ones, so give Him much of it. Say to Him sometimes—

"With You all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day."

And sometimes, hour by hour, do nothing but commune with Him. Yes, always, when about your business, or whatever else you have to do, abide in Him, for He would have you do it.

In closing, I would earnestly urge those who love the Master to take frequent opportunities of getting alone with their Beloved, that they may express their love to Him. Do you often do that, dear Friends? To my mind, that is one of the choice forms of devotion—just to tell the Savior how you love Him—to sit down, or kneel, or stand, or walk, and say, "My gracious Lord, I do love You. Teach me to love You more." Tell Him why you love Him. Rehearse His deeds of Grace towards you. Keep on at that theme till your heart burns within you with a vehement flame of love to your Lord!

Another acceptable thing to do is, every now and then, to do something specially for Christ Himself or to give something directly to Christ Himself—as directly as it can be done. As the woman washed His feet with her tears and wiped them with the flowing tresses of her head—and kissed them unceasingly and anointed them with the precious ointment—so do you something for Him. Some will think it wasteful to break the alabaster box and to anoint Him thus, but do it, whatever they may say. There is nothing too precious to be lavished upon Christ. Possibly you can find some poor saint to whom you will do some great deed of love because you are doing it for Christ. Or you may know of some part of the work of Christ that needs help that will cost you much self-denial to render. Do it, but tell nobody about it! Never let your name be seen in the matter, but do it for Him. If you do really love Him and He is your All-in-All, you will not need any urging to do this.

When we are in love, we need no one to urge us to give tokens and pledges of love—it is a joy to us to do anything that will give pleasure to our beloved. It is no misery to the tree to produce its luscious fruit and it is no severe task to a Christian to perform deeds of love to Christ! So I will not urge you to it, but leave the matter with you, and with the Well-Beloved of your souls.

But what shall I say to those who do not love Christ? Do not love *Christ*? O you blind, you dead, you foolish ones! The Lord have mercy on you! If He does not, remember that this is the text that belongs to you, "If any man loves not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha"—"let him be accursed, for the Lord comes." And every godly soul must say, "Amen," even to that dreadful sentence, for he who loves not the blessed Lord must be accursed!

God save you all from that terrible doom, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 SAMUEL 18:1-16; 20:1-17.

1 Samuel 18:1. *And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.* Jonathan, the brave young soldier who had himself done great exploits, naturally admired the youthful warrior who had slain the Philistine giant, and also admired the modesty of his speech when he returned with the head of Goliath in his hand. "The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul."

2-4. *And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him.* No doubt one suitable to his rank as the heir-apparent to the throne of Israel.

4, 5. *And gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his belt. And David went out wherever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war.* Probably Jonathan had previously occupied that position, but now that David is called to supplant him, Jonathan is not jealous of him, but he loves him as he loves his own soul.

5-7. *And he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants. And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music. And the women answered one another as they played, and said.* Singing in chorus, with answering refrains—

7-9. *Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands. And Saul was very angry, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom? And Saul eyed David from that day forward.* This shows how envy will destroy a man's own peace of mind, as well as make him plot against the one of whom he is envious. Instead of being thankful to God for sending him such a valiant champion as David to deliver both himself and his people, Saul is full of malice towards the young hero simply because he receives his due need of praise for his victory over the giant. "Saul eyed David" with an evil and envious eye—looked askance upon him and determined to do him mischief whenever he could.

10. *And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house.* Probably talking wildly and foolishly.

10. *And David played with his hand, as at other times.* That is, as he had at other times, played upon the harp to chase away the evil spirit.

10-12. *And there was a javelin in Saul's hand. And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it. And David*

avoided out of his presence twice. And Saul was afraid of David. David was not afraid of Saul, although Saul was the man with the javelin, and with the murderous, malicious spirit which prompted him to hurl it at the young harpist. David—guileless, brave, honest, trustful, was not afraid of Saul—but "Saul was afraid of David."

12-14. *Because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul. Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people. And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the LORD was with him.* And, young man, you also will be wise if God is with you! And you will be able to behave yourself wisely, discreetly, prosperously, as the word seems to mean. Even when malicious eyes are fixed upon you, they will not be able to find any fault in you if the Lord is with you. You will win favor where you least expect it if you do but so live that God can be with you—if you keep the vessel of your nature so pure that the Master can use it. May it be your portion and mine to have it said of each of us, "The Lord was with him!"

15, 16. *Therefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him. But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them.* This love of the people only caused Saul's hatred of David to be carried to a still greater excess. But Jonathan still loved David and promised to cleave to him whatever might happen. In the 20th Chapter we can read still more concerning this faithful friendship.

1 Samuel 20:1, 2. *And David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? What is my iniquity? And what is my sin before your father, that he seeks my life? And he said unto him, God forbid; you shall not die.* Jonathan could not think that his father really intended to take the life of his friend!

2, 3. *Behold, my father will do nothing either great or small, but that he will show it to me; and why should my father hide this thing from me? It is not so. And David swore moreover, and said, Your father certainly knows that I have found favor in your eyes: and he says, Let not Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved: but truly as the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, there is but a step between me and death.* He had so often escaped, as it were, by the skin of his teeth,, from his cruel persecutor, that he knew himself to be in a position of extreme peril.

4. *Then said Jonathan unto David, Whatever your soul desires, I will even do it for you.* Such was his love for David that he would make no exception—whatever there was that David wished him to do, he would do it for him.

5-10. *And David said unto Jonathan, Behold, tomorrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at dinner: but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field unto the third day at even. If your father at all misses me, then say, David earnestly asked leave of me that he might run to Bethlehem, his city: for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family. If he say thus, It is well; your servant shall have peace: but if he is very angry, then be sure that evil is determined by him. Therefore you*

shall deal kindly with your servant; for you have brought your servant into a covenant of the LORD with you: notwithstanding, if there is in me iniquity, slay me yourself; for why should you bring me to your father? And Jonathan said, Far be it from you: for if I knew certainly that evil were determined by my father to come upon you, then would I not tell you? Then said David to Jonathan, Who shall tell me? Or what if your father answers you roughly? What am I to do in such a case as that? If your father should turn against you as well as against me, what is to be done then?

11. *And Jonathan said unto David, Come, and let us go out into the field. And they went out both of them into the field.* To get quite alone that they might express to one another the feelings of their inmost hearts, and also might consult together without any risk of being overheard.

12-17. *And Jonathan said unto David, O LORD God of Israel, when I have sounded my father about tomorrow any time, or the third day, and, behold, if there is good toward David, and I then send not unto you, and show it to you; the LORD do so and much more to Jonathan. But if it please my father to do you evil, then I will show it to you, and send you away, that you may go in peace: and the LORD be with you, as He has been with my father. And you shall not only while yet I live show me the kindness of the LORD, that I die not: but also you shall not cut off your kindness from my house forever: no, not when the LORD has cut off the enemies of David, everyone from the face of the earth. So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the LORD even require it at the hand of David's enemies. And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul.* Thus were these two men bound together by ties of mutual love—may we be thus bound to Jesus! Oh, that there may be such love between us and our Lord as shall even excel the love of Jonathan and David!

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK—809, 795, 788.

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

DAVID WARNED AND REWARDED
NO. 2775

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 20, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 29, 1881.

"Moreover by them Your servant is warned: and in keeping them there is great reward."
Psalm 19:11.

DAVID was constantly singing the praises of God's Word, although, as I have often reminded you, he had only a small portion of the Scriptures compared with the complete Bible which we possess. If, then, it had pleased God that the Canon of Revelation should have been closed in David's day, it would, by the aid of His Spirit, have been even then a sufficient Light of God to lead the saints of God into the way of holiness. You would be very sorry if the Pentateuch and the earliest Historical Books should be all that you had of the Scriptures, yet they are, evidently, so rich, so full, so instructive, that they were all that David needed for the practical purposes of a holy life! Never allow anybody to make you depreciate the Old Testament. No part of the Bible is to be set up above the rest, or to be treated as of secondary importance. "All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

So I gather, from what David says, that if we had no more Books of the Bible than he had, we should still possess all inestimable treasure for which we ought daily to bless and praise the name of the Lord. But now that we have the complete Revelation of the will of God, as contained in the Old and the New Testaments, we ought to rejoice with exceedingly great joy. We have a Bible which is large enough to be a perfect library and which is also so compact that we can carry it about with us wherever we go! It is exactly the right size and it is just right in all other respects. It is just adapted to every individual in the world and it is also the most fit Book for any nation to use as an everyday guide as to its morals, its laws and its conduct in relation to both God and men.

There are two things mentioned in the text which made the Scriptures very dear to David. The first is that *they had warned him against evil*—"by them Your servant is warned." And the second is that *obedience to the Scriptures had brought him a great reward*—"and in keeping them there is great reward."

I. First, then, THE SCRIPTURES HAD WARNED DAVID AGAINST EVIL.

We are so dull and so foolish that unless we are taught of God the Holy Spirit, we really know nothing as we ought to know it. Yet we are so headstrong and so obstinate that if we are not Divinely checked, we run with heedless impetuosity into all manner of evil. We need to be goaded on to everything that is good, but we need to be held in with a tight rein, or we shall plunge into many things that are evil. Even when we do not willfully choose the wrong, we seem to run into it by a sort of natural tendency—and we find ourselves bogged down before we know where we are. If, however, the Scripture is made to be our constant companion and guide, we shall be saved from many mistakes into which, otherwise, we are sure to fall. Where we should have rushed on madly to our destruction, we shall find ourselves suddenly stopped and we shall hear a Voice behind us saying, "This is the way; walk in it." And, through giving heed to that warning Voice, we shall turn back from the broad road of our own choosing to the narrow way of God's choice.

God's Word warned us, first, *concerning our soul's disease and its remedy*. To some of us, our first warning concerning the evil of our nature came from the Scriptures. There are some persons who must, very early in life, have been made aware of the evil of their nature. I mean persons with a hot, impetuous, passionate temperament, or those with a strong animal tendency and others who were brought up in the midst of vice, and who themselves eagerly plunged into it. One would think that such people ought to be able to see that they are not what they should be. But there have been others with a gentle nature who have been trained up in the midst of piety. Even without the Grace of God, they would not be likely to become vicious like those to whom I have referred. They have also, through helpful training, become honest, upright and amiable. There is everything about them that is pleasing and beautiful. They go to church, or to the meeting house, and they join with others in making confession of sin, yet, somehow, they do not seem to realize that the confession applies to themselves exactly as it stands, for they are not openly as sinful as others are. There are some people in such a condition of natural excellence that if it had not been for the Word of God, they would not have known what evil was sleeping within their hearts!

A leopard may have been kept under restraint from the time it was a cub and it may appear to be perfectly harmless. But if it should taste blood, its real fierceness will soon be seen. You may walk over a grassy hill and think yourself perfectly secure, yet, underneath, there may be a slumbering volcano, liable to break out at any moment. Everywhere about us there is that which flatters us and makes us think that we are better than we are, but, by the Word of God, we are faithfully warned that there is a sink of iniquity within our soul—a black and fetid spring—a foul generator of everything that is evil in the very fountain of our nature! What a blessing it is for us to be warned of that evil, lest we should go on dreaming that all was right and never find out the truth till we were past conversion—past the possibility of being renewed because we would have entered that other world where hope and mercy can never come! What a blessing it is that God's Word warns us concerning the

disease and tells us of the remedy for it—warns us that we are lost and reveals to us the glorious Truth of God concerning the Savior who has come to seek and to save that which was lost!

Then, next, God's Word warned us *concerning our danger and the way of escape from it.* Did you ever find yourself, dear Friend, forming associations with ungodly persons and gradually becoming more and more pleased with them and, then, did the Word of God come to you with power, saying, "Be you not unequally yoked together with unbelievers"? Did you also hear this command applied to you, "Come out from among them, and be you separate, says, the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing"? If so, I am sure that as you tore yourself away from the fatal embrace of the ungodly, and escaped for your life out of the Sodom of which you had almost become a citizen, you could not help prizing and praising the Book by which you had been warned to flee from the peril which threatened to destroy you!

Did you ever find yourself thinking that all was well within—that you were really getting to be somebody of importance—that you might hang out your streamers? And did the Word of the Lord then come home to you, saying, "You say, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked"? Did you haul down your flags? Did you hide your face for shame? Did you get away alone and confess to God the proud mistake that you had made, and not feel safe again until you were lying at the foot of the Cross, looking up to your Savior for mercy and forgiveness? If so, I feel sure that you took your Bible in your hand and you said, "By this blessed Book Your servant is warned to escape from self-delusion and from being puffed up with the conceit that he was something when he was nothing."

How many, many dangers there are in this life against which the Word of God warns us! I recollect being on board a steamboat going up the Thames, early in the morning, when the fog had not cleared away and when a man in the bow of the vessel shouted out as loudly as he could for us to go astern, for we were out of our track and should soon have been ashore. As I heard that shrill cry of warning, I could not but be grateful for it and you and I, dear Friends, would long ago have gone aground if the Word of the Lord had not called out to us, sometimes in sharp, stern tones, "Stop! There is danger just ahead!" And we have been compelled to alter our course and go where our natural inclination would never have induced us to go. Blessed be God that we were not only warned, at the first, concerning our spiritual disease, and directed to Him who could cure it, but, many a time since then we have been warned of unseen dangers in our holy pilgrimage! So let us prize and bless the Book that has been our Mentor and our Monitor, always seeking to keep us in the right path, or to draw us off from the wrong.

God's Word has also been a warning to us, oftentimes, *concerning our duty and our obligation.* Many a professing Christian is not living as he or she should live. But if they would diligently read their Bible and obey its injunctions, there would soon be a great alteration in them. Hundreds of

Believers, while searching the Scriptures, have been powerfully affected by some text and have been led not only to see their shortcomings, but also to perceive the way to a nobler and better life. "I must do something," says one, "to prove my love to Him who has done so much for me. I have fallen short even of the standard that I set for myself, and that standard is far below what I find in the Word of God."And, it may be, under the influence of a single verse, the man has become generous, self-sacrificing, earnest, fervent and has glowed with a zeal for God which he never knew before! Many of us can testify how often the Word of the Lord has quickened us—so let us be wise enough to go to it whenever we become lethargic and dull, so that, under the Inspiration of its sacred pages, we may be again awakened and revived. O Spirit of God, we bless Your holy name that when duties lay neglected and precepts had been entirely forgotten, You did bring them up again before our minds in this precious Book—and then, by Your Grace we made haste and delayed not to keep Your commandments because Your Word has warned us concerning our duty and our obligation!

Brothers and Sisters, God's Word warns us *concerning the whole of our life and even concerning some things to come which, otherwise, we could never have known*. If any Brother is impressed with the thought that Jesus Christ may come at any moment, and call him to account, that is an admirable reason why he should, every day, watch unto prayer, and get himself ready for his Lord's coming. But, sometimes, when I read the Word of God, and when I travel through this great city, I am led to contemplations of another sort. I think that whether the Lord comes soon, or not, does not affect my responsibility and yours concerning the people now living, and the generations that may yet come. If this great London is to go on increasing. If the population shall still keep multiplying, what will be said of us if we allow street after street to be built, houses by the thousands to be erected, and hardly any new houses for the worship of God, while public bars may be measured by the mile? It seems to me a dreadful thing to live at this particular time in which, if the Gospel seed is not plentifully sown, the waste ground of centuries—if the world lasts so long, will cry out because of our indolence! But if the seed were scattered broadcast, then the harvests that shall be reaped in the centuries that may yet come shall redound to the Glory of God and also to the credit of those who faithfully served their Lord.

I believe that if ever men stood in a place where they could have power over a vast tremulous mass of humanity—if ever men were in contact with wondrous wires that may influence ages that are yet to be, and nations still unborn—we are the men who stand in just such a position! That which is done, or left undone, today, will have certain effects throughout eternity, but it will, perhaps, be sufficient for us to limit the consideration and to remember that our service or our neglect may affect generations of our fellow creatures for good or evil. May God help us to remember that solemn verse which warns us that "none of us lives to himself, and no man dies to himself." May the Holy Spirit also bring to our memories our Savior's words, "You are the salt of the earth." And

"You are the light of the world." If we salt not the earth, what can come to it but corruption? And if we enlighten not our generation, what can come to it but the blackness of darkness? By the consideration of these things are God's servants warned to be up and doing while it is called today. May God grant that we may not neglect the warning, but may we prize it, and thank God that in the Sacred Scriptures there is provision made to wake us up when we sleep, and to keep us active in His holy service! "By them Your servant is warned."

I would like to pass the question round to all who are here—Dear Friends, are you being warned by God's Word? Does it ever stop you, like an angel in the way when you are going forward contrary to the will of the Lord, and make you suddenly start and stand still? Does God's Word ever, as it were, put its finger up to silence you just as you are going to speak? Does it ever seem to lay its hand upon your arm just as you are going to stretch out your hand unto iniquity? Does it ever warn you? Does it operate upon you as a drag, a check, a restraint? If it does not, then you have yet to learn the first elementary lesson of true piety! You are not as David was—you are not yet taught of the Spirit of God—for, if you were, you would frequently be warned by God's Word and you would love to have it so. May God, in His mercy, grant that we may all learn, experimentally, the meaning of this first sentence of our text—"By them Your servant is warned"

II. Now let us turn to the second part of the subject, in which I take much delight. It tells us that OBEDIENCE TO THE SCRIPTURES BROUGHT TO DAVID A GREAT REWARD.

Holy Writ was very precious to David and he says, concerning God's commandments, "in keeping them there is great reward." He does not say, "*for* keeping them." That is the old legal system—so much pay for so much obedience. It is a poor system even if it could be worked out, but it is not God's plan at all. "You are not under Law, but under Grace." We are to do nothing for payment, but everything for love. Observe the difference between the two sentences. "For keeping them there is great reward." That is beggarly! It is a hireling's utterance. "In keeping them there is great reward." *That* is the language of one who loves obedience. It is a child's sentence—the sentence of one who is perfectly free in his obedience and who does not render it because he must, but because he delights to do so. That is the difference between the legal spirit of bondage and the evangelical spirit of holy freedom before the living God.

So, then, there is a great reward to gracious men in the keeping of God's commandments and that reward consists, first, in *the pleasure of obedience*. To those of us who love the Lord, it is a great delight to do what God bids us do. For instance, He bids us draw near to Him in worship and I can confidently appeal to many of you who are here, and I am sure that you will sympathize with me when I say that the happiest moments of my life are those that are spent on this spot where I am now standing. Or down in the Prayer Meetings or at the Communion Table, for, when I begin to worship and adore the Lord, my heart finds wings and I soon rise above all cares, troubles and carnal considerations into a

high, holy, happy, spiritual condition! I am certain that I have experienced more true happiness on this platform than can have been enjoyed in any other place on the face of the earth! Whether you have been happy while I have been praying, I cannot tell, but I know that I have seemed to be in the immediate Presence of God while I have been leading you in supplication and, therefore, I judge that it has been much the same with you. And when you have a happy time alone in prayer, or in singing God's praises, or reading His Word, is it not the very vestibule of Heaven to your soul? Well, that is an illustration of the Truth of God that in keeping God's commandments there is a great reward!

That refers to one part of the commands of God—the drawing near unto Him in worship. Now turn to the Second Table, where you are bid to love your fellow men, and see how far you have obeyed its commands. Have you done all you could to help the poor? Have you distributed alms among them? Have you been a nurse to the sick? Have you taught the little children? Have you tried to instruct grown-up people whom you have found under soul-concern and sought to lead them to Christ? What have been the happiest evenings that you have ever spent when you have reviewed the engagements of the day? Have they been those in which you have had a season of gaiety with your friends—I do not mean anything objectionable or wrong, but ordinary amusement—a day, for instance, when you have been in the country and you have been full of mirth and merriment? Has that been your happiest day?

I do not think so. I believe that the happiest days you have ever lived have been those in which you have been downright weary in the cause of God! You have put your head on your pillow and you have slept, oh, so sweetly! Or, if you have been too tired to sleep, you have had joy-bells ringing in your heart because you have been doing somebody good. It is a great delight to give away money for Christ's sake—to help the poor and to succor such as are unable to help themselves! Just try to relieve a poor widow of part of her burden of care, or seek to supply the needs of an orphan child and see whether it will not bring you joy and gladness! It is a whole day's holiday to be permitted to spend a day in doing well. In saying this, I am not dreaming—I am merely telling you what I know to be a matter of fact. Those who love the Lord find that in keeping His commandments there is great reward! There is a pleasure in the obedience, itself.

Then, dear Friends, there is *a reward in the healthiness of this exercise*. Either in worship and serving the Lord, or in loving and doing well to your fellow men, there is most healthful exercise to your spirit. There are some forms of physical labor that quickly wear out the human frame—and there are some processes of thought that bring on brain weariness and mental exhaustion. But, in the service of God there is a refreshment which makes the labor light. If we could have a machine that would manufacture its own oil, provide its own coal and repair its own waste, it would be a wonderful triumph of mechanism—and the spiritual mind is, by God's Grace, made something like that. It bears within itself a well of living water springing up into everlasting life! It is an engine that

creates its own fuel, oil and water as it runs along its way. God, by His Infinite Power, gives to the Believer such spiritual strength within him that even "though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." There is nothing that does a man so much good as to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. A little heavenly excitement is a blessed refreshment and revival for the entire manhood and—turning again to the other side of the subject—to walk uprightly towards our fellow men, to forgive those who injure us and to bless with our beneficence all those who need anything at our hands is a kind of exercise that is eminently suitable to our renewed manhood! And, the more we have of it, the more are we refreshed. If you want to grow to be what you ought to be, keep God's commandments, for in keeping them there is this blessed healthiness of spirit that comes to the obedient. He who would be whole, must be holy. Holiness is, indeed, a kind of wholeness or spiritual health.

Let me give you a few specimens of the way in which some of us have found the keeping of God's commandments to be truly profitable to us—

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
'I am this dark world's light.
Look unto Me, your morn shall rise,
And all your day be bright.'"

I obeyed that command and I can bear testimony that a great reward was at once given to me. Oh, how quickly the heavy burden rolled from my shoulder! How my soul did leap like a roe or a young hart the very moment that I obeyed that command of the Lord, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." Then there is that command, "Trust in the Lord," which is the perpetual precept for a Believer's whole life—have not many of you found a great reward in keeping that command? Why, that trust in God has enabled you to cast your burden of daily care and every other burden that has been upon you, upon Him! And when you have trusted Him, you have been placid, and calm, and joyful and strong, and fully equipped for all your labor and service. What a great reward faith brings to all who exercise it! It is a most soul-enriching Grace and, where it is in active operation, untold spiritual wealth comes pouring into the coffers of the saint!

Now take another command. For instance, "Pray without ceasing." In keeping that command, have you not had a great reward? True prayer is true power. Prayer brings every blessing from on high. There is no need to do more than just mention it, for many of you know that when you have kept that command, there has been given to you a great reward.

Let me remind you of a command which is often forgotten—the command to forgive them that trespass against you. If you have done that, have you not found a great reward in the fact of having done it? Someone well said, "If my fellow men do not praise me for what I have done, I do not mind. I am quite satisfied to have done that which deserved their praise." So should it be with you and those whose wrong-doing you have forgiven. If you have borne long with their ill manners and your kindness has only increased their enmity so that they have reviled you more than ever, feel that it is quite sufficient reward for you to have done the right thing in forgiving them.

Or suppose it is not the duty of forgiveness that is in question, but some other, such as that of holy self-sacrifice? How do you stand with regard to it? Have you made sacrifices for Christ? Have you given of your substance to His cause until you have pinched yourself in doing so? That is one of the sweetest things a Christian can ever do—and there is a great reward in doing that. Have you denied yourself some pleasure in order to spend your time in doing good to others? If so, I am sure it has proved to be one of the best things you have ever done. It does not breed boastfulness or self-conceit, but there is a kind of moral sense within the spirit that makes our heart feel happy whenever we are doing a right and noble thing. We do not ask that we may be praised for it, or rewarded for it—it is quite sufficient delight for us to have had the privilege of doing such a thing as that.

One of the greatest rewards that we ever receive for serving God is the permission to do still more for Him. The reward for a man who has faithfully served God as the leader of 50 people is to be permitted to serve Him as the leader of a hundred. And, in the case of a man who has lost a great deal of money through being faithful to his conscience, perhaps the greatest reward that God can give him is to let him lose twice as much by being still more faithful if that is possible! He who has been honest and upright—and who has been slandered—it may be that he shall be rewarded by being slandered still more! The highest reward that God ever gives His servants on earth is when He permits them to make such a sacrifice as actually to die in His service as martyrs. That is the highest reward of which I can conceive—the acceptance that God gives to the very body, blood and bones of His servants, as a whole burnt-offering unto Him.

Do you remember what reward the Spartans had when they fought most valiantly? A Spartan was once asked, "Suppose you fight like a lion today, what reward will you have?" He answered, "I shall have the honor of always being in the front rank where there is the most danger." A coward would have preferred to be in the back rank where there was the least danger, but the brave Spartan said, "If I have proved my courage, I shall have the permission to suffer more, and to venture more for my country." And this is the kind of reward that God will give to us. If we keep His commandments, we shall be permitted to have more to do for His dear sake.

I have not time to speak of the peace that comes from the keeping of God's commandments, or of the ennobling character which it produces, but I must just mention the great reward which this obedience brings to us *in the power and capacity which it is gradually breeding in us for the perfect service of Heaven*. God can make a man fit for Heaven in a minute if He pleases to do so. That I am sure of, for Christ took the dying thief there, but, as a general rule, the education of God's children is a matter of time. We have to be prepared for the enjoyments and the employments of Heaven by processes of discipline here on earth. Now, Brothers and Sisters, when you get to this state of spiritual experience—that it is your one joy and delight to glorify God—when you can bless God for suffering,

when you can praise Him for heaviness of spirit if He chooses to send it—when your will is entirely subject to the will of God and your whole life is entirely absorbed in seeking the Glory of God, then you are fit for Heaven, for Heaven principally consists of perfected natures with the capacity to do the will of God without question or hindrance forever!

Now I must conclude with two observations. The first is, dear Friends, that you may know the profitableness there is in keeping God's commandments by considering the opposite thing. Do not try it, but just think of it! Suppose that you Christian people do not keep God's precepts—suppose that, in certain ways, you violate them? What will happen? I am not now referring to your *eternal* safety, but I am quite sure that you will never derive any benefit from disobedience to God. You may get more money, perhaps, by a certain course in business, but that will not be true profit—it will be bad money which will canker all the rest that you have. Whatever you get in that way will be infinitely worse than losing. Look at David when he broke God's commandments. It was an evil day for him when he looked with lustful eyes upon Bathsheba. And, from that first moment in which he turned aside, there was a cloud over his entire life. Although God had made with him, "an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure," yet that last part of his life was full of grief and sorrow—and you can trace it all to that turning aside from keeping the precepts of his God. O Brothers and Sisters, do you want to curdle your whole life? Then, let a drop of uncleanness fall into it! You may do, in half an hour, what will embitter the next 20 years of your life—yes, and will make your dying pillow to be full of thorns. There can be no possible profit to a child of God in disobeying his Lord's commands.

This is my last remark. There must be a great reward in keeping God's commandments, for I never yet heard anybody say that he was sorry that he had kept them. I have met with many persons who have, for a time, suffered because of their faithfulness to conscience, but they have taken that as a matter of course and they have found such a great reward in obeying Christ, and following their conscientious convictions that if it had cost them a hundred times as much, they would have cheerfully submitted to the loss! Never has there been a man who, on his deathbed, has regretted that he has followed the Lord fully. Is there one here who has kept God's commandments and who regrets that he has done so? Is there one such person on earth? Was there ever one who could truthfully say, "I served God with all my heart and He has cast me out—and I am sorry that I ever had such a Master"? No, there has not been such a person, nor shall there ever be one who can say that as long as the world stands, for in keeping God's commandments there is great reward!

God bless you, dear Brothers and Sisters, and give you that reward, according to the riches of His Grace, through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 19.

This Psalm has the same subject as Psalm 119. Both of them are full of praise of God's Word. God has written two books for us to read—the volume of the Creation and the volume of the Sacred Scriptures—and these two are in complete harmony. Happy are they who can read both these books and see the same vein of teaching running through every page.

Verse 1. *The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.* The heavens are always declaring God's Glory. If we gaze up to them by day or by night, we always read in them the power, the wisdom, the goodness, the greatness, the Immutability of God.

2. *Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night shows knowledge.* If we have but ears to hear and hearts to understand, how much of God may we see in that vast volume of Nature which is spread out above us both by day and by night!

3, 4. *There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.* All men must hear God's voice in Nature if they are only willing to do so. Paul wrote to the Romans, "The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead." So that those who will not see "are without excuse."

4-6. *In them has He set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoices as a strong man to run a race. Its going forth is from the end of the Heaven, and its circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.* The sun has its place, and keeps it, so let us keep ours. The sun is glorious in its goings forth—"as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber"—glad himself, and making all things glad in his gladness—the whole world rejoices at the sight of the face of the sun. The sun is strong to go through its appointed orbit and fulfill its ordained course. So may it be with us—may we not only have the gladness of our conversion when we are "as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber"—but may we have strength and Grace to run the race set before us from the start to the finish. The sun makes its influence felt wherever it goes—"there is nothing hid from the heat thereof." So also may it be with us—may our influence be felt wherever we go! The sun is a type of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, but it is also a type of what every Christian should be, for "the path of the just is as the shining light that shines more and more unto the perfect day." And there should be nothing hid from the fervent heat of our Christian character. We ought to serve God so that our influence should be felt everywhere. May God give us more of His Light and His heat that we may shine and burn to His Glory!

7-9. *The Law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.* Six sentences, ac-

cording to the parallels of Hebrew poetry, all in praise of God's Word! Let us always regard this holy Book as the Word of Jehovah! Let us never look upon the Bible as being on a level with other books. The Word of the Lord is our ultimate Court of Appeal—we accept its teaching as Infallible, we obey its commands, we desire to reflect its purity. "The Law of the Lord is perfect." Nothing may be taken from it and nothing added to it, for it is perfect as it is. It is without admixture of error and without adulteration of falsehood. And it proves its supernatural power by converting men from the error of their ways. What other book can convert the soul of man except so far as it contains Biblical truth?

"The commandment of the Lord is pure." There is no other code of morals so pure as that revealed in the Bible. The Gospel reflects glory on all the perfections of God and, therefore, it makes wise the simple. Poor simple-hearted folk, conscious of their own ignorance, come to this Book and not only find wisdom in it, but are themselves made wise by it. It is also, "sure," as well as, "pure." There is no question about its teaching—it is certainly true. If we learn only what is sure, we may be sure that we shall not have to unlearn it. "The statutes of the Lord are right," and they will set us right if we obey them. They will also rejoice our heart, for unrighteousness brings sorrow, sooner or later—but rightness in the end brings joy.

"The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." There is a close connection between the eyes and the heart. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Sin in the heart puts dust in the eyes—we cannot see right unless we feel right. "The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever." When you come to know God and the power of true religion in the form of holy, child-like fear, you never lose it—it is yours forever! Time cannot destroy it, eternity will but develop it. "The judgments of the Lord are true." There is no alloy of falsehood here. Whatever destructive criticism may be brought to bear upon it, no part of sacred Scripture will ever be destroyed—"The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

10. *More to be desired are they than gold, yes, than much fine gold.* Or, the very best gold. No riches can so enrich the mind and heart as the Word of God does. A man may have tons of gold and yet be utterly miserable, but he who is pure in heart, he who has God's Word and the love of it in his heart, is truly rich, however poor he may be in temporal things.

10. *Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.* As I read those six poetic lines in praise of the Word of God, I could not help thinking how the bees build their honeycombs in hexagons of six-sided combs, all full of honey. Such is this portion of the Word of God with its hexagons of commendation, every part of which is full of sweetness to the true Believer.

11, 12. *Moreover by them Your servant is warned: and in keeping them there is great reward. Who can understand his errors.* While David is speaking of the Book that has no errors in it, he is reminded of his own errors—and they strike him as being so many that he cannot understand them. Every sin is really an error, a mistake, a blunder, as well as some-

thing a great deal worse. It is never a wise thing to do wrong. At the end of a book, we sometimes find that the printers insert a list of, "errata"—errors made in the printing of the volume. Ah, me, we shall need to have a long list of "errata" at the end of the volume of our lives! How many mistakes we have made! Augustine, in his "*Confessions*," amended what he had written amiss in his previous books. The best of men need to continually confess their errors, but God's Book has no error in it from beginning to end!

12. *Cleanse me from secret faults.* "Cleanse me from the faults which I cannot see and which no mortal man has ever seen. You, Lord, see them. Be pleased, therefore, to cleanse me from them." This view of the Omniscience of God is very comforting to the Believer because he perceives that even if he cannot see his sin, so as to acknowledge it and confess it, yet God can see it so as to forgive it and cleanse it!

13. *Keep back Your servant, also, from presumptuous sins.* If we indulge in secret sins, we may gradually slide down an inclined plane until we come to presumptuous sins—sins committed willfully, sins known to be sins, daring, God-defying sins! Lord, keep me back from such sins as these! If others urge me to advance in this wrong direction, O Lord, keep me back! "Keep back Your servant, also, from presumptuous sins."

13. *Let them not have dominion over me.* For, when a man once sins presumptuously, the tendency is for him to become a slave to that sin. It gets dominion over him. The worst slave owner in the world is sin and presumptuous sin is a tyrant with many a cruel whip in its hand.

13. *Then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.* "That greatest transgression of all, that sin against the Holy Spirit which shall never be forgiven. If I am kept from presumptuous sin, I shall never fall into that fatal pit."

14. *Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength, and my Redeemer.* David does not hope to be accepted till he has, first of all, been pardoned. But when the Lord has forgiven him and sanctified him, then he comes with both mouth and heart to serve his God and his prayer is that he may be acceptable in the sight of God, to whom he owes the strength to worship and through whom he hopes to be accepted because he has a Redeemer. "O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer." May each one of us be thus acceptable in the sight of God, for Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK—768, 718, 703.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, 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 CHURCH A MOTHER
NO. 2776

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 27, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPELS SOUTHWARK,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DURING THE SPRING OF 1860.

"The children you will have, after you have lost the others, will say again in your ears, The place is too small for me; give me a place where I may dwell. Then will you say in your heart, Who has begotten these for me, since I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and wandering to and fro? And who has brought these up? Behold, I was left alone; but these, where were they?"
Isaiah 49:20, 21.

I NEVER like to look upon the Bible as merely an old Book, a relic of the past. I like to read it and think of it as a new Book and one applicable to the present time. And I am continually compelled to regard it as such, for I find that it relates to the things passing around me—it deals with my present sorrows, my present doubts and my present joys. It is not merely a record of the saints in olden times—it is a Book of Direction for the saints of the present generation. It not merely gave consolation to those who received the promise centuries ago, but the same promise comes home fresh and sweet to us and we look upon it as being a new and present Revelation from Heaven to us. At least there are times when the Spirit takes of the words of Scripture and makes them as fresh and new to us as though an angel had just flown from Heaven and, for the first time, uttered the gracious words by whispering them in our ears! And the passage which I have read bears to me, just now, though it may not to you, all the freshness and sweetness of a passage made for the occasion. If this Book had been written yesterday, I am sure it could not contain truth more applicable to myself—no, if I had to have it, as Mahommed's followers had the Koran, chapter by chapter, just as they required it, I could not have a Bible more adapted to my daily experience and my daily needs, for so does the Holy Spirit continually take of the things of Christ and not simply apply them unto us, but, apparently, He seems to *adapt* them to us, or else He brings out to our mind's eye that old original adaptation which God had placed in them, foreknowing for what purpose they would be used in later days.

I propose to comment upon this text somewhat pointedly and I hope that the remarks I shall make upon it may be the means of leading others to take the passage as a subject of profitable meditation. I shall begin by observing that *the Church is a mother.* When I have dwelt upon that idea, I shall notice that, like other mothers, *the Church has, sometimes, to be bereaved.* Then, in the third place, I shall observe that she has anoth-

er trouble which mothers in England do not have—God grant they never may—*she is sometimes, herself, a captive*—she wears bonds and fetters, and groans in slavery. And then I have to notice, in the fourth place, the promise of the text, that *this mother, despite her bereavement, despite all her captivity, shall see her family multiplied to a most extraordinary degree*, so that she shall be overwhelmed with amazement and, lifting up her eyes, shall say, "Who has begotten these for me, since I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and wandering to and fro? And who has brought these up? Behold, I was left alone; but these, where were they?"

I. Well now, first of all, notice that THE CHURCH IS A MOTHER. She has always stood in that relationship to all her members. Take each member of the Church individually, he is a child. Take us altogether, we make up the mother, the Church. The Church of Rome professes to be a mother and what a mother she has proved to be! Let the Inquisition tell how tenderly she has nursed her babes! Let conventual torture chambers tell how her little infants have been cared for! Let the stakes that once stood on Smithfield. Let the gallows and the fires all stand up and tell the story of that tender and pitiful mother! Ah, but the Church of Christ is a true mother. Even when she is not continually using the name, yet is she a tender and affectionate nursing mother to all her offspring. I shall begin here very briefly to speak about this mother.

The Church is a mother *because it is her privilege to bring forth into the world the spiritual children of the Lord Jesus Christ*. The Church is still left in the world that she may bring out the rest of God's elect that are still hidden in the caverns and strongholds of sin. If God had willed it, He might have brought out all His children by the mere effort of His own power, without the use of any instrumentality. He might have sent His Grace into each individual heart in some such miraculous manner as He did into the heart of Saul, when He was going toward Damascus. But He has not chosen to do so. He, who has taken the Church to be His spouse and His bride, has chosen to bring men to Himself by means. And thus it is, through God's using the Church, her ministers, her children, her works, her sufferings, her prayers—through making these the means of the increase of His spiritual Kingdom—she proves her right to take to herself the title of mother.

But when these little ones are born, the Church's business is, next, *to feed them*. It is not enough that she has brought them to Christ. It is not sufficient that through her agency they have been quickened—and begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It is her work to feed them. She gives to them the unadulterated milk of the Word of God. Through her ministers, through her servants, through the different agencies which she employs, she endeavors to satisfy their longing souls with the Bread of Life. She gives them food convenient for them—she feeds them by her doctrine, by her ordinances—she bids them come and eat and drink at her table and it is her earnest desire and effort to supply all their spiritual needs by feeding their understandings, their affections, their hearts. The Church labors to feed every part and power of the mind and soul.

Nor is she content with feeding—it is her endeavor *to train up her children*. There are some professed churches of Christ that seem to do nothing whatever in the way of training up the young in their midst. These churches, if there are any sinners converted, scarcely ever hear of it. If children are born, there is no rejoicing over them. Their names are not written in the family register—the church book. They are not asked to come forward and be recognized as children of God by being baptized—they are permitted to come up, perhaps, to the church's house, but if they should offer to join her number by profession of their faith, they would be at once told that they were not yet fit to be numbered with her right royal children! But the true nursing Churches do not act thus. They look out for every babe in Christ that they can find and then they seek to instruct these babes—and when they are instructed, the Church receives them into her arms and she takes them to be hers, to be trained up for future deeds of usefulness. She trains up some of her sons to be captains in the Lord's host. She puts the Sword of the Spirit into their hands and bids them use it in fighting their Master's battles. She trains up others of her sons and daughters to teach still younger ones and these she puts into her schools. She trains up all her children, some by one means and some by another. She says to some, "Go abroad, my children, and labor for your Lord in His far-off fields and extend His Kingdom wherever you can." Thus does the Church well deserve the name of mother, when she brings up and fosters, and nurtures the children of God.

Nor is this all the Church can do. *She will be always ready to nurse her children when they become sick,* for, alas, in the Church's family, there are always some sickly ones, not only sick in body, but sick in spirit. And never does the Church appear so truly a mother as she does to these! Over these she will be, if she is what she should be, peculiarly watchful and jealous. Though the strong shall have her attention, yet the weak shall have double. Though those who are standing up shall be helped, yet those who are cast down shall he helped still more. If there is a weak lamb, if there is a wandering sheep within the Church, she opens wide her eyes and it will be her endeavor to watch most over these. She knows her duty is like her Lord's—to bind up the broken in heart and comfort those who mourn—so she continually bids her ministers bring forth sweet things out of the storehouse. She says to her servitors, "Set on the great pot, and put in the precious Doctrines of the Gospel, and let all these be set a-simmering, that there may be food for all my children." "And," she says, "take care that you bring forth the wines on the lees well refined, the fat things full of marrow, for I have some weaklings in my family who will not be strong to labor unless they have the rich cordials of the Gospel continually given to them."

Ah, and when the Church is in proper order, how she will nurse the weak! Do you remember what she did in Paul's days?—for what Paul did, the Church did. He says, "We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherishes her children." So will the Church do, through her ministers, her officers and, indeed, through all her members if they act up to their duty. She will be watching for the souls of men, especially for those souls that are the saddest and the most cast down, and the most subject to

temptation and to trial. She will watch over them and nurse them. And she will never be happy, let me add, until she brings all her children up to her Husband's house in Heaven! She is expecting Him to come, by-and-by, and when He comes, it will be her joy to meet her Husband leading her daughters with her. And she will say, "Come forth, you daughters of Jerusalem, and see Him who is greater than King Solomon crowned with the crown which his mother crowned him on the day of his espousals." And, at last, when she and her Husband shall be safe in the glory kingdom in Heaven, then will she say, "Here am I, and the children which You have given me, and have nursed for You; but by Your help have they been kept, by Your Grace have they been preserved—and it has been my loving duty, as their tender mother, to nurse, and cherish, and nurture them—and bring them up for You."

Every time I give the right hand of fellowship to a new member, especially to those just brought in from the world, I think I hear Christ's voice speaking to me and saying, "Take these children and nurse them for Me, and I will give you your wages." I say this is said to me, but I mean it is said to the entire Church—I merely speak, of course, as the representative of the body. We have, whenever members are given to us, a great charge, under God, to nurse them for Him and, instrumentally, to advance them in the road to Heaven. But in all this the Church is a poor mother if her God is not with her. She can do nothing in bringing forth, nothing in nurturing, nothing in training, nothing in preserving and nothing, at last, in bringing her children Home, unless the Holy Spirit dwells in her and sends her strength to accomplish all.

When we speak of persons joining the Church, we mean that they are added to the company of God's people. We believe that the Church does not consist alone of the preachers, deacons and elders, but that the Church is a company of faithful men and women, banded together according to God's holy rule and ordinance for the propagation of the Truth of God as it is in Jesus. And Betsy, the servant-maid is as much in the Church as any Very Reverend Doctor or Dean is! The Church, then—by which I mean the great company and body of the faithful—that Church is a nursing mother.

II. The second remark which I proposed to make upon our text is that THE CHURCH IS SOMETIMES BEREAVED. Ah, there must be coffins in every house. There must be shrouds in every family and so is it in the Church.

The Church has to lose some of her children. "After you have lost the others," I read here. Some of her nominal children she loses *by spiritual death*, but the reason of this is because they are not really her children at all. They are those who crept in and pretended to be hers—and they looked so much like hers that she could hardly tell them apart. For a little while she nursed them but, afterwards, they turned out to be the offspring of Satan—and then they went away from her. But even when they go away, she is such a loving mother that though she feared they were not her children, yet she did not like to lose them. I heard some of her children singing, the other night, after one of these false brethren had been found out—

"When any turn from Zion's way,

Alas, what numbers do!
I think I hear my Savior say,
'Will you forsake Me too?'"

The Church does not like to lose even those who are not her children.

Then, next, she loses many of her children—I mean, they go away from her—*by temporal death*. Many of the Church's children are taken up above and, somehow, though she is glad to know they are in their Father's bosom, yet she does not like to miss them. The Church regrets to see the vacant seat of her dead—and especially if it has been one of her children who has been very dutiful and has strived to serve her much. She will weep plenty for such. When she lost her son Stephen, do you remember that a whole company of her children followed him to the grave? For it is said devout men carried him to his burial and made great lamentation over him. Though the Church does not sorrow as one that has no hope—though she is glad to know that her children are well provided for and taken up to dwell in their Father's House—yet it is no small suffering to see her ministers taken away, and her church officers and members removed, one by one, even while in their various spheres of usefulness—and while faithfully serving their Lord and Master.

Then, again, the Church loses her children, sometimes, *by a trying Providence*. Many churches, as well as ourselves, are in that position. We have lost our children. We have lost many simply from the fact of their having to remove to a distance—in this way our congregations are necessarily scattered. Some of those who used to sit under our ministry Sabbath by Sabbath, who came up with our great company and kept holy day, cannot now be seen in our midst. And I, even if you do not, feel this as bereavement. I cannot bear to miss the face of a single one from the members of the church! There is a sort of sacred bond of union that binds us all together and I do not like anyone to go away, except it is, now and then, when some grow dissatisfied—and then I feel it is better for them to go somewhere else—it is certainly not worse for their minister. But those who have been loving, tender children have had to leave the Church—those who have strived for her good. It is a sad thing to see them separated from us and that has happened to this church over and over again. As often as the minister has been removed from her midst, some of her children have been lost. The church book is a very checkered book to look at. As I look back upon the record of the past, I see the membership increase rapidly. A certain minister dies and then the church is diminished and brought low. Again another comes and a fresh company is gathered together, but as soon as he removes, away they go! And thus the church suffers bereavement. Her children are removed—not into the world, let us hope—but, alas, this *does* happen, even with God's own children—after losing their early love in some one church, they go on wandering here and there, scarcely caring to unite themselves in church fellowship again, living unhappily, bereaved and alone, desolate and without companions!

I think I have said enough upon this point. The Church, like every other mother, has sometimes to lose her children and suffer bereavement.

III. Now I come to the third head, which is this—THE CHURCH HAS SOMETIMES TO BE CARRIED AWAY CAPTIVE.

How often has this happened to the Church of God in the olden times! The Church has been carried into foreign countries, taken from her much-loved house at Jerusalem and compelled to sit down by the waters of Babylon and weep while she remembered her ancient habitation. Her children have hung their harps upon the willows and, when their enemies came and required of them a song, they have said, "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" She has been a captive, indeed, in more modern times! Since the days of Christ, the Church has been a captive in another sense, namely, that sometimes she has been cruelly persecuted. Kings have sent forth their bloody edicts against her and then the tender nursing mother, the Church, has been obliged to house her children in the dens and caves of the earth. They have worshipped in catacombs, by the light of candles, or perhaps with no light whatever. Her dearest sons have been compelled to administer the ordinance of Christ in the vaults among the dead. When the living were too unkind, then has death found them a shelter. The earth has helped the woman and in the catacombs have her children been brought forth.

Often, too, has the Church been compelled to seek a refuge in foreign countries. You know how she went far into Africa and how, again, she sought a lodging place in the fastnesses of the Alps—there, amidst the snow-clad mountains, she found some little shelter from the blood-thirsty hounds of Hell. And in still more modern times, the Church in this land has had to flee across the waters and there, in America, the Pilgrim Fathers have become the founders of mightier churches than those they had left behind! Those were the times of the Church's captivity. We cannot tell in this age what griefs they were that wrung the hearts of the first passengers in "The Mayflower." When they left England and went to America, they went forth not knowing where they went. They could not meet together for worship—it was death if they ventured to preach the Gospel—but they went where they could among the red men, to be free to worship their God. Ah, those were days of wandering to and fro! Then the Church wept and said, "I am desolate, I am a captive, I am driven far away from my former habitation."

The same thing has sometimes happened to the Church, also, not in days of persecution, but in days when deadly sickness has seized upon her limbs, when, all of a sudden, her energies have been dampened, her power lessened and she has no more brought forth children, or even nursed them tenderly. Days of slumber and heaviness have come over the Church, yes, and days of heresy, too, when her ministers were no more shining lights, but, like the flax when the light is gone out, they were an offensive stench. When her fountains have no more gushed forth with living waters but a black, turbid, and putrefying stream. When, instead of the Bread of Heaven, her children have had to eat husks. When, instead of the pure Word of God, it was anything but the Truth of God—the lies of Satan and the inventions of Hell.

IV. I will say no more of the Church's captivity, but will just observe, in the last place, that when the Church has lost her children, and when she herself has been made captive and removed to and fro, she has said,

"Ah, me! Ah, me! My God has forgotten me, the Lord has forsaken me! I have become a widow. I will sit in the dust, I will sorrow even to the end, I will groan even in the bitterness of my spirit. Like Rachel, I will weep for my children and I will not be satisfied or comforted, because they are not." And here comes this last point—even then THE CHURCH HAS HAD A MARVELOUS INCREASE AFTER ALL HER CAPTIVITIES—and all her bereavements have always worked for her good!

Never has the Church lost her children without obtaining many more. You remember when the Jewish nation seemed to be once and for all cut off from the Church? When the Apostle said, "Seeing you judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles"? The Church might have sorrowed and said, "I have lost the Jews." But she found the Gentiles! Where she lost one, she found thousands! The day of her sorrow was the day of her increase! And, do you know, whenever the Church has lost a martyr, she has always, soon afterwards, found her numbers increased? Gathering round the stake, idle bystanders have marked the patience of the man of God—they have seen him when his beard was being singed by the flames. They have watched him as his very bones cracked in the fire. They have seen him lift to Heaven his burning hands and clapping them, cry, "God is with me in the fire!" Struck with amazement, they have asked, "What is this that makes the man rejoice in a death so terrible?" And they have gone home and they have retired to pray. And the next day has found them knocking at the door of the Church, entreating to be admitted into the sacred number of her children!

The days of her bereavement have been the days of the increase of her family and when the Church has been scattered and driven to and fro, it has always been for her good—it has been like the scattering of seed. There was once a time when there was a granary full of heavenly seed. Satan knew this was destined to cover the whole earth with a glorious harvest. He was exceedingly angry concerning it and he said, "What shall I do to destroy this seed?" So he went down into the dark Pit and brought up a legion of fiends. "Now," he said, "we will burst the granary door open. We will take out that grain and we will cast it on the waters, we will throw it to the winds of Heaven—we will throw it all away—it shall not be kept here to make a harvest on the earth." So they broke open the door and scattered the seed. Fool that he was—God was making use of him to sow the fields and, lo, the harvest sprang up and Satan was still more full of wrath to find that he had outwitted himself! Instead of scattering the Church, he had increased it! The little handful of corn on the mountaintop, when it was planted, grew and shook like Lebanon, and made the fruit of the seed rejoice and flourish like the grass of the earth! Yes, my Brothers and Sisters, you will find, in every instance in the Church's history, whenever she has been made captive, or has been bereaved, it has been for her good!

Now, just at this time, we are somewhat desolate. We have lost many of our children. Our hearers are compelled to wander here and there, instead of listening to the Church's voice, while we ourselves are like a captive wandering to and fro from one place to another where we can meet. And we have been apt to say, "This is a very sad thing and very much to

our hurt." But let us say that no longer—for mark, I take this to be a personal promise, and I think it is a promise to the Church—"The children you will have, after you have lost the others, will say again in your ears, The place is too small for me; give me a place where I may dwell. Then will you say in your heart, Who has begotten these for me, since I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and wandering to and fro? And who has brought these up? Behold, I was left alone; but these, where were they?" This shall be the cry of the Church!

The first thing which astonishes the Church when she opens her eyes after her captivity, is *to notice the number of her children*. She formerly counted her children by the number of their graves. She said they were all dead, but, all of a sudden, she found others coming round her and calling her mother! Again she saw her house filled—they were thronging about her and she was astonished to see so great a number. Had there been but one or two, she would have thought they were the residue spared from the hands of the enemy, but she saw the great number, and was astonished! Now, sometimes, when we think of this Church which God has so greatly enlarged that we number 1,500 souls, we are apt to think, "What a number!" It astonishes us. "You shall see greater things than these," and you shall find that our removal to another place, and our apparent captivity shall increase the number of converts, and we shall be astonished as, month by month, they come before the Church and bear witness of what Grace has done for them! We shall say, "Who has begotten these for me? Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows?"

It was not merely their number, it was also *their character* that astonished her, for she said, "Who has begotten these for me? I do not know them. I have lost my children. These, where had they been? Who has brought these up?" It is their character, as well as their number, that amazes her. Often the Church finds her converts run in a certain vein—a certain class of persons is brought to know the Truth of God. But when the Church removes to and fro, there is another set brought in. Do you remember what happened, once, in Exeter Hall? A young man going, one Sunday morning, with his skates in his hand, to the Serpentine, and passing Exeter Hall, saw a crowd blocking up the path. He said, "What is this? There is something special going on here." He joins the crowd and the mass behind pushes him in—the minister preaches and the Words of God go home to that young man's heart. They are quick and powerful—he is brought to know the Savior and is converted! Many who are not accustomed to go to one place, will go to another. Many who would not enter a place consecrated to Divine Worship, may, nevertheless, step in to another building out of idle curiosity or amusement. This has happened at the Surrey Gardens and now, when we go to another place, another class, who perhaps have never been to hear the Gospel, will be induced to come in and we shall say, "Who has begotten these for me? These, where have they been?"

I am not a Prophet, nor the son of a Prophet, but, before long, this will come to pass—we shall see numbers converted to God that will astonish us! And, besides that, there will be among them some remarkable sinners and some remarkable saints—and when they are added to the

Church, they will compel us to say, "These, where have they been? Who has begotten us these?" Then will you thank God that you ever had to suffer. Then shall the Church rejoice that she was bereaved and that she was removed to and fro. How do I know this? Well, I know it simply because I know, if I know anything, that this passage has been applied to my heart by the Holy Spirit! It has stuck so to me and entered so thoroughly into my heart that I have not been able to get rid of it, but have lived upon it, and have felt the sweetness of it! And if this does not come true, then I am certainly deceived. But let us take care that it does come true, for, while we believe the promise, it is ours to be the *means*, in the hand of God, of fulfilling it!

Dear Brothers and Sisters, pray more than you have ever done! Wrestle with God in prayer. Plead with Him that this may come true. For though He gives the promise, He says, "I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." I ask you this night—I cannot get you each to say, "Yes"—but I ask you, as a personal favor to your minister, and as an act of kindness to our loving mother, the Church, as a proof of your affection to your Lord and Master—I ask you, at the family altar, and in private tonight, and on till next Christmas, that we meet together to plead with God for this particular blessing!

Turn to this promise in your Bibles. Read the passage at your family altars, and then plead it—"Lord, You have made us to be, for a time, desolate. We have lost some of our children. Now grant that the children which we shall have, after we have lost these others, may cry, Make room for us; the place is too small for us to dwell in." One of our Brothers lately said to me, "You surely do not expect to see the Tabernacle crowded down the aisles, do you?" I do, indeed! I expect to see it as crowded as ever this chapel has been. I think we shall *often* be moved to say, "Who has begotten these for me?" God's arm is not shortened that He cannot save, neither are His ears heavy that He cannot hear us. We shall go on and conquer and never cease! The God who has been with us in the past, will be with us in the future and, as it has been, so shall it still be! God shall still be glorified in the salvation of men.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 CHRONICLES 11:1-17; 12.

Let us read, for our instruction, part of the story of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon.

2 Chronicles 11:1-4. *And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he gathered of the house of Judah and Benjamin an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, which were warriors, to fight against Israel, that he might bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam. But the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah, the man of God, saying, Speak unto Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin, saying, Thus says the LORD, You shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren. Return, every man, to his house: for this thing is done of Me. And they obeyed the words of the LORD, and returned from going against Jeroboam.* So far, so good. There was some degree of the fear of God in the

minds of men when, at the bidding of a single Prophet, a king would disband his troops and cease from war.

5-15. *And Rehoboam dwelt in Jerusalem, and built cities for defense in Judah. He built even Bethlehem, and Etam, and Tekoa, and Bethzur, and Shoco, and Adullam, and Gath, and Mareshah, and Ziph, and Adoraim, and Lachish, and Azekah, and Zorah, and Aijalon, and Hebron, which are in Judah and in Benjamin fenced cities. And he fortified the strongholds, and put captains in them, and stores of victual, and of oil and wine. And in every several city he put shields and spears, and made them exceedingly strong, having Judah and Benjamin on his side. And the priests and the Levites that were in all Israel resorted to him out of all their coasts. For the Levites left their suburbs and their possession, and came to Judah and Jerusalem: for Jeroboam and his sons had cast them off from executing the priest's office unto the LORD; and he ordained him priests for the high places, and for the devils, and for the calves which he had made.* No wonder, therefore, that Rehoboam's kingdom was strengthened by the advent of these men, who were, doubtless, the best men in the whole country—men who feared the Lord—men who knew the Law of God and who knew how to teach the people what they should do.

16. *And after them out of all the tribes of Israel such as set their hearts to seek the LORD God of Israel came to Jerusalem, to sacrifice unto the LORD God of their fathers.* "Birds of a feather flock together," so those in Israel who feared the Lord went where their ministers had gone. This movement would bring about an emigration of some of the best of the population to reside near the sacred shrine where Jehovah was worshipped. And it must have tended still further to the strengthening of Rehoboam's little kingdom.

17. *So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and made Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, strong three years, for three years they walked in the way of David and Solomon.* That was well while it lasted; but, alas, it did not continue long.

2 Chronicles12:1. *And it came to pass, when Rehoboam had established the kingdom, and had strengthened himself, he forsook the Law of the LORD, and all Israel with him.* He was not able to endure the perils of prosperity. He forgot the Lord who had caused him to prosper and, in the pride of his heart, he turned aside to idols.

2. *And it came to pass, that in the fifth year of king Rehoboam, Shishak, king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, because they had transgressed against the LORD.* That was not Shishak's reason for coming up against Jerusalem. He had heard of the riches of Solomon and, doubtless, he came for the sake of the spoil which the palace and the temple would yield to him! But God often overrules, for the accomplishment of His own purposes, the lower motives of men. "I girded you," said He of Cyrus, "though you have not known Me." So did He gird Shishak for the chastisement of Israel, though Shishak knew Him not.

3, 4. *With twelve hundred chariots, and threescore thousand horsemen: and the people were without number that came with him out of Egypt; the Lubims, the Sukkiims, and the Ethiopians. And he took the fenced cities which pertained to Judah, and came to Jerusalem.* How vain is man when he boasts in the strength of his fortifications! These fenced cities fell at

once, like houses built of cards, before the power of the mighty king of Egypt and the vast hordes that accompanied him! Rehoboam had spent his strength in making these defenses, but how soon they were proved to be worthless. "Blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." But, "cursed is the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord."

5, 6. *Then came Shemaiah the Prophet to Rehoboam, and to the princes of Judah, that were gathered together to Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said unto them, Thus says the LORD, You have forsaken Me, and therefore have I also left you in the hands of Shishak. Whereupon the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves; and they said, The LORD is righteous.* Now, that is the very essence of true humility—the acknowledgment that God is righteous in whatever punishment He brings upon us on account of our sin. It is a very short sentence, but there is a great fullness of meaning in it—"Jehovah is righteous."

7, 8. *And when the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah, saying, They have humbled themselves; therefore I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance; and My wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak. Nevertheless they shall be his servants that they may know My service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.* That is a very instructive expression. I believe that when God's people go astray from Him, He sometimes allows them to fall into great bondage in order that they may realize the difference between His happy service and the servitude in which they may be held by any other lord. All masters, to whom we surrender our minds and hearts, will turn out to be tyrants, except the blessed Prince of Peace! His yoke is easy, and His burden is light, but all other yokes gall the shoulders sooner or later and God has, sometimes, made His wandering people feel this so bitterly that they have longed to get back to the service of their God!

9. *So Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, and took away the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house. He took all: he carried away also the shields of gold which Solomon had made.* He did not plunder the people—he was content with the loot of the temple and the palace. These were comparatively easy terms for the conquered nation and one wonders how such a powerful king as Shishak would have been thus satisfied in those days. But God has the hearts of all men under His control and even when He lets a powerful foe go forth against His people, He still restrains him when He pleases. What a mercy it is for us that when God chastens us, there is an end to it! It is always in measure—He does not let loose the fullness and the fierceness of His wrath, as He will upon the castaways in eternity—but when He lays His rod upon us, He counts every stripe. Forty stripes save one was all that an Israelite might have to endure and, surely, God often stops far short of that number when He deals with us! However, Shishak humiliated the king and his people by taking away the treasures of the temple and the palace and, among the rest of his plunder, "he carried away the shields of gold which Solomon had made."

10-12. *Instead of which king Rehoboam made shields of brass, and committed them to the hands of the chief of the guard that kept the en-*

trance of the king's house. And when the king entered into the house of the LORD, the guard came and fetched them, and brought them again into the guard chamber. And when he humbled himself, the wrath of the LORD turned from him, that He would not destroy him altogether: and also in Judah things went well. Or, rather, "things in Judah even went well." There was comparative prosperity—they were not altogether prosperous, for they were not altogether right with God. But there was a sufficient proportion of godly men, the Puritan party, the Evangelical party was strong enough in the land for God to still look upon it with favor, yet not unmixed with disapprobation, for the party that worshipped idols, the party composed of the superstitious, the party belonging to the world was still very strong.

13-15. *So king Rehoboam strengthened himself in Jerusalem, and reigned: for Rehoboam was one and forty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there. And his mother's name was Naamah an Ammonitess. And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD. Now the acts of Rehoboam, first and last, are they not written in the book of Shemaiah the Prophet, and of Iddo the seer concerning genealogies?* Where are those books now? It is of no consequence, whatever, where they are! There are a great many other books that have perished because they were not Inspired. They were books of genealogies—valuable in their day, but if they had been of any use to us *spiritually*, they would have been preserved. Now, as other ancient books have evidently been lost, let us devoutly bless God that the Inspired Books have been preserved to us. By what a continuous miracle of Providence every Inspired letter has been continued in existence, it would be hard to tell, but we ought to constantly praise the Lord that out of the Book of this prophecy, not a line has been removed.

15, 16. *And there were wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually. And Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David: and Abijah his son reigned in his place.*—[This sermon was preached *42 years* before it was published in 1902. The Metropolitan Tabernacle was in the process of being built—the first sermon preached in it was on March 25, 1861. There were more than 5,000 members of the Metropolitan Tabernacle when Brother Spurgeon died in 1892—EOD]

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, 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 QUEEN OF SHEBA, A SIGN
NO. 2777

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 4, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 28, 1878.

"The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here." Matthew 12:42.

The scribes and Pharisees might easily have ascertained that Jesus was the promised Messiah if they had only taken the trouble to examine His credentials. They had the Law and the testimony at their fingertips and they might also have made an appeal to the Prophets and, then, they could scarcely have failed to note the many wonderful points of resemblance between Jesus of Nazareth and the Messiah who was to come—but they refused to thoroughly investigate His claims, took it for granted that He was an impostor and, therefore, rejected Him. When they were driven into a corner by the Truths of God that He spoke, they demanded of Him a sign—and there again they showed that they were not sincere, for He had given them many signs—some of which they must have recognized, because their anger had been excited by them, as, for instance, when Jesus went into their synagogue and healed on the Sabbath, a man who had a withered hand. They had condemned Him as a Sabbath-breaker because He worked this miracle, so it must certainly have come to their knowledge, yet, while this and multitudes of other miracle were constantly being reported of Him, they still continued to reject Him, disdaining to confess that He was the Christ, even though He proved it to their faces.

They asked Him for a sign, but the Savior tells them that they shall have no signs beyond those they had already had. One of those signs was the Prophet Jonah coming up from the belly of the fish after having lain there three days. Christ Himself would rise again the third day and, by His Resurrection, He would fulfill the type of Jonah. This would be such a sign as they could not gainsay. Then there were the signs of the men of Nineveh, repenting at the preaching of Jonah, and the queen of the South coming to Solomon. The Gentiles, the far-off ones, should be signs to the unbelieving Jews—they would see that Jesus was the Christ because He called unto Himself a people who knew Him not and they ran

unto Him because of the Lord His God, who had sent Him as His Messenger. If the scribes and Pharisees would continue to reject these Infallible signs, no others would be given to them, but the great King's signet would be set to the writ of execution, condemning Jerusalem to destruction and the people to be scattered abroad.

I think we may truly say that the queen of Sheba is a sign even to this generation, for each generation, though differing in some respects from others, has many points of resemblance to them. When you perceive what other men have been, you see very much what you yourself are. It is a commonly admitted truth that history repeats itself and it does so because it is the result of the same sort of passions and the same sinful tendencies in wicked human hearts. So I believe that the present age is, in many points, very like the one in which Christ Himself appeared. And if He were corporeally here, at this moment, He could with great accuracy say, "The queen of the South shall rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here."

I pray the Lord especially to bless His own Word to any of you who are unconcerned and I beg all the Lord's people to pray that it may be so. You who are saved will get a blessing through your own prayers while you are seeking a blessing on what is spoken, in the name of Christ and by the aid of God's gracious Spirit. And others will get a blessing, also.

Our divisions shall be these—first, *the conduct of the queen of Sheba condemns unbelievers.* Secondly, *that condemnation is strengthened by many circumstances connected with her history.* And thirdly, *the condemnation of such a witness must be solemn and overwhelming.*

I. First, then, THE CONDUCT OF THE QUEEN OF SHEBA CONDEMNS UNBELIEVERS.

For, first of all, *she was interested in the report of Solomon's wisdom.* We do not know much about her, except that she came from a great distance, constrained by her desire after knowledge, her wish "to hear the wisdom of Solomon." I suppose she was a woman of intelligence and thoughtfulness and, therefore, she sought the king who was of the same way of thinking. A man of taste, living in a city, or only visiting it, very soon knows all about its sculpture and paintings and he very naturally gets reports concerning its chief artists brought to him. Even in a little village, a lover of science and art very soon finds people informing him of details and facts which bear upon scientific and artistic matters. He attracts to himself those who are somewhat like himself and, in similar fashion, Solomon attracted this woman because she was evidently the possessor of some wisdom and she desired to have more.

Her action is a strong condemnation of the many people in the world whose thoughts never rise above their bodies and whose only questions are, "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? How shall we be clothed?" There are thousands who would not go half a mile to obtain even the ordinary kind of wisdom—they shun all forms of education—they have no

idea beyond their usual day labor, or the pursuits in which they occupy their time. But this queen of Sheba longed for wisdom and traveled far to obtain it. In contrast to her, look at the great majority of people in this vast city of London, and in various parts of our own and other lands. Some are interested in science, art, politics and such matters, but as for the higher things which He who is "greater than Solomon" would teach them—they seem to have no inclination for them!

You may build a chapel or mission hall in some dark neighborhood and it may be by self-denial that you provide the means for its construction. You may feel intense anxiety about the people in that region and use all lawful inducements to bring them inside the place you have built—yet you cannot stir them, or interest them. Oftentimes, it is the very hardest task in the world to get even a moment's hearing for the Gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Plenty of people will read the newspaper through from the first word of the title to the last advertisement, but they will scarcely deign to look at a gracious treatise, or tract, or their Bibles—there is nothing there to interest them! Anything about war, or the wreck of a ship, or an accident in a coal mine or, worse still, the story of some foul crime, or the details with which the Divorce Court is familiar—there are many who are quite sure to read all that through—but as to that which concerns the soul, eternity, Heaven, Hell, the Christ of God—all this appears to be a matter of perfect indifference to a large mass of our fellow creatures—

"Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by?
Is it nothing to you, that Jesus should die?"

We may well take up that lament, for the practical answer to our question from great multitudes upon whom we dwell will be, "It is nothing to us. We care for none of these things. If you will feed us. If you will clothe us, well and good. But if you begin to speak about the Gospel, or talk to us about our immortality and of our need to be prepared for eternity, our ears are deaf! We are like the adder that will not hear, charm you ever so wisely." Oh, how will this queen of Sheba who was so interested in the best things that she knew of, and who sought them as a merchant seeks goodly pearls—how she will rise up in the judgment and condemn multitudes of careless folk in this worldly generation!

She will also condemn many because *she believed the report of Solomon's wisdom when she heard it*. She was not only interested in hearing it, but what she heard, she believed. I do not know who brought the report to her, but Solomon was a great merchant and traders came from all parts to do business with him. So one and another who had stayed at Jerusalem and heard of the marvelous wisdom of the great king, and had seen some of his matchless architectural feats, his vast reservoirs, his wonderful ascent by which he went up to the house of the Lord, carried the report of all this to the queen of Sheba and she believed it. I do not say that it was very amazing that she should believe it, yet her belief condemns the skepticism of this age and condemns it all the more be-

cause, in some respects, this is a very credulous age. We readily believe what travelers tell us. There have been some very extraordinary stories told which once were *not* believed, yet afterwards were found to be true and, now, we generally accept the testimony of a man who comes back and says that he has seen such-and-such things. Our learned Societies invite these men to visit them and tell their story. There may be some who doubt but, on the whole, they are believed.

Yet, when we give our report concerning the Lord Jesus, we have often to ask, "Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" We tell men not only what God says in His Word, but what we ourselves have tasted, handled and felt—yet even when we get them interested in our message, they do not always believe it. Nothing appears to be more popular, at this present time, than the casting of doubts upon everything that is sacred! And he seems to be reckoned the cleverest man who takes a tar brush and goes through the sanctuary daubing all the holy vessels! And whereas, of old, "a man was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees," that he might use them in building for God, it seems now as if every man's axes were for breaking down the carved work and damaging the cedar of which the temple of the Lord is constructed! The queen of Sheba, in her belief of the report which, I do not doubt, bore upon its face some degree of improbability—for marvelous stories were told about Solomon—yet, believing it because it came to her upon good, fair, honest testimony of men who had no objective in deceiving her—she shall rise up in condemnation of the people of this generation who will not believe Christ Himself, nor God Himself, but even say that this Book is God's and then deny the things which are most plainly taught therein—and so make God Himself to be a liar!

This queen of Sheba will condemn the unbelief of this generation, in the next place, because she was not only interested in the highest things that came in her way, and believed the honest report that was brought to her, but also because *she acted upon it*. She determined to go where she could hear more of the wisdom of which she had been told. She loved wisdom and sought for it as for rubies. She, therefore, made up her mind to take the long and perilous journey and to go and find Solomon, that she might hear his wisdom. She so believed the report that she set out upon her journey—and a journey in those days was a different thing from what it is now. Even a century or so ago, our grandfathers made their wills before they went 100 miles, so what must it have been for the queen of Sheba to go to Jerusalem to see the great and wise king who reigned there? She believed that she would be fully rewarded for all the trouble she was taking, so she went.

This is a very important point, for we have, in our congregations, a large number of persons who profess to believe everything that they hear, yet, in their hearts, they cannot really be believing anything, for they do not act upon it. O Sirs, if you do believe yourselves to be sinful, why do you not seek forgiveness? If you believe yourselves to be in danger, why

do you not bestir yourselves and search for a way of escape? If you believe that there is a God, why do you not ask how you may be reconciled to Him? If you believe the words of Jesus, why do you not trust in Him and obey Him? It will go very hard with those of you who have been believers in the Bible and lovers of orthodoxy all your lives, and who very earnestly condemn anything like doubt, yet who prove that you do not, yourselves, truly believe because your belief does not lead you to action! God grant that if any of you are guilty of such a sin as this, the arrow of conviction may pierce your conscience now!

The queen of Sheba will also rise up in judgment against unbelievers because she not only acted upon the report she received and believed, but *she persevered in doing so under very great difficulties*. I have already said that a journey to Jerusalem was no small thing for her to accomplish. We little know what were the difficulties of traveling at that time. She may not have been afraid of thieves and other evildoers who were in the way, for Solomon's great power, I do not doubt, kept a wide district very much more quiet than it would otherwise have been, but still, it was a serious task for her to undertake. Yet now, alas, there are many who would like to hear of the wisdom of Christ, but they fear that it would cost them too much and that there would be too many hardships to be borne. They would have Christ if He could be had by a careless soul, or by one who is living in sin! But the idea of starting out to seek for Christ and facing difficulties—which, indeed, would soon vanish if they had but resolute hearts—that idea daunts them! Like Pliable, they cannot push their way through the Slough of Despond. Anybody else may have the Celestial City, but they cannot go to it through such a foul place as that.

These people are afraid of the laugh of a foolish companion—afraid of the cold shoulder from a wealthy associate—afraid of the sneer of an unbeliever—afraid of having to give up some favorite sin! The queen of Sheba could go from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, but they cannot go to Christ, who is far wiser and "greater than Solomon" ever was! They think the way is much too long and difficult for them. This woman hoped to get wisdom by her journey but these people need salvation—they should go with a view to their soul's eternal destiny—but the cost is too heavy for them, so they will not go.

Another point that is worth noticing is that this queen of the South *had to stoop from a high position*. Her position, at any rate, involved her in greater difficulty than many others would have experienced. Was she to leave her throne? Then, what would become of her dominions during her absence? Perhaps there would be plots to overthrow her—she might not be able to trust her counselors in power. Shall she, a woman, nursed in luxury as she has been, brave all these dangers to make such a journey as that to Solomon's court? Well, she did all that—so she condemns those who will not do likewise. There is something to be said for those who are in high places and who fear not God. I would not say anything to apologize for their neglect of Christ, yet I remember His own words, "How

difficult shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God!" But the most of you have not that kind of hindrance—you could not say that you have a kingdom to rule, or a large business to manage. You have your cares but, still, they are not such as to be an excuse for you if you do not seek the Lord. This woman, with a kingdom's cares about her, went to Solomon for wisdom—how she condemns those who have very little to do, yet who say that they have not time to think about these things!

You have not to step down from a throne, which is a very trying position for any of the Lord's people to occupy. You have not to shake off the manners of the court, the vices of the court, the pomp of the court to come down and listen to some poor minister of the Gospel—no, you know that you are not at all demeaned when you are sitting here, listening to a plain preacher like myself! There is no necessity for you to have the Archbishop of Canterbury to preach to you—I am quite big enough for you in that respect. Well, now, there is an advantage in all this, and it is still true that "the poor have the Gospel preached to them." There are some poor, miserable rich people who never do have the Gospel preached to them and I do not see how they ever will. Perhaps they live in a grand mansion in the country where everybody looks up to them. It may be and it often is the case that in the parish church there is nothing but Popery. Now if they went to the little Methodist chapel, they might hear the Gospel—and if you were in that part of the country, you would go—but they could not. I do not know that they *could* not, but I do know that they *think* they could not. And, indeed, if they did, everybody would notice them! They would be such objects of attraction and talk that that would be a difficulty in their way.

Well now, you have not had that obstacle! This queen had it with all its weight—yet she came to listen to the wisdom of Solomon. Oh, then, when Jesus, the "greater than Solomon," is near, should not the poor, to whom He delighted to preach—the common people, like the most of us here—should not we feel that there is nothing in our way to keep us from coming to Him? We can come on a Thursday night, or on the Sabbath to listen to the Gospel and nobody thinks that there is any great condescension when we are found occupying a seat among our fellow worshippers! Yet it might be a far more difficult matter with others in a higher station.

One thing more about this wise queen is that *she made great use of Solomon when she reached his court*, for she asked him hard questions and searched and pried into everything that she could. Now, in this, I think she rebukes a great many half-believing professors. You have come to Him who is "greater than Solomon." You have come to the Infinite Wisdom of our great Lord, and there is many a hard question that you puzzle over, but you do not take them to Him. You do not commune with Him concerning all that is in your heart as the queen of Sheba did with Solomon. You do not get from Christ rich gifts as she received from So-

lomon. Oh, when you get to Jesus, make use of Him! It is no good for you to have a Savior if you do not use Him. If God, in His great Grace, has given Him to you, get out of Him all that you can—and do not think that He will consider you to be intruding! It is the delight of His heart to give out of His fullness to His needy people! He is best satisfied with you when you are best satisfied with Him. He gets most from you when you get most from Him. Remember that and never, never, never, start back from a golden promise as though you must get it changed before you spend it!

Some Christians seem as if they could not touch the sovereigns that lie before them in heaps, but they must take only a half-crown at a time and think they have taken a great deal. O you poor saints, be rich—take your spending money with a lavish hand and lay it out before God! There is a blessed prodigality in Grace—you may spend as much as you please, yet you shall not be considered a spendthrift! God grant that the queen of Sheba may rebuke us if we have not used Him who is "greater than Solomon" after the same fashion as that in which she used Solomon when she came to him!

Thus much by way of proof that the conduct of the queen of Sheba condemns those of us who still remain unbelievers.

II. Now, secondly, THE QUEEN OF SHEBA'S CONDEMNATION IS STRENGTHENED BY MANY CIRCUMSTANCES CONNECTED WITH HER HISTORY.

The first of those circumstances is this—*the report which came to her could not have come with the same force as the report which comes to us.* As I have already said, it is probable that the merchants who traded with Solomon told what they had seen and some of their servants, no doubt, talked to some of the queen of Sheba's servants and, possibly, they told very extraordinary tales, and drew the long bow, as we say. In this case, however, they might draw the longest bow they could get because when they had said all they did say, the half was not told! Solomon was wiser than they thought he was, yet they thought him to be almost impossibly sage. The report of his wisdom could not have come to the queen, one would think, from many who had been eyewitnesses, yet it was sufficient to convince her. But the report concerning Christ comes to you in the Word of God, from many witnesses and it is repeated to you by many ministers of the Gospel, and by many others of God's servants, living men and living women who tell you what they know, what they have felt, what they have experienced. Ah, some of you had the report, first of all, from one whose word you never doubted—your mother told it to you when you were a child. Is she dead? Then I feel sure that among the last words that she spoke, she told you that report, again, and bade you seek Him who is "greater than Solomon."

Perhaps I am addressing some whose dear grandfather, now in Heaven, told them the report when they were little children. And your brother, your sister, your friend and several of your acquaintances have again

and again said to you, "It is true! I have tried it, and proved it. I know it is so." There are very many converted people around some of you, and if you do not believe their report, you practically make them out to be liars and, as I have already reminded you, you make God Himself a liar! The queen of Sheba had no Divine Witness, she had only the testimony of men. But you believe this bible to be the Book of God, and the Witness of God is greater than the witness of men. Beware, therefore, lest you reject the testimony of God against yourselves and the witness of all His people, age after age, and the witness of your kinsfolk and acquaintances! If you do not believe when you have so many to bring you the report, the queen of Sheba condemns you, for she believed, though she had so few to report to her.

I do not wish to have a congregation that will accept teaching simply upon my bare word. No, dear Friends, "let the Word of Christ dwell in you." There is always a tendency to follow this divine or that, but I charge you not to do anything of the kind! Go to the Book for yourselves! Go to Christ and to His Inspired Word on your own account. We will teach you the Truths of God, as far as we know them, but we will never bear the responsibility of being the standard for other men's beliefs. It may suit so-called "priests" to take away the Bible from the people, but true preachers of the Gospel always push the Bible to the front. Therefore we urge you to search the Scriptures and we pray God to grant that as you search them, they may search you, and, as you dwell upon the reading of them, that what you read may dwell in your hearts to your permanent profit, making you wise unto salvation!

The report that comes to you, also, concerns *much weightier matters than the queen of Sheba heard of*. Solomon's wisdom interested the queen of Sheba because she loved all kinds of wisdom, but it did not matter much to her, after all. Her country would still have been as productive of its wondrous spices and gold if she had never gone to Solomon. Why, then, should she go to him? But the matters about which God's Word reports to you, and God's Spirit reports to you, and God's servants report to you unbelievers, concern your souls, yourselves, your sins, your fears, your hopes! It is about your everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and the Glory of His Power, or your eternal happiness in Christ Jesus. I do not understand some of you. You are not fools in secular matters. Jingle a guinea near you and you quickly hear the sound of it, and are pretty sharp to catch it. You are shrewd traders, keep your books correctly and look well to your accounts—yet you neglect your souls! If a man had a bag full of bank notes and he went down the borough with it and got into a crowd, it would be strange if all his anxiety was lest he should lose a cotton pocket handkerchief, while he never thought about his bank notes! You would conclude that there was a great flaw in his judgment! Yet that is exactly what men do. They care about what, after all, are comparative trifles and let their never-dying souls take care of themselves as best they can!

The queen of Sheba will, next, condemn unbelievers very seriously, *because the report that came to her was not nearly so touching as that which comes to us*. There was no report like this—that Solomon had died for her. There was no message of love, there were no tidings of self-sacrifice which indicated a heart of pity. No, simply that he was wise—and so she resolved to go and see him. O Sirs, what a different report I have to bring to you! I have not to set before careless souls merely a wise Savior, but a loving, condescending, self-sacrificing, dying Savior! And if that report does not lead men to seek Him, they will be fearfully condemned by this queen of Sheba who came to see Solomon because of the report she had heard of him in her own land.

Then, again, *this report was, in her case, accompanied by no Divine command*. She heard a report about Solomon, but there was no law, either human or Divine, ordering her to go to Solomon. She could do precisely as she pleased about it. But when *you* hear about Christ, O Sinners, it is not left to your own option whether you will come to Him, or not—but "God now commands all men everywhere to repent" And He has bidden us go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, and to say to them, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned."

Besides that, *the queen of Sheba had no invitation to go to Solomon*. He did not send to her, and say, "Come, and hear my wisdom." She came uninvited, but, O sons and daughters of men, you have been invited again and again! "Come unto Me," is Christ's constant message. You are invited to come to Him, yet you will not come.

And again, *the queen of Sheba had no promise that she would be welcomed if she did come*. She could not tell that Solomon would receive her, yet she came, believing that he would, and he did. But you have the Savior's gracious assurance, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Oh, with what readiness and promptness ought you to respond to the sacred invitation of love, backed by the Divine command and confirmed by the sacred promise! The Lord grant that some of you, while I am thus simply stating the claims of my Lord Jesus, that "greater than Solomon," may resolve to come to Him that you may receive eternal life!

And then again, dear Friends, this woman came simply through a report. But, in your case, it is not merely by report. When I tell you about what Christ has done, which is written in the Word, that is a report. But when you see—and many of you have seen—the finger of God upon some of your friends, that is not a report! I put it to some here present who are unconverted, but who have had godly mothers—was not your mother's life one of the things you never could get over when you tried to doubt your Bible? And is it not still to you a very wonderful life as you look back upon it? How calm, how joyous she was in suffering or in poverty! How quiet, how patient she was in putting up with you! Then, as to her death, was there not something almost Divine about that patient waiting for her Lord and that dying smile, and that last triumphant hymn? Why,

if ever I doubted the Word of God, some of the deathbeds that I have witnessed would bring me back to faith immediately!

Well do I remember a working man who used to go out preaching the Gospel, and with whom I was intimate in my early days. I went to see him when he was dying. He was sitting up in his bed and his eyes had failed entirely. Disease had made him blind, but when he heard me come into the room, he said to me—

"And when you hear my eye-strings break,
How sweet my minutes roll!
A mortal paleness on my cheeks,
The glory in my soul."

There is no deception about a scene like that! That is not a mere report—that is a thing to hear, to see, to know—and such things are constantly happening all around us! Old men and old women lean on their staffs and die as Jacob did. Young men and young women go down to their graves through consumption, not regretting it, but exulting to be so early in the morning with Christ! Why, Sirs, some of you must surely believe or else you will gag your conscience, violate the best instincts of your nature and commit spiritual suicide! God grant that you may not do this.

And then, when this woman heard the report, *she had not the opportunity of testing it at once without a long journey*. She had to go all the way to Jerusalem. But you, Sirs, have not to go an inch in order to find Christ. What says the Apostle? "The word is near you, even in your mouth." Note that expression, "in your mouth." Why, hungry man, if I say to you, "There is bread on the table, take as much as you need," it is your own fault if you do not eat it. But if I can say, "Man, it is in your mouth," you will have to exert yourself to reject it! It will cost you more pains to spit Christ out than to feed upon Him! There are some men who seem to me to choke themselves in trying to get rid of the Gospel which God has put in their mouths—they will not let a crumb of it go down their throats. If that is your case, when you are damned, you will have to say, "Amen," to your own condemnation—and all who will hear it will say, "That man's destruction was, indeed, just, for he deliberately took the trouble to be his own destroyer."

The queen of Sheba had to travel a long way to get to Solomon, but you do not have to go a long way to get to the Savior. "Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven? (That is, to bring Christ down from above). Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (That is, to bring Christ up, again, from the dead). But what does it say? The Word is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart; that is the Word of faith which we preach, that if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved."

I must not weary you with these many particulars, but I cannot help saying that *the queen of Sheba, in coming to Solomon, did not have anything like the inducements which are put before you in coming to Christ.*

Solomon could prove to her his own possession of wisdom, but he could not make her wise, though I think that, generally, people learn a good deal of wisdom by seeing and hearing it in others. But, in coming to Christ, you have not the inducement of merely learning how much He knows, but He will make you wise unto salvation and He will give you unspeakably precious gifts! Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba great gifts, of which I hope to speak another time, yet he had never promised that he would do so. But you may come to Christ with the confident expectation that of His fullness you shall receive Grace for Grace, for this is His way of welcoming all who come unto Him.

Who will come to my Lord and Master for the first time? It is now many years since I first came to Him, but I have never once regretted that step. Blessed was the day and blessed was the hour, when I came to Him. Oh, if I had not come to Him, I think that my soul would never rest until it had found Him! If it had all to be done over again—yes, if the coming had to be continually repeated, as indeed it has—"to whom coming, as unto a living stone"—I would delight to do it all over again! And if I had to begin preaching the Gospel to you, I would still preach the same Gospel that I have preached to you. I would seek to preach it better, but it should be the same "old, old story of Jesus and His love." I love it so much because I know that it is true! I prove it, every day, by happy personal experience. Believe it, O you careless ones who now are found at the post of Wisdom's doors—and come in to see Him, the Lord Jesus, who, in His dominion, and in His person, and in His wealth, and in His Grace, is "greater than Solomon!"

III. I have only time for just a few closing words upon the third point, which is that THE CONDEMNATION OF SUCH A WITNESS MUST BE SOLEMN AND OVERWHELMING.

I have shown you that all along—that is the point at which I have continually been aiming. Surely you will, none of you, wish to be condemned by a heathen queen! It is bad enough to be condemned by the example of Christian people, and by what they say—but this heathen queen, with swarthy countenance, will rise up in the judgment and condemn you who do not believe in Jesus, though you live in the midst of Christian Light and even call yourselves Christians, and talk about being inhabitants of a Christian country! The queen of Sheba lived in a dark age, but this, you know, is a very wonderful age. Some people are never weary of crying it up—according to them, this is the most marvelous generation that has ever existed on the face of the earth! Our fathers—what were they, poor creatures? What did they know? Yet somehow or other, they got through the world almost as well as we do now, even though we break our necks in railway accidents and send our ships to the bottom of the sea so speedily by our new inventions!

We are wonderful people, there is no doubt about that! Raise a pyramid a thousand times higher than Mont Blanc, and set the man of the times upon it. When you have him up, I can only stand at the base and

say, "These are your gods, O Israel"—the man of the 19th Century—the thinker—the critic—the philosopher—the scientific man! Some of us poor, simple Christian people never did pay much reverence at all to them, but think them only magnified pieces of bombast and presumption, always crying out about what they know, whereas there are many other things they do not know, which, if they did, would make them a great deal more humble. We have invented the phonograph. We have invented the telephone. What shall we not invent next? Nobody knows. We are wonderful people, yet a heathen queen of the dark ages will rise up in the judgment and condemn us if we do not believe, because she acted better with her little Light of God than we do with our far greater Light. When God teaches us more about His works, some of us think less about their Maker—and when He reveals more of the secrets of Nature, some care less about the secrets of His Divine Grace.

Verily, the queen of Sheba will condemn this generation! Christ will call her up as a witness and at the sight of her—albeit His condemnation will also come, yet, at the sight of her—this heathen queen—the unbelieving world will stand condemned! Looking into her dark face, their own faces will turn deadly pale, for her faith, and her coming to Solomon, will condemn all unbelieving ones, and especially those who only pretended to believe, yet who never acted upon the faith they professed to possess.

May God the Holy Spirit bless this word, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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

CONSULTING WITH JESUS
NO. 2778

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 11, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 31, 1878.

"And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she came to test him with hard questions...So Solomon answered all her questions: there was nothing so difficult for the king, that he could not explain it to her"
1 Kings 10:1-3.

Those of you who were here last Thursday evening will recollect that I spoke to you upon our Savior's words, "The queen of the south shall rise up in judgment with this generation and shall condemn it; for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here." [Sermon No. 2776, Volume 48—THE QUEEN OF SHEBA, A SIGN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org] I tried, then, to prove that the queen of Sheba is a condemning sign to those who do not believe our report concerning Him, or who do not act upon it so as to seek His face. Tonight we will follow the queen of the south little further.

As our Lord has given the queen of Sheba for a sign, it would be unbecoming if we did not try to learn all that we can from that sign. She came "to hear the wisdom of Solomon." But Christ is "greater than Solomon" in every respect. He is greater in wisdom, for, though Solomon was wise, he was not Wisdom, itself, and that Jesus is. In the Book of Proverbs Jesus is referred to under the name of Wisdom and the Apostle Paul tells us that He is made of God unto us wisdom. They who really know Him know something of how wise He is and how truly He may be called Wisdom. Because He is with the Father and knows the Father, He has such wisdom as no one else can have. "No man knows the Son, but the Father. Neither knows any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomever the Son will reveal Him." He knows the deep things of God, for He came down from Heaven bringing His Father's greatest secrets in His heart. To Him, therefore, men ought to come if they wish to be wise, and ought we

not to wish for wisdom? To whom else can we go if we go not to Him "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"?

In speaking of the queen of Sheba coming to Solomon as a type of our coming to Christ, I will, first, call upon you to *admire the queen's mode of procedure.* Then, secondly, *we will try to imitate it in reference to Christ.* And, then, thirdly, we will close by *answering certain questions of a truly practical character.*

I. First, then, I call upon you to ADMIRE THIS QUEEN'S MODE OF PROCEDURE WHEN SHE CAME TO SOLOMON. We are told in the text that "she came to prove him with hard questions."

She wanted to prove whether he was as wise as she had been led to believe and her mode of proving it was *by endeavoring to learn from him.* She put difficult questions to him in order that she might be instructed by his wisdom. And if you want to ascertain what the wisdom of Christ is, the way to know it is to come and sit at His feet and learn of Him. I know of no other method—it is a very sure one and it will be a very profitable and blessed one if you adopt it. He has Himself said, "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls."

Jesus came forth from God to be "the faithful Witness" to the Truth of God and, therefore, we are bound to believe what He says and, certainly, we shall never fully appreciate His wisdom unless we are willing to receive His testimony. The Psalmist says, "O taste and see that the Lord is good," but, in this case we must test and prove that the Lord is *wise.* There are some who despise the wisdom of Christ and if you probe them, you will discover that they were never willing to learn of Him. His own words are, "Except you are converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." The wisdom of Christ cannot be known by those who refuse to be disciples, that is, *learners.* We must learn of Him before we are competent to judge whether Christ is wise or not—and never did a disciple sit humbly at His feet, never did one, in the spirit of a little child, sit with Mary at the feet of the great Teacher, without saying, as he listened to the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth—"The half was not told me. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge that are to be found in Him!"

The queen of Sheba is also to be admired in that, wishing to learn from Solomon, *she asked him many questions*—not simply one or two, but many. Some people say, though I do not know how true it is, that curiosity is largely developed in women. I think I have known some men who have also had a tolerably large share of it. In this case, however, the

woman's curiosity was wise and right. It was a wise thing, on her part, when she was in the presence of such a man of wisdom, to try to learn all that she could from him and, therefore, she questioned him about all sorts of things. Very likely she brought before him the difficulties connected with her government, various schemes relating to trade, the modes of war, or the arts of peace. Possibly she talked to him concerning the beasts of the field, the fish of the sea, and the fowls of the air. But I am persuaded that she also talked about higher things—the things of God—and I am led to that conclusion by the expression in the first verse of my text, "When the queen of Sheba heard of the name of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she came to prove him with hard questions." The report that came to her had to do with Jehovah, the God of Israel, as well as with Solomon! So we may rest assured that she put to him many difficult questions concerning the state of her heart, her character, her present position before God and her future relationship to Israel's God. Questions on those points are not easy to answer, but she took care to ask them so that when she reached her home, she might not have to say, "I wish I had asked Solomon about that matter—then I would no longer be in doubt."

Now, Beloved, if you want to know the wisdom of Christ, you must ask Him many questions. Come and inquire of Him about anything you please! There is nothing which He does not know of earth, of Heaven and of Hell. He knows the past, the present, the future—the things of every day and the things of that last great day of days! He knows the things of God as nobody else knows them, for He is One with the Father, and with the Spirit—and He can tell us all that we need to know. Come to Him, then, with every question that has ever puzzled you, and with every doubt that has ever staggered you. Resort not so much to your own thoughts, or to the counsels and arguments of your fellow creatures, but consult with Him who spoke as never man spoke, and whose wisdom, like Alexander's sword, can cut each Gordian knot and end, in a moment, all the difficulties that trouble your spirit!

But the main reason which I admire the queen of Sheba is that *she proved Solomon "with hard questions."* Was she not wise? If she had asked Solomon questions which a schoolboy could reply to, it would have been almost an insult to him. No, if Solomon's wisdom is to be tested, let him be proved with "hard questions." If a man is really wise, he likes to have inquiries put to him which a man with less wisdom could not answer. If the queen's questions had been such as she could answer herself, why need she have gone all that long way to ask Solomon to reply to them? Or if she had somebody at her home, wherever it was, who could

have replied to her questions, why need she have gone to Jerusalem? It was because she had no one else to help her that she brought her questions to the one who, because of his superlative wisdom, would be able to answer them. This would relieve her mind and send her home satisfied upon many points that had previously troubled her—so she did well to bring her "hard questions" to Solomon.

But I have known some—I think I still know some—who seem as if they could not ask Christ a hard question. For instance, they feel that they are great sinners and they think that if they had not sinned so much, He might be better able to forgive them, so they do not like to bring their hard questions to King Jesus. Others have a hard struggle to conquer some fierce passion, or some reigning lust—and they think they must overcome that evil themselves. Do you think that my Master is only a little Savior? He is the great Physician! Will you only bring to Him a cut finger or an aching tooth to cure? Oh, He is such a Savior that you may bring to Him the worst, the most abject and depraved of men, for they are those who can best prove His power to save! When you feel yourselves most lost, then come to Him! When you are at your worst state—when you think you are almost damned and wonder that you are not altogether so—then come to Him! If yours is a hard case, bring it to the almighty Savior. Do you think He only came into the world to save those who are decent and good? You know what He, Himself, said, "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

And, Beloved, listen yet again. Are you in some very sharp trial? Is your spirit terribly depressed and have you, because of that, kept away from Christ? Have you felt that you could go to Him with your everyday burdens, but not with that special load? But why not also take that to Him? Prove Him with hard questions—the harder, the better! Do you not remember the Indian nurse who said to the invalid lady who seemed as if she did not like to lean too heavily upon her, "If you love me, lean hard"? That is what your Lord says to you, "if you love Me, lean hard upon Me." The more of your weight you rest upon Him, the better pleased He will be. The more you trust Him, the more you prove your confidence in Him, the closer will be the union between you. Christ is the Bearer of a world's iniquities, so He may readily enough be the Bearer of your most extraordinary grief! Prove the Lord Jesus in every possible way for He loves to be proved. The more needy the outcast, the louder does the Gospel trumpet blow that they who are ready to perish, may come and be saved.

When the night is darkest, ask Him for His Light! When the way is roughest, lean more than ever upon His arm! When the storm is the most

fierce, trust the Pilot of the Galilean Lake! When all around you rocks and reels to and fro like a drunken man, find a sure shelter and hiding place in the Rock of Ages! Prove the Lord Jesus in every possible way, for He loves to be tested! You blackest sinners who are here, come and put my Lord to the Test!—

"The poorer the wretch, the more welcome here."

The more hungry men are, the more fit they are for the Gospel feast! The more needy the outcast, the louder does the Gospel trumpet blow, that they who are ready to perish may come and be saved!

II. Now, secondly, LET US IMITATE HER EXAMPLE IN REFERENCE TO CHRIST WHO IS "GREATER THAN SOLOMON." Let us prove Him with hard questions. Let us bring to Him some nuts to be cracked, some diamonds to be cut, some difficulties to be solved. I do not know what hard question may be resting upon the mind of any of you, but I will briefly mention 10 hard questions which Jesus answers. They are only 10 out of ten thousand that might be put to Him, for there is no hard question which He cannot answer. He is far wiser than Solomon, of whom we read that he, "answered all her questions: there was nothing so difficult for the king, which he could not explain to her."

Here is the first hard question. *How can a man be just with God*? It stands in the Book of Job and it seems to stand there unanswered—"How should man be just with God?" There is nobody on the face of the earth who could have answered that question if it had not been made possible by our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no way of being just in the sight of God except through Him. But if we come to Him, He will tell us that we, ourselves, must stand in the place of condemnation and confess that we deserve the wrath of God for our sin. We must always admit that no merits of ours can ever win His favor—that, in fact, we have no merits of our own, but are undeserving, ill-deserving, Hell-deserving sinners. And when we occupy that position, then, of His own abounding Grace and mercy, God will reckon us as just through Christ Jesus.

Our Lord Jesus also tells us how a man can be just with God as He reminds us that He is the Covenant Head of His believing people, that, as in Adam, the first head, all men fell, so those who are in Him, who is the Second Adam, the Lord from Heaven, all rise again. "As by one man's disobedience many were made righteous." Righteousness in the sight of God comes through the Headship of Christ to all who are in Him. Christ has honored the Law of God, He has obeyed every jot and tittle of it and His obedience is reckoned as the obedience of all who are in Him. "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity." And blessed is that man to whom there comes a righteousness which is not of

the Law and which comes not because of circumcision, but which comes to those who believe—as it is written, "Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness." The question, "How can a man be just with God?" is, therefore, answered thus—Jesus says, "I have stood in the place of the guilty and have rendered to God's Law a perfect obedience. This is imputed to all who believe and God regards them as just through My righteousness." Oh, glorious Doctrine of Imputation! Happy are all they who believe it and rejoice in it.

Here is another hard question. *How can God be just, and yet the Justifier of the ungodly*? If He is just, surely He must condemn the ungodly! Yet we know for sure many who have been ungodly whom God has been pleased to meet with and to justify so completely that they have been heard to say, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies." How can this be? Only Jesus can answer the question, and He answers it thus—"I have borne the penalty that was due to sin. I have stood in the sinner's place and suffered that which has fully satisfied the claims of Divine Justice on his behalf. I have paid the sinner's debt, so the Law may well let him go free." "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. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Therefore, by the knowledge of Him shall God's righteous Servant justify many, for He has borne their iniquities. The great Sin-Bearer has suffered in the sinner's place—the sword of Divine Justice smote Him, for He stood in the sinner's place willingly bearing the sinner's penalty and now that sin has been punished upon Him, God can be just, and yet be the Justifier of all who believe in His dear Son!

The next question is one which has puzzled many. *How can a man be saved by faith alone without works, and yet no man can be saved by a faith that is without works*? Some have thought that there is a contradiction between the teaching of Paul and that of James, and have even gone so far as to say that the Apostle James was not Inspired when he wrote, "Faith, if it has not works, is dead, being alone." They had no right to say this, for James was as much Inspired as Paul was. The Truth of God which James teaches is as certain and as valuable as the Truth of God which Paul taught. James did not teach other than Paul taught and Paul did not teach other than James taught. Whenever they met, I have no doubt that they had blessed communion with one another, for they both meant the same thing, though they expressed it differently.

If you are puzzled by this question, our Lord Jesus Christ will tell you, in this Book, through which He still speaks to us, that we are to *believe in Him for salvation*, and not to bring any works of our own as the ground of our trust—not even our own faith, so far as it is a work—for a man is saved by Grace, that is, by God's free favor, not by works of righteousness which he has done. "For by Grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." That Truth of God is as clearly taught in Scripture as it can possibly be! But then it is equally true that no man may claim that he is saved unless the faith which he professes to have, is an active, living faith which makes him love God and, consequently, *do that which is well pleasing in His sight*. If I say that I believe in God, yet continue to live in sin willfully and knowingly, then I have a faith no better than the devils have, for they "believe and tremble."

There are some men who profess to believe in God, yet who do not tremble before Him, but are impudent and presumptuous. That is not the kind of faith that saves the soul! Saving faith is that which *produces good works*, which *leads to repentance*, or is accompanied by it, and leads to love of God, to holiness and to a desire to be made like unto the Savior. *Good works are not the root of faith, but they are its fruit*. A house does not rest upon the tiles on its roof, yet it would not be fit to live in if it had not a roof and, in like manner, our faith does not rest upon our good works, yet it would be a poor and useless faith if it had not some of the fruit of the Spirit to prove that it had come from God. Jesus Christ can tell us how a man can aim at being as holy as God is holy, and yet never talk about his holiness, or dream of trusting in it. We should live as if we were to be saved by our own works, yet place no reliance whatever upon them, but count them as dross, that we may win Christ and be found in Him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is God by faith.

Here is another hard question which once greatly puzzled a ruler of the Jews. You know his name, Nicodemus, "The same came to Jesus by night." This was his hard question—*"How can a man be born when he is old?"* At first sight, it seems as if that were unanswerable, but Jesus Christ has said, "Behold, I make all things new." Even under the old dispensation, God's promise to His people was, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." All this is impossible with man, but it is possible with God. The Holy Spirit regenerates a man, causes him to be born-again, so that, though his bodily

frame remains the same, yet his inner spirit becomes like that of a little child and, as a newborn babe, he desires the unadulterated milk of the Word that he may grow. Yes, there is a total change worked in men when they believe in Jesus Christ. He said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." And men who are old can be born-again, "by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever." Graybeard, you can be born-again! Leaning on your staff for very age—though you have outnumbered three score years and ten, you can be born-again! And if you were a 100 years of age, yet if you would believe in Jesus, by the power of the Eternal Spirit, you would at once be made a new creature in Christ Jesus!

Here is another hard question. *How can God, who sees all things, no longer see any sin in Believers?* That is a puzzle which many cannot understand. God is everywhere and everything is present to His all-seeing eyes, yet He says, through the Prophet Jeremiah, "In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none." I venture to say that even God Himself cannot see that which no longer exists. Even His eyes rest not on a thing that is not! And thus is it with the sin of those who have believed in Jesus—it has ceased to be. God Himself has declared, "I will remember their sin no more." But can God forget? Of course He can, as He says that He will! The work of the Messiah was described to Daniel in these remarkable words, "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." To make an end of sins? Well, then, there is an end of them! And, according to that other gracious, Divine declaration, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins." Oh, what blessed words! Therefore they are gone, they have ceased to be, Christ has obliterated them and, therefore, God no longer sees them! Oh, the splendor of the pardon which God has bestowed upon all Believers, making a clean sweep of all their sins forever!

Here is another hard question. *How can a man see the invisible God*? Yet Christ said, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." And the angel said to John, "His servants shall serve Him and they shall see His face." This hard question is putting in another form, the difficulty which Philip brought to Jesus—"Lord, show us the Father, and it will satisfy us." Jesus answered Him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet have you not known Me, Philip? He that has seen Me has seen the Father." In the Person of His dear Son, God the Father has displayed Himself before the eyes of men, as John says, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begot-

ten of the Father), full of Grace and truth." Jesus Himself said, "I and My Father are One," so that we can see the invisible Father in the Person of Jesus Christ His Son.

Moving upward in Christian experience, here is another hard question. *How can it be true that "whoever is born of God sins not," yet men who are born of God do sin*? Ah, that is a question which has puzzled man, but we must remember that every man of God is two men in one. That new part of him, which is born of God, that new nature who was implanted in regeneration, cannot sin because it is born of God. It is the incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever, but, as far as the man is still in the flesh, it is true that "the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be." The old nature sins through the force of nature, but the new nature sins not because it is born of God.

This helps, also, to answer another hard question. *How can a man be a new man, and yet be constantly sighing because he finds in himself so much of the old man*? The Holy Spirit guided the Apostle Paul to instruct us upon this matter. There is the new man within us which leaps for joy because of the heavenly life. But, alas, there is also the old man. Paul calls it "the body of this death." There it is and you know that it is the older of the two, and that it will not go out if it can help it. It says to the new nature, "What right have you here?" "I have the right of Grace," answers the new nature—"God put me here and here I mean to stay." "Not if I can prevent it," cries the old nature! "I will stamp you out, or I will smother you with doubts, or puff you up with pride, or kill you with the poison of unbelief—but out you shall go some way." "No," replies the new nature, "I never will go out, for I have come to stay here. I came in the name and under the authority of Jesus Christ and where Jesus comes, He comes to reign, and I mean to reign over you."

He deals some heavy blows at the old nature, and smites him to the dust, but it is not easy to keep him under. That old nature is such a horrible companion for the new nature, that it often makes him cry, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But even while he is thus crying out, he is not afraid of the ultimate issue—he feels sure of victory. The new nature sits and sings, as it were, within the ribs of death, with the stench of corruption in its nostrils—but it still sits and sings, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord," and triumph still in Him. We are not going to be overcome, Beloved. "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the Law, but under Grace." But, my Brothers and Sisters, it is a tremendous struggle and if our Lord had not instructed His servant Paul to tell us

about his own experience, some of us would have been obliged to cry, "If it is so, why am I thus?"

Christ knows all about the inner life of His people and His Word explains what may appear mysterious to you, so, when next you feel this conflict raging within your spirit, you will understand it, and say, "It is not because I am dead in sin, for, if I were dead, I would not have this fighting. It is because I have been quickened that this battle is going on."

Here is one more of these hard questions. *How can a man be sorrowful, yet always rejoicing*? That is one of the Apostle Paul's riddles of which he gives us a great number! Such as these—How can a man be poor, yet make many rich? How can a man be cast down, yet not destroyed; persecuted, yet not forsaken? How can a man be less than nothing and yet possess all things? The explanation is that while we are in this body, we must suffer, and smart, and pine—but thanks be to God! He has also taught us to glory in tribulation and to expect the great reward that awaits us, by-and-by, so that if we are full of sorrow, we accept the sorrow joyfully. If we are made to smart, we bow beneath the rod and look for the later blessed results from it. And so we can sigh, yet at the same time sing.

I have one more hard question. *How can a man's life be in Heaven while he still lives on earth*? May you all understand this riddle by learning what Paul means when he says, "For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Who "has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Even now the heavenly life may be enjoyed by us, although we still live upon earth and, sometimes, we are half inclined to say with the Apostle, "Whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knows." Yet we soon discover that we *are* in the body, for we have physical needs, temptations and trials. And then we cry, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" Yet, perhaps, the next moment, we say, "My treasure is all packed up and gone on before me. And I stand on tiptoe, waiting to be called away, for, where my treasure is, there is also my heart, and they are both above the skies with my dear Lord and Savior."

There are the 10 hard questions. I might have asked a great many more, and He, "who is greater than Solomon," could have answered them all!

III. Now in closing, let us ANSWER CERTAIN QUESTIONS OF A PRACTICAL CHARACTER.

Answer, first, this question—How can we come to Christ? He is in Heaven, so we cannot climb up to Him there. Yes, but He has graciously said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." And

though we see Him not, and hear Him not, yet in spirit He is among us at this moment! You need not stir even a step in order to get to Him. If Jesus were again upon earth, He could not, in His bodily Presence, be in all places at once. Suppose He were in London, what would they do who live in Australia and needed to get to Him? They might die on the voyage! Or if He were at Jerusalem, how many poor people would never be able to get to Palestine? It is much better that He is not on earth—it is more expedient for us, because His Spirit is everywhere and, desiring to think about Him, wishing to know Him, seeking Him, and, above all, trusting Him, we have come to Him!

"Well," says one, "supposing that is done, how can we ask Christ hard questions?" You may ask anything of Him just the same as if you could see Him. You need not even speak the question—if you think it, He hears it. Pray to Him, for He hears prayer. Wherever there are the praying lips of a sinner, there is the hearing ear of the Savior!

"But," you say, "if I ask of Him, how will He answer me?" Do not expect that He will answer you in a dream, or by any vocal sound. He has spoken all you need to know in this Book. Read it, study it, that you may learn what He has revealed. We who preach are not worth hearing unless what we say is taken out of the Bible. Listen to us when we preach because, oftentimes, the Words of the Book may seem cold to you. But if we translate them into warm lip-language, they will go home to your heart. You will understand them better and feel them better, as coming from one who loves you and who is a man of flesh and blood like yourselves.

"Yes," says one, "I would gladly come to Christ with my doubts and difficulties—and here is one question that I want Him to answer now. How is it that I read, in the Word of God, that He has limited a day, and yet you bid me come to Him now?" Yes, I do bid you come to Him now and, what is more, I tell you that His own Word is, "Him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out." "But is it not also true that He limits a day?" Yes, He does, but shall I tell you how He limits it? Again, He limits a certain day, saying by David, "Today, after so long a time, as it is said, Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Blessed be His holy name, if He has limited you, He has limited you to today! And if I live to see your face tomorrow, I will still say the same to you. The limit is a very gracious one—it is "today." If ever a soul comes to Christ, when he comes, it is today—and if you come this day, you will be within the limit, for he has said, "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Today then, dear Soul, is within the boundary! This night, before you go to your home, you are just within the limit. "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Accept Him now! Trust Him now!

Come to Him with your hard questions now! Come to Him with your hard doubts, come with your hard infidelity, come with your hard obstinacy! Come just as you are and cast yourself at those dear pierced feet of His, for there is not a question that He will not answer, not a difficulty that He will not overcome, nor a sin that He will not pardon—and send you away rejoicing!

I think I hear someone say, "What is this all about? Are there really any people in the world who want God in this fashion?" Yes, there are, and we are grieved if you are not one of them, for, believe me, Friend, all who are living as if there were no God are missing everything that truly makes up life! I heard a young man say, "I would like to see a little life." Yes, I hope you will, and a great deal of life, too, but there is no life in the outskirts of vice—that is death, rottenness, stench, corruption—like the valley of Hinnom and the burning of Tophet. Flee from it! Life is to be found by coming to God—and by trusting Jesus you get to God and become the possessor of *eternal* life! Then, getting to know God, you help to make the world all alive. The very times and season will seem to have changed to you, for things are not what they once were. The wilderness and the solitary places rejoice and the desert blooms as the rose. If I could live ten thousand years on earth without my God, and perpetually swim in a sea of sensual delights, I would beg to be annihilated sooner than have to undergo such a doom! But let God send or withhold whatever He pleases of temporal favors, if He will but give me to know that He is mine and that I am His, it shall be all I will ask of Him! I mean what I say, and I believe that every child of God who has once enjoyed the full Light of His Countenance will say the same.

HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK—
426, 45 (Version 4) and "Are You Weary?"

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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

HEART-COMMUNING
NO. 2779

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 18, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 7, 1878.

"She communed with him about all that was in her heart."
1 Kings 10:2.

Last Sunday evening I mentioned some of the "hard questions" which Jesus is able to answer [Sermon No. 2778, Volume 48—CONSULTING WITH JESUS — Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org]. It appears that the queen of Sheba, when she had once obtained an interview with the great and wise king of Israel, was not content with merely putting to him various difficult questions, for she unloosed herself to him and exposed all that lay concealed in her heart—and Solomon listened attentively to her—and, no doubt, so spoke to her that he sent her away rejoicing.

It is not generally a wise thing to tell all that is in your heart. Solomon himself said, "A fool utters all his mind; but a wise man keeps it in till afterwards." There are many things which you had better not tell to anybody. Make no one your complete confidant. If you do, you run great risks of making an Ahithophel or a Judas for yourself. David said, in his haste, that all men were liars. That was not quite true. Probably what he meant was that if we trust all men, we shall soon find ourselves deceived. But if we could meet with a Solomon—one who had been Divinely endowed with wisdom, as he was—it might be safe for us to bring all our questions and tell all our troubles to him. At any rate, we know of One, who is "greater than Solomon," to whom it is most safe and blessed to tell out all that is in our heart! He is willing to listen to us, and to commune with us and, the more frank and open we are with Him, the better will He be pleased and the better will it be for us. That is to be our subject—heart-communing with Jesus—spiritualizing the action of the queen of Sheba, when she came to Solomon, and "communed with him about all that was in her heart."

I. We will begin by saying that WE OUGHT TO COMMUNE WITH JESUS ABOUT ALL THAT IS IN OUR HEART.

I do not mean all of you who are present—I mean all those who have been redeemed from among men by His most precious blood—all those who are believing in Him and who call Him their Savior, their Master, their Lord. You are bound to tell Him all that is in your heart and to have no secrets hidden away from Him within your soul.

Tell Jesus all that is in your heart, *for neglect of communing with Christ, of the most intimate kind, is ungenerous towards Him.* Are there any professing Christians here who have lived for a month without conscious communion with Christ? If I were to speak of a longer period and to ask, "Are there not some professing Christians here who have lived for three months without conscious communion with Christ," I am afraid there are some who, if they were honest and truthful, would have to reply, "That is the case with us." If so, think what that means! You profess to belong to Jesus and to be His disciple, yet you confess that you have lived all this while without real, intimate communication with Him who is your Master and Lord! What is more, you profess to be not only one of His disciples, but one of His friends. "Is this your kindness to your Friend?"

I may go further than that, for you believe yourself to be married to Christ, for that is the union which exists between Him and His people. That would be a strange kind of marriage union in which the wife should be in the presence of her husband and not even speak to him by the week, by the month, by the three months, by the six months together! For them to have no fellowship with one another, no mutual interchange of love, no communications with each other would be regarded as unnatural and would be rightly condemned. But do we not, sometimes, act towards our heavenly Bridegroom in just that manner? Are we not, too often, like the men of the world who do not know Him? Do we not live as if we did not know Him, or as if He were no longer present with us? It ought not to be thus! Unless we would act contrary to all the dictates of our higher nature, we must be continually be holding intimate conversations with our Lord Jesus Christ.

And we must tell Him all that is in our heart, because *to conceal anything from so true a Friend betrays the sad fact that there is something wrong to be concealed.* Is there anything that you do that you could not tell Jesus? Is there anything you love that you could not ask Him to bless? Is there any plan before you that you could not ask Him to sanction? Is there anything in your heart which you would wish to hide from Him? Then it is a wrong thing—you can be sure of that! The thing must be evil, or else you would not wish to conceal it from Him whom, I trust, you really love. O my Lord, why should I desire to hide anything from You? If I want to hide it, then, surely, it must be because it is something of which I have cause to be ashamed! Help me to get rid of it. O Christian Brothers and Sisters, I beseech you to live just as you would do if Christ Jesus were in your room, in your bedchamber, in your shop, or walking along the street with you—for His *spiritual* Presence *is* there! May there never be anything about you which you wish to conceal from Him!

If we cannot tell Jesus all that is in our heart, *it shows a lack of confidence in His love, or His sympathy, or His wisdom, or His power.* When there is something that the wife cannot tell to her husband, or there begin to be some secret things on the part of one of them that cannot be revealed to the other, there will soon be an end of mutual love, peace and joy. Things cannot go on well in the home while there has to be concealment. O Beloved, I beseech you to love Christ too much to keep anything

back from Him! Love Him so much that you can trust Him even with the little frivolous things which so often worry and vex you. Love Him so much that you can tell Him all that is in your heart—and never, for a moment, wish to keep back anything from Him. As the hymn says—

"Tell it all to Jesus, comfort or complaint."

If we do not tell it all to Jesus, it looks as if we have no confidence in His love and, therefore, thought that He would not bear with us. Or that we had no confidence in His sympathy and fancied that He would not take any notice of us. Or that we had no confidence in His wisdom and thought that our trouble was too perplexing to bring to Him—or that we had no confidence in His power and dreamt that He could not help us in such an emergency. Let this never be the case with any of you, but, each day unburden your heart to Christ and never let Him think that you even begin to distrust Him! So shall you keep up a frank, open and blessed fellowship between Christ and your own soul.

I am quite certain that if you will carry out the plan I am commending to you, it will bring you great ease of mind. Whereas, if you do not, you will continue to have much uneasiness. Is there anything that I have not told to Jesus—anything in which I could not have fellowship with Him? Then, there is something wrong with me! Are you keeping your trouble to yourself and trying to manage without consulting with Jesus? Well, then, if anything goes wrong, you will have the responsibility of it! But if you take it all to Him and leave it with Him, it cannot go wrong, whatever happens! And even if it should *seem* to go wrong, you would not have the responsibility of it.

I believe that our trials usually come out of the things that we do not take to the Lord and, moreover, I am sure that we make greater blunders in what we consider to be simple matters, which we need not take to the Lord, than we do in far more difficult matters which we take to Him. The men of Israel were deceived by the Gibeonites because they had on old shoes and clothes, and had moldy bread in their packs, and the Israelites said, "It is perfectly clear that these men must have come from a long distance. Look at their old boots and their ragged garments." So they made a covenant with them and inquired not the will of the Lord. If it had not appeared to them to be quite so clear a case, they would have asked the Lord for direction—and then they would have been rightly guided. It is when you think you can see your way that you go wrong! When you cannot see your way, but trust to God to lead you by a way that you know not, you will go perfectly right. I am persuaded that it is so that the simplest and most plain matter kept away from Christ will turn out to be a maze, while the most intricate labyrinth, under the guidance of Christ, will prove to have in it a straight road for the feet of all those who trust in the Infallible Wisdom of their Lord and Savior!

On the other hand, if you do not come to Jesus, and commune with Him of all that is in your heart, you will lose His counsel and help, and the comfort that comes from them. I do not suppose anybody here knows what he has lost in this way, and I can hardly imagine how you are to calculate what you have lost of spiritual good that you might have had.

There is many a child of God who might be rich in all the intents of bliss, who continues to be as poor as Lazarus the beggar—he has hardly a crumb of comfort to feed upon and is full of doubts and fears—when he might have had full assurance long ago! There is many an heir of Heaven who is living upon the mere husks of Gospel food when he might be eating the rich fare of which Moses speaks—"Butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat." Very often, Beloved, you have not because you ask not, or because you believe not, or because you do not confide in Jesus and commune with Him. How strong the weakling might be if he would go to Jesus more frequently! How rich the poor soul might be if it would draw continually from Christ's inexhaustible treasury! Oh, what might we not be if we would but live up to our privileges! Might we not live in the suburbs of Heaven, and often, as it were, be close to the pearly gates, if we would but go and tell all to Jesus and commune with Him concerning all that is in our hearts?

Sometimes, our naughty habit *of reticence towards Jesus is aggravated by our eagerness to tell our troubles to others*. In the time of trial, we often imitate King Asa, who, when he was sick, "sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians." It was not wrong to go to the physicians, but he should have gone to the Lord first. It is the same with many of you as it was with Asa—away you go to your neighbor over the fence, or you call in a friend, and have a talk with Him in your own drawing room, or you go to some great one, and tell him all your trouble—yet how much have you gained by doing so? Have you not often found that you would have been wiser if you had followed Solomon's advice, "Go not into your brother's house in the day of your calamity?" Have you not also frequently discovered that when you have talked over your griefs with your friends, they still remain? Cowper truly wrote—

"Have you no words? Ah, think again—
Words flow apace where you complain
And fill your fellow creature's ears
With the sad tale of all your cares.
Were half the breath thus vainly spent
To Heaven in supplications sent,
Our cheerful song would more often be,
'Hear what the Lord has done for me!'"

You say that you need a friend, yet He who is the Friend that sticks closer than a brother is neglected by you! Suppose the Lord Jesus Christ were to meet some of you and you were to say to Him, "Good Master, we are in trouble"? And suppose He should say to you, "Where have you been with your trouble? You have not been to Me." And suppose you were to reply, "No, Lord, we have been consulting with flesh and blood—we have been asking our friends to help us"? And suppose He were to say to you, "And have they disappointed you?" You would have to reply, "Yes, Lord, they have." And suppose He looked at you and said, "Where you have already gone, you had better go again. You went to your friends first—are you coming to Me last? Am I to play the lackey to you and do you only come to Me after having tried all the others?" Ah, if He did talk

like that, what could you reply? Why, I think your only answer could be, and I trust your answer now will be, "Jesus, Master, I have too much forgotten You. I have not regarded You as a real present Friend. I have gone to my neighbors because I could see them, speak with them and hear what they had to say to me. But I have thought of You as if You were a myth, or, perhaps, I have not thought of You at all. Forgive me, Lord, for I do believe that You Are and that Your Word is true, which declares that You are always with Your people, and help me, henceforth, by Your Grace, to always go to You."

That is my first remark—that we ought to commune with Jesus concerning all that is in our hearts.

II. Secondly, WE NEED NOT CEASE COMMUNING WITH CHRIST FOR LACK OF TOPICS.

The queen of Sheba and Solomon came at last to an end of their talk. They could not go on speaking to one another forever. But with regard to ourselves and our Lord, there need never be an end to our communion with Him, for the subjects upon which we can have fellowship with Him are almost innumerable. Let me mention just a few of them.

There are, first, *your sorrows*. Are you very grieved? Are you smitten of God and afflicted? Then, Brothers and Sisters, you may well go to Jesus with your sorrows, for He is the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. He knows all about you and all about your sorrows, too. There is not a pang that you have ever felt but He has felt the like. If you will only talk with Him, you will find an open ear, a sympathetic heart and a ready hand, all placed at your disposal. "What do you mean, Sir? Do you mean that I am to sit down in my room and tell Jesus all about my troubles?" Yes, I mean just that! And as you would do if you could see Him sitting in the chair on the other side of the fire, sit down and tell it all to Him. If you have a quiet and secluded chamber, speak aloud if that will help you, but, anyway, tell it all to Him—pour into His ears and heart the story which you cannot disclose to anyone else. "But it seems so fanciful to imagine that I can really speak to Jesus." Try it, Beloved—if you have faith in God, you will discover that it is not a matter of fancy, but the most blessed reality in the world! If you can only see what your eyes perceive, it is no use for you to do as I say—in fact, you cannot do it. But if you have the inner eyes that have been enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and if your heart discerns the invisible Presence of the once-crucified but now glorified Savior, tell Him the whole story of your grief. Oftentimes, after you have done, you will find that it will cease to grieve you anymore.

Then, also, tell Him *your joys*, for He can have as much true fellowship with the joyous as with the sad. Go, young Sister, young Brother, in the gladness of your first youthful joy, and tell it all to Jesus! He rejoiced in spirit when He was upon the earth and, now He has the joy that was set before Him when He endured the Cross and despised the shame. If you tell Him your joys, He will sober them—not sour them. He will take away from them their earthly effervescence and impart to them a spiritual flavor and an abiding sweetness, so that, even in common things, your joy shall not become idolatrous and sinful. You who are bereft of creature

comforts should pray that you may find all things in God. But you who have such comforts and are full of joy, should pray this prayer—that you may find God in all things. They are both good prayers. That latter petition, you joyous souls may well pray to Jesus, and He will answer it, and you shall find that the marriage feast is all the better for Jesus being there to turn the water into wine, and that to all earthly joys He adds a bliss which they could not otherwise possess.

Some people say that we Christians get into ecstasies and raptures and then we hardly know our head from our heels, and we are so excited that we are not fair witnesses as to matters of fact. I do not think that the Church has often had too much excitement—the fault has usually been something quite in the opposite direction! But my own conviction is that we do not see the Glory of Christ when we are excited, or when we are in an ecstasy, one half as well as we do in our cool, calm, reflective moments. I know a great many Christian people who are by no means fools. If you try to do business with them, you will find that they are as shrewd and wide awake as any men. I would like to appeal to them about this matter. I believe that I have, myself, a certain degree of common sense and I venture to say that Christ never appears to me so glorious as when I am perfectly cool and collected—just as I would be if I were sitting down to write out some statistics, or to work out a mathematical problem, or to make up an account and strike a balance.

Whenever, in the very calmest and quietest manner, I begin to think of my Lord and Master, He then, most of all strikes me as glorious. Our religion does not require the excitements and stimulants upon which some seem to live, but when we are in the most serene state of mind and heart, then we can best see the glories of Christ. O Sirs, my Master would have you sit down and count the cost of being His servants! He would make you mathematicians, that, after you have counted the cost, you may see that He is worth ten thousand times more than He could ever cost you! He would have you survey Him and look upon Him from all points of view—look at His Person, His work, His offices, His promises, His achievements—that in all things you may see how glorious He is! I ask you calmly to see what kind of Lord and Master He is and what sort of Glory it is that surrounds Him. And if you will do so—that is, if your hearts have really been changed by His Grace—you will say, "Oh, yes! Tell the wide world over that it is simple common sense to believe in Christ, that it is irrational to reject Him! Tell them that the best use of your reason is to lay it at His feet—and that the truest wisdom is to count yourself but a fool in comparison with Him—and to sit with Mary and listen to His wondrous words."

You may also go to Jesus and tell Him all about your *service*. You have begun to work for the Lord and you are very pleased with the opportunity of doing something for Him, but you do not find it to be all sweetness. Perhaps you are like Martha who was "cumbered" with her service for Christ. When she was preparing a dinner for Him, she was greatly worried over it. The servants might burn the meat, or she was afraid that one very special delicacy would be spoiled altogether. Besides, somebody

had broken the best dish and the tablecloth did not look as white as she liked to see it. Martha was also troubled because Mary did not help her, so she went to the Master about it, which was the most sensible thing she could do. I can speak very sympathetically about this matter, for I get to worrying concerning it sometimes. I want to see Christ served with the best that I have, and with the best that all His people have. And if things go a little awry, and will not work quite right, I am apt to become fidgety. But this will not do, either for me or for you. We must go and tell the Master about it. He will set it all right and make us see that it is all right. Suppose any of you have not been treated kindly by your fellow members even when you were trying to do good? Suppose that the girls in your class have grieved you? Suppose that you have been rapped over the knuckles when you really meant to be serving your Lord, what are you to do? Again I say, as I said before—

"Tell it all to Jesus, comfort or complaint."

Do not come and tell me! If I could help you, I would, but there is One who is far better than any pastor on earth to go to, even the Great Shepherd and Bishop of Souls, our Lord Jesus Christ!

Then, next, go and tell Jesus *all your plans*. You think you will do something for Him, do you? Do not begin till you have told Him all about what you mean to do. He had great plans for the redemption of His people and He communicated them all to His Father. No, I should rather say that He drew them out of His Father's eternal decrees. Go and tell Him what you are planning for the Glory of God, and the good of men, and you may, perhaps, discover that some of it would be a mistake.

When you have any *successes*, go and tell Him. The 70 disciples returned to Jesus with joy, saying, "Lord, even the devils are subject to us through Your name." If you have the high honor of winning a soul, tell Jesus—and be sure to give God all the glory of it! Sing, "Non nobis, Domine"—"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Your name give glory, for Your mercy, and for Your truth's sake."

And when you have any *failures*—when your hopes are disappointed—go and tell it all to Jesus. I do not know whether I make myself clearly understood upon all these points, but I feel that working side by side with Christ is the only style of working at which a man can keep on year after year. If you get alone away from your Master—if you have sorrows or joys which are all your own and which you do not tell Him, you will get into a sad state. But if you feel, "He is near me, He is with me"—and if you act upon that belief by constantly communicating with Him concerning what you feel, and what you believe, and what you do—you will lead a holy and blessed and useful, and happy life. I have not time to complete the long list of topics on which we are to commune with Jesus, but, in brief, let me urge you to tell Him all your desires. If you desire anything that you ought to desire, and may desire, let Him know it. Tell Him, also, all your fears. Tell Him that you are sometimes afraid to die. Tell Him every fear that distresses you, for, as a nurse is tender with her child, so is Christ with His people.

Tell Him all *your loves*. Bring before Him, in prayer, all upon whom your love is set. Tell Him especially all you can about your love to Himself and ask Him to make it firmer, stronger, more abiding, more potent over the whole of your life. Often sing a song to Jesus, your Best-Beloved and say, "Now will I sing to my Well-Beloved a song touching my Beloved." Sing and speak often to Him and whenever you have any mysteries which you cannot explain or tell to anyone else, go and ask Him to read the inscription that is engraved upon your heart and to decipher the strange hieroglyphics which no one else can read.

III. Now, dear Friends, I will close when I have briefly shown you, in the third place, that WE SHALL NEVER CEASE COMMUNING WITH CHRIST FOR LACK OF REASONS.

I am not now speaking to those who have never communed with my Lord. I have often communed with Him. I still commune with Him and so do many of you. And I say that we shall never cease communing with Him for lack of reasons.

For, first, *it is most ennobling to have fellowship with the Son of God.* "And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." I have heard it said of some men that to know them is a liberal education. If you are only slightly acquainted with them, you are sure to learn much from them! But to know Christ is to know everything that is worth knowing—and He is our All-in-All.

It is also *highly beneficial* to commune with Christ. I know of nothing that can lift you up so much above the evil influences of an ungodly world as constantly abiding in close fellowship with Christ and telling Him all that you feel in your heart of hearts.

How *consoling* it is to do this! You forget your griefs while you commune with Him. How *sanctifying* it is! A man cannot take delight in sin while he walks with Christ. Communion with Him will make a man leave off sinning, or else sinning will make him leave off communing. You will not be perfect while you are in this world, but the nearest way to perfection lies along the pathway where Jesus walks. How *delightful* it is, too, to commune with Jesus! There is no other joy that is at all comparable with it—and it prepares us for the higher joys above. When those who walk with Christ on earth come to live with Him above, there will certainly be a change in some respects, but it will be no new experience to them. Did He not love His saints and seek their fellowship while they were here below? Then they shall have that fellowship continued above! Did you not walk with God here? They you shall walk with Jesus up there!

Are there any of Christ's followers who seldom commune with Him? Beloved, shall I not chide you if that is true of you? My Master is looking down upon you at this moment. Does He need to speak to you? He did not speak to Peter when the boastful Apostle had denied His Lord. Jesus turned and *looked* at Peter and I trust He will look upon you—that those dear eyes, which wept for you, will gaze right down into your soul—and that His blessed heart that bled for you will look out of those eyes of His upon you. He seems to say, "Do you, indeed, love Me, as you never wish for My company? Can you really love Me?"

And then, I think that my Master looks upon some here who have never had any communion with Him at all, and He says, "Is it nothing to you that I loved mankind, and came to earth, and died to save sinners? Is it nothing to you that I bid you trust Me, and that I promise to save you if you do? Will you still refuse to trust Me? Will you turn upon your heels away from Me? Oh, why will you die!? Why will you die!?

And then, lastly, He speaks to those of you who have long enjoyed fellowship with Him and, as He looks at you, He says, "Abide in My love, even as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." Beloved, if you have ever enjoyed fellowship with Christ, never lose it! Oh, to hold on—to hold fast—to hold through life and to hold in death to Him whose face we have never seen, yet whom we know to be among us now! O Beloved of our souls, never leave us! No, You will not do so—we will constrain You to abide with us! Give us Divine Grace, we pray, to never vex You or grieve Your Holy Spirit. Come very near to us just now—nearer than You have ever been since the first day we saw You. Come near to all of Your people, Immanuel—God With Us—and be always with us and go with us wherever we go—and never leave us again, for Your love's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 KINGS 10:1-13; MATTHEW 12:38-45.

Let us first read part of the 10th Chapter of the First Book of Kings and, afterwards, a part of the 12th Chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew.

1 Kings 10:1. *And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to prove him with hard questions.* Her visit, you see, had a religious aspect. She "heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the *Lord."* He had wisdom of various kinds, but it was his knowledge of God, and of God's ways, that seemed chiefly to attract this ruler from a far-distant land.

2. *And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bore spices, and very much gold, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him about all that was in her heart.* She came with a price in her hand to get wisdom. Well did Solomon say, "Buy the truth, and sell it not." No price is too dear to pay for it, but any price would be too cheap to sell it.

3. *So Solomon answered all her questions: there was nothing to difficult for the king, that he could not explain it to her.* His wisdom came from God and, therefore, it was full and complete, and could not be confounded by man. Let us seek after the Wisdom which comes from above, and remember that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Indeed, is it not the sum total of wisdom, really, to fear, in a filial sense, the Lord Most High?

4, 5. *And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built, and the food of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel,*

and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the LORD, there was no more spirit in her. She was a queen, but she had never seen such royal magnificence as Solomon's! "The ascent by which he went up unto the house of the Lord" appears to have been a marvelous viaduct constructed of the most ponderous stones, by which the king went from his own house up to the Temple itself. I have read that an arch of that viaduct is standing at the present day and it is still a marvel. To this princess, it must have seemed a wonder of wonders!

6-12. *And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in my own land of your acts and of your wisdom. However, I believed not the words until I came, and my eyes have seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: your wisdom and prosperity exceeds the fame which I heard. Happy are your men, happy are these, your servants, which stand continually before you, and that hear your wisdom. Blessed be the LORD your God, which delighted in you, to set you on the throne of Israel: because the LORD loved Israel forever, therefore made He you king, to do judgment and justice. And she gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones: there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon. And the navy also of Hiram, that brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir great plenty of almug trees, and precious stones. And the king made of the almug trees pillars for the house of the LORD, and for the king's house, also harps and psalteries for singers: there came no such almug trees, nor were seen unto this day.* Probably these "almug trees" were trees of sandal-wood. Whatever they were, they seem to have been the best timber known to the Easterns and, therefore, Solomon very properly used them in the House of the Lord. Let the harps of our praises be made of such wood that there shall be no others equal to them in the whole world! Let us give to our Lord our best young blood, our warmest zeal, our highest thoughts, our most careful attention. Let us give Him, in fact, the whole of our being, the love of our heart. He should be served with the best of the best, "for He is good, and His mercy endures forever."

13. *And king Solomon gave unto the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatever she asked, besides that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty. So she turned and went to her own country, she and her servants.* The king first of all bountifully gave her a present which he thought most fitting. And then, afterwards, permitted her to ask whatever she would. How much is this like our King Solomon, who has already given us all our hearts can wish for and yet, if there is any right desire that is still ungratified, He provides the golden Mercy Seat at the foot of His Throne where we may present our petitions to Him, encouraged by His gracious word, "Ask what you will; according to your faith, so shall it be unto you."

Matthew 12:38, 39. *Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from You. But He answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the Prophet Jonah.* The queen of Sheba did not ask for a sign. She did not expect So-

lomon to work a miracle, but, sitting down in his presence, she proposed her hard questions and meekly awaited his answers. So should these scribes and Pharisees have done with the Lord Jesus Christ. These were His signs—

40, 41. *For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah and, indeed, a greater than Jonah is here.* Jonah was a servant—Jesus was the Master. Jonah preached only one sermon—Jesus preached many. That sermon was a short one—Jesus Christ labored long after souls. Jonah was a man full of infirmities and with an unloving heart—Jesus was tender and compassionate. Jonah did but hurry through the streets, crying, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown"—without a word of mercy—Jesus lived long among the people, giving them directions, warnings and invitations to seek and find salvation. "Behold, a greater than Jonah is here."

42. *The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here.* As I have so recently preached upon this verse, [Sermon No. 2777, Volume 48—THE QUEEN OF SHEBA, A SIGN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org] I need not say anything about it just now.

43. *When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man.* Mark, not when he is *turned* out of him by superior force, but when he has gone out of his own accord.

43. *He walks through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none.* The devil was in the Jews of old, but he went out of them at the time of the Babylonian captivity—that heavy punishment cured them of idolatry. But the devil could never find a resting place in Gentile hearts so pleasant to himself as among God's own people.

44. *Then he says, I will return to my house from where I came out; and when he is come, he finds it empty, swept, and garnished.* "I will go back to those Jews," says the devil and, when he comes back, he finds them without any true love to God—"empty, swept, and garnished." See how correctly the Pharisee is dressed and note with what sanctimonious unction he repeats his hypocritical prayers! He fasts twice in the week and pays tithes of his mint and anise and cummin. The devil finds the house "empty, swept, garnished" and, as he does not care whether he lives in a foul heart or a clean one, so long as he can but live in it, he takes up his abode there again.

45. *Then he goes and takes with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.* If idolatry did not come back to the Jews, the devil of pride and self-conceit and many more came and fought against the Son of God, so that they became worse than they were before! And the first devil of the Jewish people was nothing compared with the seven devils which afterwards possessed them. We have seen some men

of this kind. Under temporary conviction, they have given up certain outward sins, but, afterwards, they have been 10 times worse than they were before. We have known a man to be a drunk and we have rejoiced to see him leave his cups but, yet, when he has made a self-righteousness out of his temperance and set himself up against God and His Truth, we have verily believed that he has had within him seven devils worse than the first! A man may reform himself to blacker stains and wash himself with the waters of his self-righteousness till he becomes more hard to clean than he would have been at the first. Oh, for the mighty hand of One who is stronger than the Prince of Hell to throw the devil out! And then he will never come back again—but if he goes out by mere human persuasion, or by our own wills and wishes, he will most certainly come back to us! If the Holy Spirit turns him out, he will never gain an entrance any more.

45. *Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.*

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, 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 SOJOURN IN MESECH
NO. 2780

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 25, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DURING THE SPRING OF 1860.

"Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!"
Psalm 120:5.

MESECH was the son of Japheth, from whom, according to history, were descended the men who inhabited that most barbarous of all regions, according to the opinion of the ancients, the northern parts of Muscovy or Moscow and Russia. The inhabitants of the tents of Kedar were the descendants of one of the sons of Abraham who had taken to nomadic habits and were continually wandering about over the deserts. They were thought to have and doubtless were, guilty of plundering travelers and were by no means the most respectable of mankind. We are to understand, then, by this verse, that the people among whom the Psalmist dwelt were, in his esteem, among the most barbarous, the most fierce and the most graceless of men. And, therefore, it is that he cries, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" He felt a woe in his heart because of that evil companionship in which he was compelled to abide.

This has been the cry of the children of God in all ages. Lot had his ears vexed with the filthy conversation of the men of Sodom. Many of the woes of Micah sprang from those men who were sharper than a thorn hedge—every one of them ready to tear and scratch his neighbor. David's deepest griefs came from the men who surrounded him—on the one hand, the unfriendly sons of Zeruiah, who were too strong for him and, on the other hand, Shimei and the sons of Belial, who made a reproach of every word he uttered and every deed he did. Even Isaiah, himself, that happy-spirited Prophet, one day cried, "Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips!" And then he added another cause of his woe, "and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." And I expect I may truly say that, to this day, you, my Brothers and Sisters, who are followers of Jesus, have often had to cry out, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" And you have longed to be far away from this dusky world, so full of sin, traps, pitfalls and everything that makes us stumble in our path—and of nothing that can help us onward towards Heaven.

I propose, on this occasion, first, to say *a word or two in justification of the Psalmist's complaint.* Secondly, *to justify God's dealings with us in having subjected us to this dwelling in the tents of Mesech.* And thirdly, a

few words, by way of comfort, *to those who are sad at heart by reason of those ill times and those ill places in which they abide.*

I. First, then, Brothers and Sisters, A WORD OR TWO IN JUSTIFICATION OF THE PSALMIST'S COMPLAINT. I will not say that it is thoroughly commendable, in a Christian, to long to be away from the place where God's Providence has put him. But I will say, and must say, that it is not only excusable, but scarcely needs an apology, for that Christian to sometimes cry out, "My soul is weary. I am almost weary of my life because of the wicked men that surround me on every hand."

Think, my Brothers and Sisters, of what Christians have to suffer from the wicked world, and you will not wonder, you will not feel, I am sure, that they should excuse themselves when they cry, "Woe is me," for *think how the wicked world slanders the Christian.* There is no falsehood too base for men to utter against the followers of Jesus! There was a shameful slander that was circulated among the heathen, that the early Christians, when they came together, met for the most obscene and even cruel rites—whereas those holy men and women only gathered together to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of Him whom they loved. And, to this day, the chosen weapon of Satan with which the Evil One does great mischief, and on which he relies as his masterpiece of hellish ammunition against the Church, is slander! And this often wounds the Christian and cuts him to the quick when he finds his good name suddenly blasted and when filth is thrown upon his snow-white garments. It is but little marvel when he has sought studiously to avoid the very appearance of evil—when he has picked his steps, knowing the world is a miry place—when he has sought in everything to avoid giving offense to any man, and yet he sees himself abused on every hand! It is but little marvel, I say, that he should cry, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech!"

But if slander were all, though this might suffice to justify the complaint, yet would there be something lacking. For, alas, the Christian, dwelling as he does among wicked men, finds *his good things are continually marred*, so that he has to cry, "When I would do good, evil is present with me—not only here in my own heart, but in my own house and round about my neighborhood!" I know that some of you live in crowded places where you can scarcely pray without being overheard and laughed at and, if you have a meeting for prayer and friends join you in singing the songs of Zion, a crowd soon gathers round your little window and the mockers make all manner of discordant sounds. If you would learn a lascivious song, you have but to throw up your window and listen to what is being sung in the street—but if you would have thoughts of Heaven and sing of God, how hard it is when you have those about you who will cast these things in your teeth, suggest all manner of ribaldry and turn your best words into a reproach against you!

The Christian is like an chained eagle. How often does he fret over that chain and bite it! He sees the stars up yonder and he knows that he is brother to the lightning and he wants to be aloft there in his own native element—how he frets and fumes at his captivity! His mighty spirit struggles within his body and he longs to stretch his wings and fly straight to yonder lofty heights! And when he sees those about him feed-

ing upon the husks that swine eat, or when they hurl their carrion at him, how often does he long to be free—to break down the bars of his cage and get away to his own companionship—to some associates that are fit for him, some spirits that are congenial with his spirit! How he pants to be with his own group—the cherubim and seraphim, the holy ones that day without night keep ceaseless watch and sing in unending harmony around the Throne of Jehovah who lives and abides forever! Were he a worldling, he would be satisfied with the world, but since he is of nobler blood, these things here below all tend to check the aspirations and the longings of his Heaven-born spirit. It is, indeed, no strange thing that he should cry, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!

But, besides this, the Christian is conscious that *evil companionship is damaging to him*. If he is not burnt, he is at least blackened by contact with the ungodly. This world is to him a place where if he does not accumulate actual filth, it is hard to travel an hour along its roads without being covered with its dust. Though, by the Grace of God, he is kept upright, yet he feels, when he goes upon his knees again, he has suffered from contact with poor, fallen humanity. He goes up into his chamber for communion with Christ and his spirit seems to drink the dew of Heaven fresh from the Throne of God! But he has to go down into the world and the hot sun of business shines upon him—and then comes the dust of this world to mar him and he goes back to his chamber and feels like Samson when his hair was shorn away. He begins to cry, "My soul lies cleaving to the dust!" Sometimes he longs to get away from his fellows. He would, if he could, keep himself abstracted and alone that he might cultivate continual friendship with Christ and abide near to the bleeding side of Jesus. That is a foolish wish, as I shall have to show, by-and-by, but yet it is no wonder that he cries aloud, when he finds his spirit so confined and his best things so deteriorated, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!"

There are many other reasons, doubtless, why the Christian longs to be gone from the company of the ungodly and why he would be far away from them if he could. I shall be content, however, with mentioning one other, namely, *the continual process of temptation which surrounds the Christian who is situated in the midst of men of unclean lips*. Men lay traps for us and, sometimes, they lay them right warily and craftily—and unless our God has given us the wisdom of the serpent, as well as the harmlessness of the dove, we shall find our heels tripped up before we are aware. Often, in my own case, I am asked questions, apparently by enquirers who are anxious to know something about the Truth of God, only with the desire to entrap me in my words and make some capital out of my answer. And, doubtless, it is so with each one of you. You are questioned merely that your answer may become the theme of ridicule. Some temptation is put in your way—a supposed friend advises you to do this or to do that. Perhaps you do it—and he is the first man to accuse you of having done wrong. Before, he said, "Oh, it is just the thing I would do if I were in your place!"

Perhaps he would—but when he has seen you do it, he has become your accuser—your tempter has afterwards turned round to bring an accusation against you! The Christian will long to be out of a world like this, where there is a Satanic rifleman behind every bush, a devilish archer behind every crag and where, oftentimes, while we are going along some quiet vale of life, all secluded and peaceful, the Archfiend comes behind us and we hear his flattering words and, all of a sudden, he gives a shrill call and from every side, tempters rage! We see everyone of them armed to the teeth and with their arrows winged for flight and thirsty to destroy! And we wonder why we are brought into such a place, where all seemed so calm and secluded—but now we are surrounded by the enemy and we have to cry, "Good Lord, deliver us! Come from above and snatch us out of this danger! Cast down our foes and put our feet in a large place." Well may God's dove long to roost in Heaven when there are so many snares here and so many archers with their bows all ready, seeking its life! This made the Psalmist talk of fleeing as a bird to the mountain. Well may we sometimes wish we could do so and even begin to sing, in the language of the poet—

"Jerusalem, my happy home,
Name always dear to me,
When shall my labors have an end,
In joy, and peace, and thee?"

II. Having thus spoken a word of justification for the Psalmist's complaint, I am going, next, TO JUSTIFY THE WAYS OF GOD WITH US, IN HAVING SUBJECTED US TO THIS DWELLING IN THE TENTS OF KEDAR.

Well, Brothers and Sisters, whatever God does is right—we believe that once and for all—if He should do that which seemed, to our reason, to be the most wrong thing in the world, we would believe our reason to be a liar sooner than imagine that God would either be unkind or unwise. It is a happy thing when we can believe God to be right when we cannot see it, when we can trust Him even if we cannot trace Him. It is pleasant to believe that, but we would rather see it. Now, I think, in this case, we can see a little why God deals thus with us.

It is right, and just, and good that God has spared us to be here a little longer, for, in the first place, my Brothers and Sisters, has not God put us here to dwell in the tents of Kedar *because these, though perilous places, are advantageous posts for service*? The angels, those mighty spirits that serve God perfectly, seem to me to be like the soldiers in an army who bring up the rear. They are behind—there, the arrows do not reach them. When the volleys of Satanic malice are being fired off, the angels are behind and can scarcely hear their echoes. But we that are born of women must face the fire and lead the vanguard in the heavenly battle between the Son of God and that great traitor. We must go into the front rank and every shot must fall upon our harness and rattle upon our armor—and is it not a glorious thing to stand in the front? Who would care to be behind in such a battle as this? Angels might long to come where we are and earnestly desire to stand in the front of the battle—for if this is a place of danger, it is the place of honor, too!

That was a noble speech of our old English king at Agincourt, when he was surrounded by multitudes of enemies, "Well, be it so. I would not lose so great an honor, or divide my triumph. I would not," he said, "have one man the fewer among my enemies, because then there would be a less glorious victory." So, in like manner, let us take heart even from our difficulties! The Lord of Hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge. Jehovah-Nissi is inscribed on our banner! We are privileged above all the creatures of God. We have a high and noble honor to fight for Jehovah and, standing out as the soldiers of the Cross—the Church militant of the Divine One—we can do what the angels have not the power to do and, therefore, we have great reason to bless God that He lets us stop here because we are doing something for Him that even they cannot do! If you had been an angel and never been a man, you might sit down, if such thoughts could ever pass through an angelic mind, on some sunny crag high up on the celestial hills and muse thus—"I am a glorious being. The great God has made me to be happy and blest, but, down yonder, on that little planet that is glittering in the light of the sun, there are glorious creatures living that are more blest than I am, for they can do what I must not. They tell of Jesus' love! They wipe the tears from the eyes of the mourner. I can carry the soul a-loft and I am glad when I have the commission to do so—but I cannot go and bring the wanderer back and tell him how Jesus Christ has bought him with His precious blood."

I think an angel might almost fold his wings and cherish that wish! If such a thought could ever go through a cherubic spirit, such a wish might be conceived to be quite natural. For really, my Brothers and Sisters, they cannot do what we can do. There are works of charity and resignation, and deeds of heroic suffering that those blessed spirits can never perform. "Give me a body," says the angel, "and let me be a martyr, for a martyr is greater than an angel. Give me a tongue and let me he a preacher, for the noble army of the Apostles is more noble than the glorious hosts of cherubim and seraphim! They have suffered for God. They have testified for God. They have stood in the midst of a multitude of enemies, firm as a rock in the time of storm—and they have been kept steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." If there were nothing else to say upon this point, it should certainly be satisfactory enough to the Christian to remember that God has kept him here on purpose to do Him honor.

Yet another thought, my Brothers and Sisters. You never will wish, I am sure, to get away from the tents of Kedar if you will recollect that *it was through another Christian tarrying here—when, perhaps, he wanted to be gone—that you are this day a Christian.* Look back upon the instrumentality that God used for your conversion. It may have been the teaching of some aged woman who herself had long ago wished to go Home to her Father and her God. But she was kept here, pale and shivering with old age, in order to point you to the City of Refuge. Or, perhaps, it may have been some younger servant of God who preached the Gospel—and you heard it and were blessed. But that man of God had often wished to be in Heaven. Had he been in Heaven when he wished it, where would you have been? It is true, God might have found other in-

struments, but we are to speak, as men, after the manner of men. Have we not reason to thank God that these instruments were spared and still kept here, that we might be brought to Him by them?

And now, mark, is it not a fact and will you not look out and see whether it is so that there are many of God's elect ones, purchased with the precious blood of Christ, who are parts of Christ's mystical body, who are not yet brought in—and you are to bring them in? Brethren, if you were to go to Heaven, now, perhaps you would go almost alone—you must stay till there is a companion to go with you! There are two stars very prominent at this season of the year, the Gemini, the twins, glistening in the sky. You can see them, in about an hour's time, almost overhead. Yes, and you, perhaps, would have been a star, all alone, in the heavenly firmament, if you had had your own way, but, now, there will be two of you glittering together! And with some of us, blessed be God who has given us this honor, there will be a whole constellation of stars which, though they did not borrow their light from us, yet through us have been able to receive their light from Jesus Christ! And who would like to go to Heaven alone—to go through those bright fields of ether with no other redeemed spirit with him?

I sometimes think it would be a noble thing for the minister of God to have a host behind him and to look back and say, "Who are you that are following after me?" And to hear them reply, "We are they whom God has given you. As the sheaves come with the farmer in the day of harvest, so we are coming with you"—and then to enter Heaven, and cry, "Here am I, and the children that You have given me!" To say, "Here am I," is a blessed thing, but that other clause, "and those whom You have given me," that is a grand addition! What must it be to be in Heaven? Glory be to God if we are ever there, but to be in Heaven with others who are given to us—this shall be to multiply Heaven, to heap celestial mountains upon one another, to double the light of the sun, yes, to make it sevenfold, to make Heaven more than Heaven—Heaven multiplied in the Heaven of others! To not simply say, "I see the sun," but the sun reflected from a thousand glasses—the souls of others who have been led to Christ and then reflect that enjoyment upon the man who, through God, was the means of bringing them to glory! Well, Brothers and Sisters, this should make us willing to stay here.

There is, however, one other reason left, namely, perhaps our Master keeps us *in the tents of Kedar because it will make Heaven all the sweeter*. The old Romans—you hear a great deal of praise of the Greeks and Romans—but the Greeks were the biggest thieves who ever lived and the Romans were about the greatest gluttons and bullies that ever existed! Well, the Romans were such gluttons that before they came to their meals, they were accustomed to drink all the most bitter things they could, that they might be thirsty and that they might drink as much as they could—very nasty things, such as one would not like to think of—but they always liked to get their palates in such a state that when they drank their wine, they would enjoy it. Verily, Brothers and Sisters, this is something like our case. After those draughts of wormwood which we have had to drink, how sweet Heaven's nectar will be! Yes, we have had

to drink the gall, as we think, to the very dregs—but when that cup is drained and God gives us some of the new wine of the Kingdom, how sweet that will be!

Nothing makes a day of rest so sweet to a man as having long labored and long toiled. The tradesman who goes home to his little country house thinks, "Well, if ever I can make enough to always come and live in this house, I shall be so happy." He does it—and yet he doesn't like it—in a week he cannot stand it! The reason he used to enjoy the rest was because the toil of the day sweetened it. Brothers and Sisters, it will be so with us when we get to Heaven—then, when our rest shall last eternally, it will be sweet, indeed! The long wilderness of drought shall make the joys of Heaven rare and real! The waters of the Nile were considered by the Egyptians to have an excellent flavor. Our travelers say it is not so, but the reason is because the Egyptians have never drunk any water but that of the Nile, while we, who have it in all our streets so abundantly, think but little of that turbid stream. Now, we who have had much, but not too much, of sorrow from the men that dwell in the tents of Kedar, how blessed will it be there when we shall be—

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

III. My third topic is A WORD OF COMFORT TO THE CHRISTIAN WHILE PLACED IN THESE APPARENTLY EVIL CIRCUMSTANCES.

Well, there is one word in the text that ought to console him in a case like this. "Woe is me, that I *sojourn*"—thank God for that word, "sojourn." Yes, I do not live here forever—I am only a stranger and a sojourner here, as all my fathers were, and though the next sentence does say, "I dwell," yet, thank God, it is a *tent* I dwell in and that will come down, by-and-by—"I dwell in the *tents* of Kedar." You men of this world, you may have your day, but your day will soon be over! And I will have my nights, but my nights will soon be over, too. It is not for long, Christian, it is not for long. They may laugh at you, but every day they laugh, that is one day less for you to be laughed at. They may scoff and mock, and set you in the pillory with cruelty, but you will not be there forever. Perhaps tomorrow you may be in Heaven—we never know how near we are to the gates of Paradise. But, at any rate, suppose we should live to the longest period of human life? It is not long, after all.

When we get home to Heaven and come to look back, what a short way it will seem! While we are travelling in it, and our feet are covered with blisters and sores, we think all the inches are miles, but when we get up there, we shall say, "Why, that light affliction was but for a moment. I thought 'twas half a century, but, 'twas but for a moment—yet it has worked out for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." We say, sometimes, "God has appointed unto us wearisome days and nights of weeping." But when we are in Heaven, we shall say, "Weeping endured but for a night, but joy came in the morning." I say to the Christian—

"The way may be rough, but it cannot be long,
So let's smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song."

Up, Christian! A few successful struggles and you will not have one more conflict! Another blow or two and your foot shall be on your oppo-

nent's neck! What? Give up the battle when it is near its termination? Would you sit down in the shade when the sun is rising and the morning star of promise is giving you the first token of the dawn? Cheer up, cheer up, I beseech you! The end will make amends for all that you endure and you will thank God that He kept you, and blessed you, and enabled you to suffer and endure and, at last, brought you safely Home!

This, however, is not all the comfort I have for you, because that would look like something at the end, like the child who has the promise of something while it is taking its medicine. No, there is something to comfort you *during* your trials. Remember that even while you are in the tents of Kedar, *you have blessed company*, for God is with you! And though you sojourn with the sons of Mesech, yet there is Another with whom you sojourn, namely, your blessed Lord and Master! You are not alone, for Christ is with you! It is true that those who are around you are uncongenial companions, but then, there is One who walks through the midst of all these scenes and snares, who says to you, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God." There may be a noise in the street, but Christ is with you in your chamber. There may be a storm within your very doors—a husband who will not let you rest and children who cast your religion in your teeth—but there is another Husband in that house, too, a heavenly Husband—and His consolations are far more powerful than all the sneers of the other husband—the manna that He gives is so sweet that it can take all the bitterness out of the sarcasms of your foes!

Surely, when Christ is with us, the bitterness of death is past. Much more, then, the bitterness of those little trials which daily come to us from those sons of Mesech and those inhabitants of the tents of Kedar. If, my Lord, You will go with me, I will not choose the path. If I must go alone, alas, alas for me, though the road is grassy, the sky is clear, the sun is bright and the brooks are flowing on every side! Though the birds are singing on the trees and though my own eyes have a luster in them, yet I am miserable, I am wretched, I am unsafe, I am in danger if You are not with me! But come, my Master, if the sun is set, if no moon or stars appear, if all around me there are found those that would devour me. If there is a ditch on this side and a yawning gulf or a quagmire on the other. If there are all kinds of horrible things and evil spirits—if under my feet there are dead men's bones, snares, chains and pitfalls—if over me there is the shadow of death that keeps the sunlight from reaching me and if within my heart there is fear, yet, if You are with me, into the very gates of Hell, itself, my soul should enter unharmed! Through the wall of fire, amidst the blazing of Divine Vengeance my soul may walk unscathed! Nothing can harm me if Jesus is near. Does not this make the tents of Kedar as white and fair as the tents of Solomon if Jesus has visited them? And are not the men of Mesech, with their rough beards, their stern faces and their unknown tongues, as friendly angels when we know that Jesus Christ is with us forevermore?

I have but one thing more to say, and with that I shall conclude. Brothers and Sisters, you may be comforted yet again with this sweet thought—that not only is God with you, but *your Master was once in the*

tents of Kedar—not merely spiritually, but personally, even as you are—and inasmuch as you are here, too, this, instead of being painful, should be comforting to you! Have you not received a promise that you shall be like your Head? Thank God that promise has begun to be fulfilled! If you were happy in the tents of Kedar, you might think, "I am not like my Master, for He was a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief." But inasmuch as you have evil things thrown at you and your way is hard and rough, you may say, "Now I know what it is to have fellowship with Him in suffering, in some feeble measure. As I was buried with Him in Baptism unto death, so with Him I trust I have had conformity unto His death." When any pang from slander or misrepresentation rends your heart, then you can say, "Now I know what He meant when He said, 'Reproach has broken My heart.'" When you find yourself abused and misrepresented, you can say, "Now I understand what Christ endured when they said He is a gluttonous Man and a winebibber; a friend of publicans and sinners."

It is worthwhile to be like Christ in the worst of times because that is an assurance that we shall be like He in the best of times! If I carry a cross as He carried one, I shall wear a crown as He wears one. If I have been with Him in the degradation of the flesh, I shall be with Him in the glory of the Spirit. If I have been with Him when men hooted and hissed, and dogs compassed Him, and the bulls of Bashan beset Him around, I shall be with Him, too, when angelic hosts are around Him and He shall be admired of all that love Him—and adored of all creation! You shall be like your Head, poor sufferer—like your Head! Then what more can you want? Is not this a sufficient honor, that the servant is as his Master and the subject is as his Sovereign?

This may seem strange language in the ears of some hearers. All that they know is that they sometimes sneer at Christians themselves. Well, Sir, you have spoken ill of your wife and children because they follow Christ. I would not be in your shoes for half the world, nor for the whole of it! Do you see that man there with the millstone around his neck? He is going to be cast into the midst of the sea—that man is better off than you are, for Christ has said it, "Whoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in Me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he were cast into the sea." Don't laugh at a Christian or a professing Christian, even if he is a beggar, for he may be a child of God—and it will be an ill thing for you to be caught laughing at a child of God! There is nothing that makes a man so angry as to laugh at his children. There is nothing which brings a man's spirit up like touching his children. "Say what you like against me, but don't say anything against them. Touch them," says the man, "and you touch me. Touch them and you shall feel my wrath." Our Father loves them and he that touches them touches the apple of His eye. If you want to be damned, go and do something else, but don't do that! But if you want to go to Hell and to the hottest fire of Hell, go and vent your spleen on God's people! If you do it, you shall surely be punished for it.

Herod shall be eaten of worms, though his voice is as the voice of a god and not of a king. There shall be creatures who, like Antiochus, shall

have their very bowels burnt because they hurt the people of God—and you who touch them with your little finger shall feel the weight of the Divine arm! And if you have smitten them with the arm, you shall find His loins crushing you to the very lowest Hell! But, remember, there is mercy for the persecutor. Did not the Lord say, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me? It is hard for you to kick against the pricks." "John, John, why do you persecute Me?" "Lord, I only laugh at my little daughter." "You have persecuted Me—it is hard for you to kick against the pricks." "Thomas, Thomas, why do you persecute Me?" "But, Lord, I only told my wife I would shut her out if she went to the weeknight services." "You have done it unto Me, inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these, My people." And He cries to you and says, "It is hard for you to kick with naked feet against these pricks." And do you say, "Who are You, Lord?" His answer is, "I am Jesus, whom you persecute." And then, if you say, "Can You forgive me, Lord?" His answer is, "I am ready and willing to forgive. 'Come now, and let us reason together, though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'" Trust in Jesus and you are safe! Cast yourself, once and for all on Him, and you cannot be lost, for he that relies on Jesus is a saved man! May God add the blessing of His Spirit, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 16.

Verse 1. *And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him.* True love had made a mistake, but it was true love for all that, and the Lord accepted it, although He had no need of the sweet spices that the women brought.

2. *And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun.* There had already been another rising of the sun that morning, for the Sun of Righteousness had risen and, with His rising, our hopes had risen and eternal life had come to light! These holy women proved their affection to their Lord by being there so early. Love will not wait—it delights to render its service as speedily as it can—"they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun."

3, 4. *And they said among themselves, Who shall roll away the stone from the door of the sepulcher for us? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.* Take comfort from this verse, you who are seeking to serve your Lord. There will be sure to be stones in your way and some of them may be very great ones, but they will be rolled away in the Lord's good time. And in the rolling away you often will have all the greater joy. If the effort shall need the strength of an angel, then an angel will be sent from Heaven for the purpose. There might have been no angel if there had been no stone—and you might have no revelation of the power of Heaven to help you if you had not first

had a revelation of your own weakness and inability to roll away the stone.

5. *And entering into the sepulcher, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were frightened.* An angel had assumed the appearance of a young man sitting inside the sepulcher.

6. *And he said unto them, Be not afraid.* Why should they be afraid? They had come to serve their Lord and so had the angel, so there was no cause for fear. Those who love Jesus need never be afraid of angels, nor, for that matter, of devils either, for the Lord, whom they serve, will take care of them.

6. *You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified.* This was the first Gospel sermon preached after the Resurrection, so note particularly how the angel describes Christ. He calls Him by His lowly name, "Jesus of Nazareth," and does not speak of Him as the risen or reigning Christ, but as "Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified." The angels are evidently not ashamed of the Cross of Christ—they do not attempt to hide the shame of it—for this one speaks of "Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified."

6. *He is risen; He is not here.* That is the epitaph inscribed on Christ's tomb—"He is not here." On other people's graves it is written, "Here lies so-and-so," but on Christ's sepulcher it is recorded, "He is not here." He is everywhere else, but, "He is not here." He is with us in our solitude. He is with us in our public assemblies. But there is one place where He is not and that is, in the empty tomb! Thank God that He is not there! we do not worship a dead man lying in the grave. He, on whom we rely, has risen from the dead and gone up into Glory where He always lives to carry out the great design of salvation! "He is not here."

6-8. *Behold the place where they laid Him. But go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goes before you into Galilee: there shall you see Him, as He said unto you. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulcher; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they anything to any man; for they were afraid.* There was a mixture of joy with their fear, and of fear with their joy—and that tended to keep them silent for a while. Some people tell all they know, even when it would be wiser not to speak. But these godly women waited till they reached those to whom they were bid to speak. They said nothing to anybody by the way, but hurried on to find the disciples, that they might give them the blessed tidings of their Lord's Resurrection!

9. *Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils.* Where Grace had worked its greatest wonders, there Christ paid His first visit—"He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils."

10, 11. *And she went and told them that had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that He was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.* I can imagine that scene—the weeping and mourning disciples—and this eager woman telling her story, and telling it with evident truthfulness and deep pathos, but they believed her not. Do you expect to be believed whenever you tell the story of

your Lord's Resurrection, or any other part of the Gospel message? You have to tell it, not to Christ's disciples, but to those who are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and, probably, you do not tell it as well as Mary Magdalene did. Marvel not, therefore, if many a time those who hear your message believe it not! Mind that you believe it yourself and keep on telling it whether others believe it or not—and God will bless it to some of them, by-and-by

12, 13. *After that He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the rest, but they did not believe them either.* Unbelief is not easily driven out of even true disciples, but let none of us ever harbor it in our hearts. As we see how unbelieving these disciples were and know how wrong their unbelief was, let us not be like they were.

14-20. *Afterward He appeared unto the eleven as they sat at the table, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen. And He said unto them, Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe. In My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into Heaven, and sat at the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with accompanying signs. Amen.* God bless to us the reading of His holy Word! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—127, 550, 309.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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

JESUS CALLING
NO. 2781

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 1, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 14, 1878.

"Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."
Matthew 11:28.

I HAVE often preached from this text. [Sermon #265, Volume 5, THE MEEK AND LOWLY ONE; #969, Volume 17, REST, REST; #1322, Volume 22, REST FOR THE LABORING; #1691, Volume 28, CHRIST'S WORD WITH YOU; #2298, Volume 39, THE CHRIST-GIVEN REST and #2708, Volume 47, THE OLD GOSPEL FOR THE NEW CENTURY—Read/download all the sermons, free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org] I hope, if I am spared, to often preach from it in the future. It is one of those great constellation texts which, like certain stars which shine so brightly in the sky, have served as a guide to mariners—they have helped to direct many a poor tempest-tossed seaman into the harbor he wanted to reach—and these texts have guided many into the haven of everlasting peace. Among the many stars up yonder in the heavens, there are some that are so conspicuously set and so peculiarly brilliant, that they are sure to be observed. And amidst the many precious promises in God's Word, this is one of the very brightest—it has gladdened thousands of weary eyes and cheered untold myriads of burdened souls.

This morning we were meditating upon the thirst of Christ while hanging on the Cross [Sermon #1409, Volume 24, THE SHORTEST OF THE SEVEN CRIES—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org] and I tried to show you the mystic meaning hidden within the letter meaning of His short but suggestive cry, "I thirst." Our Lord Jesus Christ still thirsts for the souls of men. He thirsts for our salvation and here is one of His thirst-cries—"Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

I am not going to look at our text, as we usually do, and as we most properly do, from man's point of view, but, rather, from Christ's. I shall speak at this time of the longing desire which was deep down in His soul and which made Him give sinners these frequent and urgent invitation to come unto Him. What was it that made Him so anxious those men should come to Him? They were, many of them, most unwilling to accept His invitations. No, worse than that, they often derided Him—but still He cried, not merely once or twice, but His whole life-cry was—"Come unto Me." And as long as Mercy's gate stands open, Christ's continuous cry, until He comes again, will be, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This sacred passion of our Savior's

soul moved Him to entreat sinners to come to Him almost as if they could, thereby, confer some favor upon Him by coming—whereas it was only that they might receive of His mercy, "and Grace for Grace."

I. To help in bringing out of the text the thought of our Savior's longing for the souls of men, I want, first, to answer the question—WHO IS HE? Who is He that thus says, "Come unto Me"? Who is this who so anxiously desires that those who labor and are heavy laden should come to Him, that He may give them rest?

If you look at the connection of our text, you will see that the answer to this question is that *it is One who has often been rejected*. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." When He mingled freely with the sons of men, in all the gentle manliness, cordiality and sympathy which were so characteristic of Him, when He sat with them at their tables and ate and drank with them, instead of saying, "How condescending He is!" they murmured at Him and said that He was "a gluttonous Man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." When He walked through their streets and worked His wondrous miracles of Grace and mercy, they attributed them to Satanic agency! Yet, after all that, He still stood and cried, again and again, "Come unto Me! Come unto Me!" Their rejection of Him could not chill the warmth of His affection—He would not take their cruel negative, but He kept on crying, even as He did on that last great day of the feast, "If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me, and drink." They turned their backs upon Him, but He cried so much the more, "Come unto Me." They called Him all that was evil, yet His only answer was, "Come unto Me." That same rejected Savior, whom, perhaps, dear Friend, you have also rejected, lo, these many years, still stands as if He were rooted to the spot and cries to you, "Come, come, come unto Me, and I will give you rest."

This is He, too, who, but a little while before, *had warned them that to reject Him involved the most fearful guilt*. "Tyre and Sidon," He said, "suffer not such a heavy penalty as guilty Capernaum does. Sodom and Gomorrah were swept away, but not with so dire a doom as awaits Chorazin and Bethsaida, which have rejected My message of mercy." Jesus looks, with deep pity upon His face, on the many who spurn Him and warns them of their terrible fate if they continue to refuse His invitations. But having done so, He again says to them, "Come unto Me." He tells them that they will surely die unless they come to Him and then He cries to them, "Why will you die? Turn you, turn you, for why will you die, O house of Israel?" No lips of mortal man ever spoke so honestly and so terribly concerning the wrath to come, as did the lips of Jesus—but that was because they were the lips of Infinite Love! He courted not popular applause by endeavoring to make out that the punishment of the guilty will be slight. It was He who spoke of Hell, "where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched." It was He who said, concerning the ungodly, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." Yet He turns around—no, I must correct myself, and not say, "yet"—but *because* of that honest affection which makes Him speak the truth even when it is most unpalatable, He turns around again and again, and repeats the cry,

"Come unto Me! Come unto Me! This is your sole hope—come unto Me, and I will give you rest."

Do you ask again who He is that utters these words? I answer—*it is He who knows His Father's eternal purpose and yet fears not to give this invitation.* Just before He uttered our text, He said, "I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes." Yes, He knows all about the everlasting decrees of God! He is the Lamb that can take the sealed book from His Father's right hand and He can open every one of its seals, for He alone knows the things of God. Yet that great and glorious Doctrine of Divine Predestination had never steeled His heart, nor made Him grow callous and indifferent to the needs of the souls of men—but all the knowledge that He had of the decrees of God did but cause Him to cry the more earnestly, "Come unto Me! Come unto Me! Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." There is nothing, then, written in God's blessed Book that can render it unlawful for you to come to Jesus, for He who knows all that is there still bids all of you who labor and are heavy laden, to come unto Him—and more than that, it is *He who knows all things who invites you to come!*

Who is He that speaks thus? Why, *it is He who has all power.* Just before He uttered this invitation He had said, "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father." So, in one sense, He does not need you to help Him. He is not beating up recruits because His army is short of soldiers—nor is He seeking your support to buttress His falling throne. All things have been delivered into His hands by His Father! All power is given unto Him in Heaven and in earth—and it is He who says to you, "Come unto Me." He does not invite you in order that you may bring power to Him, but that you may receive power *from* Him! If you come unto Him, He will help you to overcome your sins and to bear your daily burdens. Or He will lift them up from your galled shoulders and bear them all Himself! It is "The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace," who says, in the words of our text, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Once more, it *is He who is the Son of God, and infinitely blessed*, who says to sinners, "Come unto Me." It is, to me, a very wonderful fact that He should stand there, in the streets of Jerusalem, or Capernaum, or Jericho, or walk along the highways of Palestine crying to unwilling hearers, "Come, come, come unto Me," as if He needed them. Yet He needed them not and He needs us not in that sense. Myriads of angels are waiting to fly at His command! He has but to will it and He can create as many more legions as He pleases! What is our whole race to Him? If we had all passed away, like the gnats of a summers evening, our Lord Jesus Christ would have been just as glorious as He is now! And yet—oh, wondrous condescension!—He cries out for the souls of men! He begs, He pleads, He entreats them with tears that well up from His very soul, to come to Him! And when they will not come—oh, wonder, you angels!—He still stands and gazes on them, with the tears streaming from His eyes, as when He wept over guilty Jerusalem, and still He says, "How often

would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not!"

It is a strange sight—the Son of God entreating sinners to have mercy on themselves, yet the guilty ones unwilling to receive the mercy! One would have thought that we had but to proclaim a full and free salvation and all would have accepted it. One would have dreamed that the Christ of God had but to come to earth and men would at once flock around Him and beseech Him to exercise His Divine and saving power! But it was not so and, still, it is He who pleads with men—not men who plead with Him. They have not to cry to Him, "Come unto us, and give us rest," but He has to stand and plead pathetically with them, "Come unto Me! Come unto Me! Come unto Me," for they will not come and they still turn their backs upon Him. Alas that it should be so!

II. But now, secondly, let us ask—WHOM DOES HE CALL, AND WHY?

Whom does He call? I could almost have understood it if He had said, "Come unto Me, you kings and princes." He is King of kings and He might well invite them to come to Him, but He does not invite them any more than others. I might have understood it if He had chosen to gather about Him the wisest men in the world, and the choicest spirits in each generation, and had said to them, "Come to Me, you Solomons, you philosophers, you great thinkers." But He did not talk so.

It seems strange that He should choose such company as He did, and be so anxious to bring to Himself, first, *those who labor*—you hard-working men, you sons of toil and especially you who are laboring hard to obtain salvation, but who will never gain it in that way—He invites you to come to Him! You who are heavy laden, too—you who, in your laboring for salvation, have been burdened with ceremonies—burdened by the work-mongers who tell you to do this and to do that in order that you may be saved. You whose poor, heavy hearts have been made heavier than they were before because you have had a false gospel preached to you—it is you whom Jesus calls to come to Him! You who are sad, and sick, and sorry—you who would gladly be delivered from sin and all its consequences—you are poor company for anyone. Your friends think you melancholy and they shun your society as much as possible. Your serious conversation has no attractions for them. You get away, alone, and keep silent, and the tears oftentimes steal unbidden down your cheeks—yet Jesus calls you and He says to you—"Come unto Me! Come unto Me! Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden."

He is Himself pure yet He is anxious to call to Himself the impure! He never sinned, yet He spent most of His time on earth with publicans and sinners and He still seeks the sinful! Even harlots were never spurned by Him, but they drew near to Him and were delighted to hear Him speak of piety and mercy and Grace for the very chief of sinners. "That was a strange taste," you say. But as the magnet seeks the steel, so does my Master, in His magnetic and magnificent mercy, search out those who most need Him. Not you whole ones does the Great Physician seek—it is the sick whom He invites to come to Him! Not you good people who hope to enter Heaven by your own works, does He call, but you sinful ones! "In due time Christ died for the ungodly." It is sinners whom He calls to

come to Him! Yes, and those sinners who fail in all their attempts at improvement—those who labor to get better, yet who are not better, but are burdened more and more with the despairing fear that they must ultimately be lost—it is such as these whom Jesus invites to come to Him! Oh, hear this, you laboring ones and you who are heavy laden! The Lord of Glory cries to sinful worms of the dust and beseeches them to come to Him that He may give them rest!

It is the ignorant whom He invites to come to Him, that He may teach them. It is those who have need of a Lord and Master whom He bids to come to Him—the rebellious and the self-willed—that He may put His easy yoke upon their shoulders. It is the weary and the restless whom He calls to come to Him that He may give them rest! Are any of you troubled? Then come to Jesus and so end your trouble! Are you sick or sad? Come to Christ and so lose your sadness! It is for this very purpose that my Master bids me stand here and, in His name, as though He spoke the words Himself, cry to you, "Come unto Me! Come unto Me! Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

III. Now, thirdly, let us enquire—WHAT CAUSES THIS DESIRE OF CHRIST AFTER SUCH PERSONS?

I hope I am speaking very personally to a great many people who are here. I would like to feel as if I had a firm yet tender grip of the hand of every unconverted person present, or that I were able to "buttonhole" everyone here who has not yet, by faith, laid hold on Christ. Well, dear Friend, possibly you think that you do not want Christ, but He wants you. Now, why can He want *you*? It cannot be because He will get anything out of you. What are you worth to Him at your best? What necessity can He have for you? If He were hungry, He would not tell you, for the cattle on a thousand hills are His! All things are His—the whole earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof.

He wants you, for your own sake, to do you good—not to get anything good out of you! He does not want you because He sees some excellence in you. If you really know yourself, you know that you have none. All that is naturally good about you is marred in many ways and you know that it is so. Jesus does not love you because He sees anything lovable in you, but out of pure pity. Nor does He want you because of anything you ever will be or do, for if your zeal could know no respite, if you could labor on for Him throughout a life as long as that of Methuselah, yet would you still be to Him an unprofitable servant, doing no more than you ought to have done! I confess, concerning myself, that my blessed Master took me into His service of His own free Sovereign Grace, and He has helped me to do my best for Him. But I make this frank confession to Him and to you—that I was never worth my keep to Him. I have cost Him infinitely more than I have ever been able to bring to Him. Even when I have done my best, I have often been to Him such a servant as a man might be glad to see the back of because he was no profit to his master whatever. So it is not with any view of getting anything out of us that Jesus is so hungry after the souls of men!

Why, then, does He want us? He wants us, first, because *He loves our race*. He has a special affection for men, for, verily, He took not up angels when they fell. He left the fallen spirits in their ruined state—and it is eternal—but He took up the seed of Abraham. He was found in fashion as a Man, and He came to seek and to save lost men. I know not if there are any other fallen beings in yonder rolling worlds that we call stars, but this I know, that Christ's "delights were with the sons of men." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

Another reason why He cries to men to come unto Him is, (wonder of wonders, and mystery of mysteries) *because He is Himself a Man*, the Son of Mary as truly as He was the Son of God. He is the great model Man, the pattern of what mankind ought to be and, therefore, standing in the midst of those whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren, He looks out of His Church and He cries to other men outside as yet, and He says to them, also, "Come unto Me! Come unto Me! I am also a Man and I know your struggles, and infirmities, and griefs—yes, I have even tasted of the gall and wormwood that you deserved to drink as a punishment for your sins. Come unto Me! Come unto Me, for I will lead you upward to perfection and to everlasting life and Glory." It is a man's voice that speaks, albeit that it is also Divine.

Why, further, does Jesus say, "Come unto Me"? It is *because He has done so much for men that He loves them for what He has done for them*. I heard a story, only this last week, of a captain on board a vessel who had a cabin boy whom he treated very roughly and to whom he scarcely spoke without an oath. But one day the boy fell overboard and the captain, who had a kind heart beneath a rough exterior, sprang into the sea and rescued him from drowning. The next time a gentleman who had noticed his ill conduct to the lad, was on board the vessel, he observed him speak to the boy very gently and almost affectionately—and he could not help saying to him, "Captain, you seem to speak to that boy very differently from what you used to do." "Look here, Sir," he replied, "that boy fell overboard and I saved his life. And afterwards I took to him wonderfully, and I have loved him almost as if he were my own son ever since," Oh, yes, if you do a good turn to a person, you are sure to love him afterwards! Now, one reason why our Lord Jesus Christ loves sinners so much is because He died to save them and, therefore, He still stands and cries, "Come unto Me! Come unto Me! Come unto Me. Have I not loved you? Have I not proved My love upon the accursed tree?" Do you wonder, therefore, that He still says, "Come unto Me"?

He who thus stands and pleads with men, *delights to do yet more and more for them*. It is Christ's Nature to scatter blessings wherever He goes. When a man can act according to his nature, he is sure to be pleased. A large-hearted man is never so happy as when he is doing good to others. When a man of a tender spirit is looking after the poor, the needy, the sorrowing and the suffering, he cannot help being happy because he is doing good to them. So is it with my Master and His blessed service on your account. You are nothing in yourselves and you cannot do Him any good—He is too great to need anything from you—yet He cries after you

because He wants to do you good. He is a Physician, so He wants to heal you. He is the Friend that sticks closer than a brother, so He wants to befriend you. He is the one and only Savior, so He delights to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. Heaven itself could not continue to hold Him when men were lost and needed Him to come to earth to save them! It would not have been Heaven to Him had He been always shut up there. No, He must seek and save the lost! His great heart could not be happy until that glorious work was accomplished.

We know some generous men, of whom it is said that they are never so happy as when they are giving their money away. If you know where they live, I advise you to go and take it—everybody thinks that it is common sense to do so. And when Jesus is so happy in distributing the riches of His mercy and His love, I pray you to go and take from Him all that He is willing to give! You will be happy in receiving, but He will be happier still in giving, for even to Him "it is more blessed to give than to receive" and He still rejoices more over those who come to Him than the coming ones themselves rejoice!

I will tell you, sorrowfully and solemnly, one reason why Jesus wants you to come to Him. It is because *He knows what must become of you if you do not come*. No man in this world knows what the wrath of God is, nor how terrible are the flames of Hell. But Jesus knows all about them, for He was the Creator even of the dreadful place of torment. He also knew something of the agony of the lost when He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" And though He is now reigning in His Gory, He remembers well when His soul drank the wormwood and the gall—and suffered on behalf of guilty sinners—the fierceness of the wrath of God! He would not have you feel that unquenchable fire, or that undying worm, or cry in vain for a drop of water to cool your burning tongue, for He is full of pity and, therefore, He warns you to flee from the wrath to come!

Have you not, sometimes, when a wreck was just outside the harbor and the waves were washing over it, known men ready to give all they had to anyone who could save the poor sailors who could be seen clinging to the masts? "Go, my brave fellows," someone has cried, "take my purse—all that is in it is yours if you will but risk your lives to save those perishing men out yonder!" Why, I have known a crowd gather on the beach when a wreck has been driven ashore, and the seamen were in imminent peril, and all the onlookers seemed frantic together. Men and women would all have given all they had if it could be the means of saving the lives of their fellow creatures. And our Lord Jesus, as He sees some of you drifting away on the wreckage that will so soon all go down and be engulfed in the fiery sea, cries to you—for He knows there is no other hope for you—"Come unto Me! Come unto Me! Come unto Me!" You may think that it is a trifling thing for your soul to be damned, but Jesus knows better. You may scoff over the very brink of the Pit, but Jesus knows what an awful doom that pit contains! Oh, how I wish that every unrepentant one here would listen to those tender tones, so oft repeated, "Come unto Me! Come unto Me!" I wish my face could shine like the face of Jesus did. I wish I could have as sweet and silvery a voice as He had,

that my tones could be as persuasive as were His when He said, "Come unto Me! Come unto Me! Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

I think, too, I may give you one other reason why Jesus invites sinners to come to Him and that is, *He knows what our bliss will be if we do come to Him*. Our Lord Jesus Christ has always before His eyes the sight of Heaven, His Throne of Glory, the gates of pearl, the streets of gold and the walls and foundations of all manner of precious stones. His ears are constantly hearing the songs of angels and of the redeemed from among men and, as He looks on those blessed spirits round about Him, He thinks of those who will *not* come to Him and He says, "If they live and die as they now are, they cannot enter here." There is but one door of salvation and Christ said, "I am the door." And He also said, "Come unto Me. I am the gate of paradise, I am the way to Heaven. Come unto Me."

There will come a day when all the sheep will pass under the hand of Him that counts them! Shall I then miss any of you into whose faces I have gazed, perhaps for a score of years? Will your name not be read out? You have heard the Gospel very attentively and you have even been an admiring hearer, but you are not yet a doer of the Word of God and if you remain only a *hearer*, you will not be among the redeemed in Glory! If you are not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, your names will be left out when He reads the muster roll of His blood-washed people! It will be all in vain for you to lament, then—"My name not there? Did I hear rightly? Christ has reached the last name, but He has not called mine! Yet I was a hearer of the Word! I was at many revival services! I was often prayed for, yet my name has not been called. Oh, that I could cease to be! Would God I had never been born!" All such regrets shall be useless, then. Then shall a man seek death and shall not find it, as the Book of Revelation tells us—and he shall wring his hands in everlasting despair, to think that the glorious gift of immortality, which was meant to make him a peer with the angels, has been so misused by him that now he must be a comrade of the devils who are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the Great Day!

God grant, dear Hearers, that you may hear Christ say to you individually, "Come unto Me! Come unto Me! Come unto Me" and that you may accept His gracious invitation—or else to His Heaven and His Glory you can never go.

You see, then, that the motives which led Christ to call men to come to Him were those of pity and affection. He could not bear to think of their perishing! Neither can those of His servants who are in the least degree like He. And why should you perish, Sirs? Why should you perish? I spoke to one, the other day, to whom I said, "Your brother is very anxious about your soul." He said, "I know he is." And then I said to him, "And so am I. I wish you were a believer in Jesus." And he answered me, "My time is not yet come." "No," I replied, " but God's time has, for He says, *Today,* if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts. *Now* is the accepted time. Behold, now is the day of salvation." I wish that if any here have such a notion as that in their minds, they would put it away from them, for the text does not say, "Wait." There is no text, except in

the devils bible, that bids you delay! There is no command for you to lie at the pool. No, Christ's invitation is still, "Come unto Me! Come unto Me! Come unto Me now! Come unto Me now!" That is Christ's one cry and, therefore, I reiterate it again and again—"Come unto Me! Come unto Me! Come unto Me! Come unto Me! Come unto Me now! Come unto Me now!" Jesus says, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," and He means, "Come now."

IV. I will close when I have answered one other question, or, rather, when I have asked you to answer it. If Jesus bids us come to Him in this fashion, and for these reasons, WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH THE INVITATION?

I would say, first, *He is in such awful earnest that we ought to be in earnest in listening to Him*. Sirs, there are many of you who do not seem to believe that you must live forever, in raptures or in woes and, therefore, you sit, from day to day, taking your ease and caring nothing about your immortal souls. It seems as if it were a trifling thing to you whether you are with God or with His enemy—whether you would be lost or saved forever if you were now to die. Is it not strange that Christ should be in such earnest about you and yet that you should not be in earnest about yourselves? I could look at some of you till the hot tears forced themselves from my eyes, fearing lest you should be lost—yet no tears of penitence run down your cheeks, nor do you seem to care about your souls in the least!

I recollect, years ago, having several times befriended one of the basest men I ever knew. I had helped him till, at last, I said that I would do no more for him, so extraordinary had been his wickedness. One day, wet through and through from a drenching shower, he stood at my gate and I had to break my promise and help him yet again. After a little while, he came again, but I refused to help him, for nothing could be done with him. My wife saw him standing in rags of the most wretched kind and she surprised me greatly when she said, bursting into tears and almost screaming, "O you poor lost soul! You poor lost soul, how can you act as you have done? We have clothed you and you have gone away and sold the garments we gave you, and the very shoes from your feet. We have picked you up from the gutter and taken you, when you have come out of prison, and helped you again and again. You poor lost soul," she said, "you had a mother, and she was a gracious woman. You had a father, and he is in Heaven, and we will help you once more, though I fear it will be no good, you poor lost soul." Yet all the while, he never shed a tear—there seemed to be no impression made upon him at all. I felt, after that, there was no hope for him, if that did not touch him when she, who was no relation of his, stood there and wept as if she would faint—and when I was moved with pity, too.

But he was not moved. Reason, thought, manliness—all appeared to have left him and he was little, if anything, better than a brute beast. In many respects, he was worse than the beasts that perish. Oh, shall it be so, my Hearers, that other people shall care about you and yet you will not care about yourselves? Remember that it is your own souls that are in peril! Whether you get to Heaven, or not, will not affect the eternal

happiness of any one of us who have believed in Jesus! Yet I can truly say, with the Apostle, "I could wish myself accursed in your stead, if I could but save you." This thought has often crossed my mind—if any dire affliction could but save your souls, I would gladly endure it! And will you never think about your own souls? Must Jesus continue to cry, "Come! Come! Come! Come," and yet you will not come? Choked with His tears, must He break down in saying, "Come! Come! Come" and yet will you never think about your own souls? Oh, by the solemn earnestness of the Christ of God—and I might add, by the earnestness of His poor servant, who is speaking to you now—be at least a little concerned about this all-important matter and begin to think it over now!

Now, as Christ says to us, "Come unto Me," *let us come unto Him*. We are great sinners, so let us come unto Him, for He will freely forgive us if we come to Him. We have often treated Him ill, but let us come to Him, for He will not upbraid us, but will welcome us! We feel so heavy, but let us come to Him. We do not feel as heavy as we should, but let us come to Him with all our load of sin and sorrow and just leave our case in His hands, for that is what He wants us to do. Let us, each one, say to Him, "Jesus, Master, I trust You to save Me. I will follow You. I will be Your disciple. I will take Your yoke upon me and wear it for Your sake if you will only save me." You *are* saved when you have reached that point—that is, when you come to Him and trust Him. That is the point, trust Him. Rely upon Him, lean upon Him, depend upon Him. Trust His blood to cleanse you, His righteousness to clothe you, Himself to keep you. Have done with yourself and begin with Him—that is all.

Listen! He is still gently whispering "Come! Come! Come!" Linger no longer. Come away, my Brother, my Sister. Hesitate not, poor doubter. Come along—it is the voice of Jesus that calls you! Come just as you are! Tarry not to amend or cleanse yourself, but come to Him to do it all! He has said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." God help you to come even now, for His dear Sons sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 11:25-30.

Verses 25, 26. *At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Your sight.* "Jesus answered"—Sovereign Grace is the answer to abounding guilt. With rejoicing spirit Jesus sees how Sovereign Grace meets the unreasonableness of human sin and chooses out its own according to the good pleasure of the Father's will. Here is the spirit in which to regard the electing Grace of God—"I thank You." It is cause for deepest gratitude. Here is the Author of election—"O Father." It is the Father who makes the choice and reveals the blessings. Here is His right to act as He does—He is "Lord of Heaven and earth." Who shall question the good pleasure of His will? Here we see the objects of election, under both aspects—the chosen and the passed-over. Babes see because sacred Truths of God are revealed to them, and not other-

wise. They are weak and inexperienced. They are simple and unsophisticated. They can cling, trust, cry and love—and to such the Lord opens up the treasures of Wisdom! The objects of Divine Choice are such as these. Lord, let me be one among them! The Truths of the heavenly Kingdom are hid by a judicial act of God from men who, in their own esteem, are "the wise and prudent." They cannot see because they trust their own dim light and will not accept the Light of God. Here we see, also, the reason of election, the Divine Will—"So it seemed good in Your sight." We can go no further than this. The choice seemed good to Him who never errs and, therefore, it *is* good. This stands to the children of God as the reason which is above all reason. *Deus vult* is enough for us! If God wills it, so it must be, and so it *ought* to be.

27. *All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knows the Son, but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomever the Son will reveal Him.* Here we have the channel through which electing love works towards men—"All things are delivered unto Me of My Father." All things are put into the Mediator's hands—fit hands both towards God and towards man—for He alone knows both to perfection. Jesus reveals the Father to the babes whom He has chosen. Only the Father can fill the Son with benediction and only through the Son can that benediction flow to any of the race of men. Know Christ and you know the Father—and know that the Father Himself loves you. There is no other way of knowing the Father but through the Son. In this our Lord rejoiced, for His office of Mediator is dear to Him and He loves to be the way of communication between the Father whom He loves, and the people whom He loves for the Father's sake. Observe the intimate fellowship between the Father and the Son and how they know each Other as none else ever can. Oh, to see all things in Jesus by the Father's appointment and so to find the Father's love and Grace in finding Christ! My Soul, there are great mysteries here! Enjoy what you cannot explain.

28. *Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* Here is the gracious invitation of the Gospel in which the Savior's tears and smiles were blended, as in a Covenant rainbow of promise. "Come," He drives none away. He calls them to Himself. His favorite word is, "Come." Not—*go* to Moses, but, "Come to Me." To Jesus Himself we must come by a personal trust. Not to doctrine, ordinance, or ministry are we to first come, but to the personal Savior. All laboring and laden ones may come—He does not limit the call to the spiritually laboring, but every working and wearied one is called! It is well to give the largest sense to all that Mercy speaks. Jesus calls Me. Jesus promises "rest" as His gift. His immediate, personal, effectual rest He freely gives to all who come to Him by faith. To come to Him is the first step and He entreats us to take it. In Himself, as the great Sacrifice for sin, the conscience, the heart, the understanding obtain complete rest. When we have obtained the rest He gives, we shall be ready to hear of a further rest which we *find*.

29, 30. *Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.* "Take My yoke and learn." This is the

second instruction. It brings with it a further rest which we "find." The first rest He gives through His death. The second we find in copying His life. This is no correction of the former statement, but an addition. First, we rest by faith in Jesus and next we rest through obedience to Him. Rest from fear is followed by rest from the turbulence of inward passion and the drudgery of self. We are not only to bear a yoke, but His yoke—and we are not only to submit to it when it is laid upon us—but we are to take it upon us. We are to be workers and take His yoke and, at the same time, we are to be scholars and learn from Him as our Teacher.

We are to learn of Christ and also to learn Christ. He is both Teacher and Lesson. His gentleness of heart fits Him to teach, to be the Illustration of His own teaching and to work in us His great design. If we can become as He is, we shall rest as He does. We shall not only rest from the guilt of sin—this He gives us—but we shall rest in the peace of holiness which we find through obedience to Him. It is the heart which makes or mars the rest of the man. Lord, make us "lowly in heart," and we shall be restful of heart. "Take My yoke." The yoke in which we draw with Christ must be a happy one and the burden which we carry for Him is a blessed one. We rest in the fullest sense when we serve, if Jesus is the Master. We are unloaded by bearing His burden. We are rested by running on His errands. "Come unto Me," is thus a Divine prescription, curing our ills by the pardon of sin through our Lord's Sacrifice and causing us the greatest peace by sanctifying us to His service.

Oh, for Grace to be always coming to Jesus and to be constantly inviting others to do the same! Always free, yet always bearing His yoke! Always having the rest once given, yet always finding more—this is the experience of those who come to Jesus always and for everything. Blessed heritage—and it is ours if we are really His!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—735, 980, 552
And from "Flowers and Fruits of Sacred Song"—1

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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

LOVE'S LAMENTATION
NO. 2782

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 8, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 28, 1878.

"I have loved you, says the LORD. Yet you say,
In what way have You loved us?"
Malachi 1:2.

THE children of Israel had passed through great trouble, but all of it was brought upon them by their own sin. Yet, in their time of trouble, God had remembered them in the greatness of His Grace and mercy. They had been carried into captivity in Babylon and there they had wept when they remembered Zion. They had been scattered over the face of the earth, but God had heard their groans and had restored them to their own land and given them a period of peace and prosperity. But now that they were cured of idolatry, they fell into self-righteousness, indifference and worldly mindedness. The ordinances of God's house were neglected, or, if they were attended too outwardly, it was in such a careless, heartless manner that God was insulted by their worship rather than adored thereby. For these reasons, new sorrows were caused to fall upon them, for, under the old dispensation, it was God's rule that His obedient people were a prosperous people—but whenever they wandered in heart away from Him, then they began to suffer. His message to them, by Moses, was, "If you will walk contrary unto Me, I will walk contrary unto you, also, in fury and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins"—and so they found it. They were, therefore, now in a very sad condition, but they had no consciousness of the real cause of it. They were fretting and fuming against God instead of striking out boldly at their sins—complaining of the severity of the Divine chastisement rather than confessing the iniquity by which they had brought the rod upon themselves!

So God sent His servant Malachi, the last of a long train of Prophets, to seek to bring them to repentance—to try to touch their hearts and consciences by reminding them of His manifold favor and of their base ingratitude towards Him who had treated them so graciously and with such undeserved mercy. This is to be the subject of my discourse. I want, if I can, to get at men's hearts. I shall not have much to say by way of instruction—I want, rather, to speak so as to impress and awaken my

hearers, seeking to set your consciences at work so that all of us—for I hope there will be something to touch us all—may be compelled to bow before God in true repentance and with genuine confession of sin.

The text seems to me to contain two things and to suggest a third. First, here is *the lamentation of love*—"I have loved you, says the Lord." Secondly, here is *the insensibility of ingratitude*—"Yet you say, In what way have You loved us?" They would not see any signs and tokens of God's love, for they did not believe in it. And the third thing on which I am going to speak is *the discoveries of Grace*, for, though it is not in the text, the text leads us to think of it and the 5th verse tells us of it—"Your eyes shall see, and you shall say, The Lord will be magnified from the border of Israel."

I. Our first theme, then, is to be THE LAMENTATION OF LOVE—"I have loved you, says the Lord."

The lamentation is abrupt and appears to end without completing its own sense. It is the exclamation of unrequited affection—"I have loved you, says the Lord." It is a sorrowful lament—as the eyes of God rest on His rebellious people, He seems to say to them, "You are acting thus wickedly against Me, yet I have loved you. You offer polluted bread upon My altar. You bring the blind, the lame and the sick as sacrifices unto Me and thus you treat Me with derision, yet I have never treated you so, for I have loved you, says the Lord," as if He were about to say a great deal more, but suddenly stopped. His grief would not let Him say more, so the sentence stands in its rugged majesty of pathos, "I have loved you, says the Lord."

Taking this expression, first, in its lowest sense, namely, *the love of benevolence*, it applies to all mankind. The Lord can still say to those who forget Him and care nothing for Him, "I have loved you." Great masses of mankind live as if there were no God. If God were really dead it would, apparently, not make the slightest difference in their thoughts and feelings. They are, practically, dead to Him and they act as if He were dead to them. The Lord seems to me to be speaking to some of you who never appear to have any thought about Him—and He says to you, "I have treated you lovingly. I have permitted you to live and kept you in being. You are not suffering pain—the blood leaps in your veins, you are in robust and vigorous health, yet, alas—you are spending that strength in sin! Your children have been spared to you. Your house is replete with comfort and you have no little satisfaction in the things of this life. I gave you all these things—your corn, your wine and your oil—and I have clothed you and kept you alive. Shall I still keep on loving you in this fashion, loading you with benefits, causing you to prosper, giving you all that heart can wish—and will you, in return, continue to be hard, cold and indifferent to Me? Must I still be your Benefactor and you remain an ingrate? Must I, from morning to night, and from night to morning, visit

you with kindness, and shall I never have anything from you but sullen silence and heartless indifference?"

There are some of you who have been so prospered in the things of this world and who have been made so happy in your homes, that you ought to love the Lord who has done such great things for you! And He seems to say to you, through my lips, "I have loved you. Will you never remember Me, never thank Me, never give yourself up to Me, never accept Me as your Father and your Friend?" It is a natural and just lament of love that it should have done all this and yet should be reciprocated by forgetfulness.

Certain men, however, go further than simply forgetting God, for they actively oppose Him. They can never seem to find language foul enough to apply to the religion of Jesus Christ. Those who are zealous on behalf of religion are described by them as cants, hypocrites and I know not what besides. And anything like conscientiousness is ridiculed by them as Phariseeism. They know better, but that is the way in which they oppose God. Yet, as He looks upon them in pity, He can say to them, "I have loved you. You oppose Me, but why do you act so?" When our Lord Jesus was upon the earth and the Jews took up stones again and again to stone Him, He said to them, "Many good works have I showed you from My Father; for which of those works do you stone Me?" He had healed their sick, satisfied their hunger and bestowed upon them countless gifts—yet, again and again, they took up stones to stone Him, so He said to them, "Why do you act thus towards Me?" And God might speak to many of you in similar style and say, "I have dealt with you in love and you have scoffed at Me and opposed Me and I have only met your opposition with a still greater display of love! With a strange perseverance of unappreciated and unrequited love, I have still pursued you—then why do you rebel against Me as you do?"

I might speak to some of you in another strain. O Sir, your mother died rejoicing in hope! Then why do you hate that Christ who was her joy and delight? Has the Lord Jesus Christ ever made your children become unkind to you? Has He ever been the means of any wrong being done to you? You know that it has not been so, but that all His influence among the sons of men has been for the good of the whole commonwealth and for the establishment of peace and righteousness the world over! Why, then, do men oppose Him so fiercely? Some of them seem almost to foam at the mouth whenever they mention His sacred name. Well may He, then, as He looks upon the atheist and the Socinian, say to them, as He says to so many more, "I have treated you with love, yet this is the only return I receive from you. Shall it always be so?"

The same expression may be used concerning the many who have long heard the Gospel and who yet remain unsaved. Now I can speak personally to a great many of you who are here. God has indeed shown His

love to you in permitting you to meet with us in this House of Prayer. You might have been born in some far-off country where you would have been taught the abominations of Paganism, or Romanism, or Mohammedanism. The name of Jesus might never have been sounded in your ears—yet it has been and, with many of you, from your very childhood! I will not speak in praise of my own ministry, but I will say this—I have always preached the Gospel to the best of my ability. All that I have known of the Word of God, I have spoken and I have tried to use the best words that I could get together in proclaiming the Gospel message. And seeing that so many hundreds and even thousands have found the Lord Jesus Christ here, I am right in saying that you have been in a highly privileged place. You have had opportunities given to you which are denied to a great many people—and God has proved that He has loved you in giving you such privileges. If you still remain hearers only, and not doers of the Word, I can fancy my Lord and Master weeping over you as He wept over Jerusalem, when He said, "How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not!"

The words of our text will also be applicable to many when they come to die. When God comes to look back upon the whole of a man's life and to recall the way in which He has treated that man from the first day of his history to the last, He will be able to say to many a man who will die unregenerate, "Yet, I loved you. I put you into the arms of a woman who taught you to fear My name. I placed you in circumstances that ought to have led you to thought, to prayer, to repentance and to faith. I have preserved your life and cared for you until now that you lie there dying, and you will be lost because of despised mercy and unrequited love! I called, but you refused! I stretched out My hands, but you regarded not—and now you are lost and must be driven away from My Presence forever—not because I treated you roughly, or denied to you the message of salvation, or shut you out of Heaven, but because you yourselves spurned My love and set at nothing all My entreaties."

I think I once told you the story of a godly woman who was wonderfully kind to her very unkind and wicked husband. She was so obedient, gentle, affectionate and patient that he even boasted about what a good wife he had. And in company, one night, long past the hour of midnight, he said that if he took his drunken companions home with him, late as it was, she would receive them like a lady and prepare a supper for them—and never show by word or sign that it was hard upon her, or that they were not welcome. And it came true! When he took them home, she got together such things as she had and made a decent feast for them. And one of them addressed her, afterwards, and said that they had come there as the result of a wager—and they could not understand how she could have patience with such a man as her husband was, for they

themselves felt ashamed of the way he had acted towards her. When they pressed her for her answer, she said, with tears "I am afraid that my husband's only happiness will be in this life. I have prayed for him and sought in vain to bring him to a better mind, but my fear is that when this life is over, there will be no more happiness for him, so I mean to make him as happy as he can be in his present condition."

It seems to me that God sometimes acts upon that plan, for He gives to some men more than heart can wish—their eyes stand out with fatness and He multiplies to them all earthly blessings because He is a God who would make men as happy as they can be. So He will let them have happiness here, for, in the eternity to come, it will not be possible for His Justice to deal out anything to them but those sorrows which are the inevitable consequence of perseverance in sin!

Even in this first part of my theme there seems to me to be much that ought to touch many hearts. But when I come to *the higher sense of the term, "love,"* and speak of God's own chosen people to whom He can, with emphasis, say, "I have loved you," oh, how sad it is that the Lord has to often say this to them while they are in their unregenerate state! He has chosen them unto eternal life. He has written their names in the Lamb's Book of Life. His well-beloved Son has already bought them with His precious blood, yet look at them—slaves to lust, rioting in sin, or merely hearers of the Word, but not doers of it, still rejecting the Savior and continually going from bad to worse. Oh, could someone only echo in their ears this little message of God, "I have loved you," could they—would they—remain as they are, without the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, or any desire to be drawn towards Him? God knows all about His eternal love towards them and the choice that He has made of them. And often must He say, as He beholds their heart of stone, brow of brass and neck of steel, "Yes, I have loved you, O you poor foolish creatures. And you shall yet be Mine and shall sing among the angels, though now you are rioting in sin and reveling in iniquity!" I think I hear the Lord thus graciously expressing the inmost feelings of His heart and the very repetition of the message ought to touch all our hearts.

But, further, think how the Lord must express Himself, in a similar style, concerning wandering backsliders. There are some whom we have every reason to regard as His people. In times past they have given abundant evidence that they were His, but they have grown spiritually cold, as if a death-chill had struck them in their heart. They have, apparently, gone back to the world and they are now far off from the place where they used to be. But the Lord looks upon them in their wretchedness and sin and He says to them, "I have loved you. You may be trying to live without prayer, but I have loved you. You may have ceased to frequent the House of God, but I have loved you. I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the

wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you. Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord, for I am married to you." "The Lord, the God of Israel, says that He hates putting away." He has not sued for a divorce from His unfaithful spouse, as He might well have done. "Only acknowledge your iniquity," He says, "confess that you have transgressed against the Lord your God, and you shall be fully and freely forgiven, for I have loved you."

I pray that my blessed Master may Himself speak to any poor backslider who is here, for, surely, His gentle, gracious accents ought to melt even a heart of stone! If you were ever really His, however far you may have wandered from Him, do not hesitate to come back to Him, for He still says to you, "I have loved you." Yes, dear Friends, whenever any of the Lord's people get into a sad, lean, low condition—when they begin to grow cold and to doubt whether they can be the children of God at all—it is well for them to hear the great Father say to them, again and again, "I have loved you. I have loved you. I have loved you. I, who made the heavens and the earth, have loved you. I have loved you from before the foundation of the world. I have not merely pitied you as a man might pity a starving dog, but I have loved you with all My heart. I have loved many others beside you, but, still, I have as much love for you as if there were nobody else for Me to love in all the world." Surely God will cause this simple but most comforting Truth to come home to the hearts of His people and then they will cry, "We will arise and go to our Father, and confess our wanderings and our sins, that we may once more be at peace with Him."

Are you, dear Friend, very sorrowful just now? Have you lost the Light of God's Countenance? Are you sighing and crying for the peace you once enjoyed? Well, then, just do what I have been bidding the sinner do! Come to Christ all over again and, at the same time, make diligent enquiry to find out whether there is any wrong thing in your character that is bringing you into this state of misery. How long is it since you have thoroughly swept out the secret chambers of your heart? If you leave a room unswept for a little while, you know how the cobwebs and the dust gather and settle all over it. Look even at the snow after it has been lying for a day or two in such a foggy, smoky, grimy city as this—it is positively black! Well, if the snow gets black in this smoke, do you not think that your soul will also get foul and dirty? This world is a bad place to live in. To maintain a high condition of purity, you will need a deal of Divine Grace, or you certainly will not do it. Ah, me, how little there is around us that can help us toward God—and how much there is to draw us away from Him! Now, because of all this impurity by which you are surrounded, your soul needs to be constantly swept out. You had need cry to the Holy Spirit to light the candle and frequently sweep out the room,

for unless there is a constant cleansing, there will be continual filth and the heart will never be fit for Christ to come into it and to abide in it. So much, then, concerning the lamentation of love.

II. Now, in the second place, I have to speak upon THE INSENSIBILITY OF INGRATITUDE.

That is a very cruel answer in our text—can you detect the heartless ingratitude in it? I am afraid I do not know how to pronounce the words aright so as to bring out all the evil that is in them. First, you hear God saying, in very plaintive tones, "I have loved you." And then, instead of that declaration touching the hearts of those who had wandered from Him, and causing them to ask for mercy at His hands, you get this wicked question, "In what way have You loved us?" That is all the reply they give! It is short and sharp, full of unbelief, pride, and rebellion—"In what way have You loved us?" Does anybody really ask that question of God nowadays? Oh, yes! I have heard it many times.

That question is sometimes asked by *men who are loaded with temporal mercies*. There is nothing that God has denied to them. When they were younger, if anybody had told them that they would be worth as much as they now actually possess, they would have said that it was beyond their utmost expectations. Yet now that they have all that their heart can desire and their eyes stand out with fatness, they put to God this shameful question, "In what way have You loved us?" They say that they cannot see any sign of the goodness of God in their prosperity—they trace all their riches and their increase to their own wit, wisdom, industry and perseverance—they leave God out of the matter altogether! And so, although His mercies stare them in the face and they wear the tokens of those mercies on their backs, and carry them within their physical frame, yet they continue to say to Him, "In what way have You loved us?"

I have known others who have practically said the same thing *by the way in which they have slighted Gospel privileges*—a man of this stamp, who has been a Hearer of the Gospel for, perhaps, 20 or 30 years, yet says—"I do not see any proofs of any particular favor that God has shown to me." O Sir, if you had been cast into Hell, you would have learned to prize the privilege of listening to the Gospel when you had lost it forever! If you had been, for even a little while, in a lunatic asylum, you might, when you come out, begin rightly to value the blessing of restored reason with which you are able to understand at least something of that Gospel which you have so long neglected and despised! It is strange that there should be people living on praying ground and on pleading terms with God, with Heaven to be had for the asking, who yet say to the Lord, "In what way have You loved us?" Ah, Sirs, some of you see what kings and Prophets desired to see, but died without the sight, yet you say to God, "In what way have You loved us?" How happy ought to be your ears

that hear the Gospel's joyful sound, yet, as you hear it not in your hearts, you cry to the Lord, "In what way have You loved us?"

Yes, and I have heard this question put very bitterly *by some who have murmured at their temporal trials*. "How has God been gracious to us?" they ask. "Look at me," says one, "I am very poor. I work as hard as any slave, yet I get but little return for all my toil, and my lot is a truly pitiable one. In what respects has God loved me?" "Look," says another, "at this broken leg." Or perhaps the lament is, "I was born deformed." Or, "I lost an eye early in life! Don't talk to me about God loving me." Yet there are many, now in Heaven, who might never have gone there if it had not been for their poverty, their infirmity and their pain. Often, when God is hedging up a man's way with thorns to stop him from going to destruction, he thinks that the Lord is unkind to him, whereas the thorns in the way are the surest tokens of Divine Love to him! Yes, Sir, you were once able to drink greedily from the muddy stream of worldly pleasure and you kept at it as long as you could. I do not know where you might have been by this time had not God struck you down, taken away your power of enjoyment and deprived you of the means by which you indulged yourself in sin! What better service could He have rendered to you? The silly, self-willed child will not thank his father for the rod, but when he becomes a man, if that rod has been really useful to him, he will respect and love the wise and kind father who did not spare him for all his crying! And you, dear Friend, who are in trouble and sorrow, say that God is dealing harshly with you—yet those trials are all sent in love. That sharp affliction of yours is the surgeon's knife that is cutting away the proud flesh and deadly cancers which, otherwise, would destroy you! God is working for your good in all that He is doing—it is His love that is doing it all.

I am sorry to say that I have known some who appeared to be the Lord's people, who have said to Him, "In what way have You loved us?" because they have become very doubting. They have not looked at eternal things—they have kept looking at their outward inconveniences and sorrows. The poor man has said, "With this leaky roof to my cottage, can God really love me?" And the poor woman has said, "With this rheumatism in my aching bones and my poor little children half clad and ill fed, can God really love me?" And even the heirs of Heaven have sometimes asked of God, "In what way have You loved us?" But when they have come back to their right mind and have rightly understood the ways of the Lord, they have blessed Him for their troubles as much as for their joys—and they have seen how all things work together for good to them that love God!

It shows how wrong is the state of our heart if we can live in the midst of God's continued mercies and yet cannot realize that He loves us. If any of you cannot see any tokens of the benevolence and goodness of God to

you, surely you must be blind! And if, dear child of God, you fail to perceive what the Lord has done for you, anoint your eyes with eye-salve that you may see, for He has done everything for you! He has given you this world and worlds to come. Yes, and He has given Himself to you, to be your Father. He has given you His Son, to be your Savior. He has given you His Spirit, to be your constant Comforter. What more can He do for you than He has done, you who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before you in the Gospel? Therefore, never let this thought flit across your soul and never let this question pass the door of your lips, "In what way have You loved us?"

Thus have I spoken upon the insensibility of ingratitude as well as the lamentation of love.

III. Now, lastly, I have to speak, for just a few minutes, upon THE DISCOVERIES OF GRACE. I am hoping and praying that these last words which I am about to utter, may come true in the experience of a great many in this place, as well as of others who will read the discourse when it is printed.

Suppose you should be converted—become a child of God, and be saved—the first thing you will discover will be *that God has loved you.* What a change that will make in all your feelings towards Him! You will never again say to the Lord, "In what way have You loved me?" But, if you feel as I did when I first found out the love of God to me, you will begin tracing your whole history, from your cradle up to the moment of your conversion—and you will say, "I can see the Lord's loving hand there, and there, and there, and there, and there." You will look upon your trials, your losses, your crosses, your removals from one village or town to another and you will say, "Ah, it was love that watched over me all the while! It was love that was arranging all that happened for my good." And you will be amazed at the difference that feeling will make in your life! Before you knew the Lord, you could not realize His love, but, as soon as ever you really know Him, you will say, "All His dealings with me have been proofs of His love." You will put up your hands in wonder and say, "How could I have been such a mad fool as to go on sinning against God in spite of such wondrous love? It really seems to me as if the more I sinned, the more He loved me—and the worse I was to Him, the better He was to me. Over against my black sins He set the whiteness and brightness of His Grace and He seemed as if He conquered me, not by the sheer force of His might, but by the superior power of His boundless love."

Further, if you shall be converted, it will not be long before you will find out that in addition to God being loving and kind to you in His Providence, *He so loved you that He gave His only-begotten Son to die for you.* The general Truth of God that Christ died for sinners is unspeakably precious—but the sweetest Truth in all the world is for any of us to be

able to say, "He died for me." O my dear Hearer, if you were ever to find out that Christ thought of you in His last moments upon the Cross—that He distinctly and personally poured out His life for you and that your name—I mean your very own name—is engraved upon the palms of His hands and that you, in your own person, are continually before Him, surely that would be a heart-breaker for you! All the Law and the terrors in the world might only harden you in your rebellion, but one glance of the dear languid eyes of Him who hung upon the Cross—one gracious look of His—will make your spirit flow like the streams of water that ran out of the Rock in the wilderness! May the Lord, in His mercy, enable each one of you to say, "He loved me and gave Himself for me," for then you will soon be at His feet as weeping, yet rejoicing penitents!

Again, if you are really converted, so that you come to know the love of God, and the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, another thing which you will soon find out will be *God's election of you from eternity*. How well I recollect when first that ray of light struck into my soul, as I seemed to hear Him say to me personally, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you." That great Truth was revealed to me in this way. I said to myself, "Here am I converted, pardoned, saved. There are my school-fellows, the boys and young men with whom I used to be associated—they are not saved. Who has made the difference between us?" I dared not say that I had, and so put the crown of salvation on my own head. I saw, in a single moment, that God must have made the distinction if I was, in any degree whatever, different from my fellow creatures. Then I said to myself, "If God has made this difference in me and done more for me than He has done for others, there must always have been in His heart thoughts of love towards my soul, since He never changes. What He does today is the result of the purpose which was in His heart from before the foundation of the world." So there rolled into my heart, like a stream of honey, the assurance that He had loved me, with complacency, long before the earth was formed, or the day-star knew its place, or planets ran their round! Then I said to myself, "O you fool of fools, that you should ever have treated your God as you have done! Are you, indeed, one of His elect and chosen people and yet have you lived all these years without hardly a thought of Him who has loved you from eternity?" I blamed myself, as I still do, that I was so slow to recognize His eternal choice of me. And if the Lord shall be pleased to say to you, in the words of my text, "I have loved you"—when you once really know His love to you, His redemption of you and His election of you, personally, you will no more say, "In what way have You loved me?" But you will bow, in speechless but grateful reverence, at His dear feet, worshipping and adoring the greatness of His Infinite Love!

I do not know how you feel, Brothers and Sisters, who know the Lord, but I feel that if I could live a thousand lives, I would like to live them all

for Christ—and I would even then feel that they were all too little a return for His great love to me. And if any of us could have Grace and strength enough given to us to die a thousand deaths for Christ, He well deserves them for having loved us as He has done.

There are just two things that I want to say to you, and with them I will finish my discourse.

First, some of you are still living in sin. Perhaps you hardly know why you came to the Tabernacle tonight. Possibly it was only out of curiosity. I am no thought-reader or mind-reader, but I can imagine that some of you have been in the habit of pooh-poohing all religion—ridiculing it—and you have done so for a long while. Now, suppose that one of these days you should preach the very faith which now you despise, just as the Apostle Paul did? Do not utter more words than you can help in reply to this suggestion of mine, for you will have to eat them, however many there are of them! Do not go any further in the wrong road than you can help, because you will have to come all that way back. I dare to tell you, in my Master's name, that some of you who hate Him, will love Him before long—though now you oppose Him all you can, by-and-by you will be among the first to vindicate His cause! My Lord knows all about you and as He has bought you with His precious blood, do you think He will not claim you as His own? He has written your name in His Book of Life, so the devil, himself, and all his legions cannot take from you the everlasting life to which His predestinating Grace has ordained you! You shall yet bow down before Him. The day draws near when you who now talk in a hectoring fashion, will be found lying at His feet as suppliants! Then, when He has drawn you to Himself, and has favored you with much of His love—when one of these Sabbath nights you shall be found sitting at His Table and the spikenard shall give forth a sweet smell, and your very soul shall seem to be carried away to Heaven because of the Presence of your Beloved, I wonder what you will think of yourself then?

Suppose He were then to whisper in your ear—I know He will not do so—but suppose He were to remind you of all your ill behavior towards Him—He will not do so, because He gives liberally and upbraids not—but suppose your own memory should be your accuser and should say to you, "Remember that you were a bond slave in the land of Egypt. Recollect those black sins that came out of your heart, those foul words that issued from your lips"—do you not think that as you look up into the face of Jesus, your Lord and Master, you will say, "Ah, my gracious Savior, I have thought of a fresh reason for loving You. I knew it before, but it has come home to me more vividly now, than ever—should not they love most who have had most forgiven? That is my case, my Lord. Therefore, bind me to Yourself and let me never again wander away from You, but let me love You even to the end."

And lastly, dear Friends, I wonder what we shall think of ourselves when we get away from communion with the saints on earth and sit up yonder with our Savior in Heaven? There is one who was once a drunk—what a strange thing it will be for him to find himself in Heaven! Here he was stuttering and stammering and could not speak plainly because of his drunkenness, but he has been washed and cleansed in the blood of Jesus—and there he is, singing more sweetly, even, than the angels! Would you believe it? That very man up there—that bright spirit robed in white, who sings the loudest of them all, used to curse and swear and ill-treat his wife because she went to the House of God—yet there he is, purified and glorified! See what Sovereign Grace can do? But what must he think of himself when he gets up there? I was trying to imagine what must be the emotion of such a man as Paul, who had been a persecutor and injurious, when he looks into the face of his dear Lord and Master, and casts his crown before Him, and yet all the while thinks, "But I persecuted Him!"

I wonder whether that man is there who pierced His side and those soldiers who nailed Him to the tree? Certainly, he is there who railed at Him on the Cross and then repented and was forgiven! And he is there who said, "I know not the Man." When they are singing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing," I think that, sometimes, Peter pauses a while—and those around wonder why Peter has left off singing, but he cannot help it. Emotions of unutterable gratitude are coming over him as he remembers that he has been forgiven through the wondrous Grace of Christ who loved him even when He was being denied by him with oaths and curses!

I wish that I could communicate to you the emotions of my own spirit as I think of the greatness of man's sin and set it side by side with the greatness of God's Grace—as I think of unspeakable love and of unutterably vile sin which that love puts away. Come, dear Friends, and let us all join together to bless and magnify the wondrous love which God has revealed to us in His Word—and may we all meet in Heaven, to the praise of the glory of His Grace, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—561, 579, 735.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, 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 WORTHY THEME FOR THOUGHT
NO. 2783

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 15, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 5, 1878.

"We have thought of Your loving kindness,
O God, in the midst of Your Temple."
Psalm 48:9.

WHO were these people who declared to the Lord that they had thought of His loving kindness in the midst of His Temple? According to the title of the Psalm, they were the sons of Korah. And who were the sons of Korah? They were the singers in the house of the Lord, those who took the principal part in sounding forth the praises of Jehovah. I think it is suggestive that they did not say, "We have sung of Your loving kindness." They had done that and it was their constant employment, but they said, "We have *thought*." And there are some singers who have *not* done that, for they have sung solemn words thoughtlessly, caring only for the music and not for the meaning. One who is not a skilled musician, or trained vocalist, can tell when his ear is pleased with what he hears and I think that such a person will say that the very sweetest music he has ever heard has come from sincere hearts, even if the voices have not been in complete harmony.

If you hear Christians sing when they are in the spirit and sing what they really feel, their singing may not be artistic and it may not be accurate, but, if your own heart is right with God, it will have such an effect upon you as no other music can have. Singing from the heart is the noblest form of praise to God! Some people would not shout so loudly where the words should be uttered softly, or sing so harshly where pathos is required, if they were thinking while they were singing. But it is quite possible for us to be uttering sweet sounds without our mind and heart being really occupied in the exercise. Let it not be so with us, dear Friends, but, whenever we sing, may we so praise God in our spirit that at the close of every Psalm and hymn we may be able to say, with these sons of Korah, "We have thought of Your loving kindness, O God, in the midst of Your Temple."

But why did they write this? For, according to the title, it is "A Psalm of (or for) the sons of Korah." It was, probably, written by them because this fact was so refreshing to their memory. Possibly, at the time the Psalm was written, they were not in the House of the Lord, nor able to go

there to sing, so they recorded their past experience to cheer them under their present trial—"We have thought of Your loving kindness, O God. There have been, in days gone by, happy times when we have rejoiced in Your great love to us and although we are now debarred the privilege of sounding forth Your praise in the midst of Your Temple, our memory recalls the glad seasons of the past and our soul is, for a while, content to sup upon these cold meats and to look forward to the day when once more we shall be banqueted in the House of the Lord."

Sometimes, dear Friends, when you get into the wilderness, it is sweet to remember that you were once an inhabitant of Zion—especially when you feel such an inward longing to get back, again, that you can say with the Psalmist, "As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God!" In this very House of Prayer, have not our hearts burned within us, many a time, as we have praised our great and gracious God? Have not our souls then been ready to dance with ecstasy? If so, we may well pray to the Lord and say, "Renew Your former mercies to us. Quicken us again, we pray You. O restore unto us the joy of Your salvation and cause our hearts, again, to shout aloud with grateful thanksgiving for all Your loving kindness towards us!"

To help us to receive an answer to the prayer which I have just uttered on your behalf, as well as for myself, let us look at our text very carefully and seek the Holy Spirit's guidance in explaining it. Doing so, I think we shall learn, first, that *the occupation of these sons of Korah was gracious*—"We have thought of Your loving kindness, O God." Then, secondly, *the place was appropriate*. Where better could they be to think of the loving kindness of the Lord than in His Temple? When I have spoken on these two points, I will try to show you, thirdly, *that the result was beneficial*. The Psalm itself shows us how much they were profited by thinking upon the loving kindness of the Lord—and it also reveals to us the blessing which came to others through them.

I. So, first, we learn that THEIR OCCUPATION WAS GRACIOUS—"We have thought of Your loving kindness, O God."

Thought is a noble faculty. The power to exercise it distinguishes men from the brute beasts. We grovel when we are under necessity to perform the acts that relate only to the body. We rise as we are able to perform the functions of the mind and heart. To really think is an ennobling employment, yet it is not everybody who cares to think. There are many who regard themselves as religious people, who like to pay somebody else to do their thinking for them, so it is theirs only second-hand. They are not like the noble Bereans who, "received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so"—thus going to the fountainhead, instead of drinking of the streams which have, probably, been polluted in their course. You may rest assured of this that you do not really know anything until you have thoroughly thought it out. You say, perhaps, "I believe such-and-such a creed," yet you hardly know what is stated in that creed and you certainly do not

know what the words mean—and, therefore, you do not really believe it in the right fashion. If you would truly know it, you must study and labor to understand it. In fact, you must think it over.

But the amazing thing is that many people will do almost anything except think. A pretty service to which the flowers from Covent Garden lend the chief attraction, or in which the millinery makes the greatest show, pleases a great many! And to have the ears charmed with the melodious sounds of vocal or instrumental music producing a sensuous feeling which they suppose to be true devotion—but is not—how many there are who will give almost anything for this! But as for *thinking*, they cannot do that. Such work is too hard for their mental constitution. They do not think and they cannot think. Yet, Brothers and Sisters, no man can be a strong Christian unless he is able to say, in the words of our text, "We have thought of Your loving kindness, O God." What is needed is that we should believingly think in harmony with the great thoughts of God, thinking them over again after Him, as it were—not endeavoring to think anything contrary to what is revealed, or seeking to be inventors of truth—which we can never be—but reading, marking, learning and inwardly digesting what we find recorded in the Sacred Scriptures. This is the kind of thought that we must exercise if we are to grow in Grace and to make advances in the Divine life.

Not only, however, is thought a noble faculty, *but God's loving kindness is a theme that is especially worthy of thought*. If there is any subject that may be neglected in our meditations, this must never be. The most common ties of gratitude bind us to at least *think* about the great goodness of God to us. It is an amazing thing that He should ever have so highly favored such unworthy persons as we are—and favored us so long, so tenderly and so perseveringly. Truly, the mercies He has bestowed upon us should never be—

"Forgotten in unthankfulness
And without praises die."

Besides, if we do not at least think about God's loving kindness to us, we may well tremble lest He should no more think upon us for good and find more grateful recipients of His loving kindness. Not think of His loving kindness? Why, there are some of us who cannot help doing so, for it continues to be manifested to us every day! We cannot forget the past mercies, for the present ones are so abundant. Fresh oil to anoint us is always flowing from the good olive tree which is one of the symbols of our Savior. How can we forget what the Lord has done for us? I might slightly alter that striking expression of captive Israel and say, "If I forget you, O loving kindness of the Lord, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember you, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth." The beam out of the wall and the stones on which we rest our feet might well cry out against us if we did not think of the loving kindness of the Lord! If we cannot tell all about it. If we cannot properly weigh and value it. If we cannot give any adequate return for it, yet let us at least think of it! Let everyone of us think of it now, so that we may be able to say at the

close of the service, or even before, "We have thought of Your loving kindness, O God, in the midst of Your Temple."

Further, *such thought as our test describes is essential to all true worship*. Be not startled if I say that it is very much in proportion to our thought that we really worship and, without thought, there is no true worship. Suppose we sing the praises of God without thinking what we are doing—is that praising Him? No, no more than if we could have taught a parrot to make the same set of sounds! Suppose we preach without thought—of what value is such preaching? I am afraid there is much of that sort of preaching to be heard. One minister said, some time ago, that he could preach two sermons a day, six days in the week and think nothing of it. And somebody who knew his style of speech said that he was quite right in thinking nothing of it, for there was nothing in it to think of! If the preacher shall talk, and talk, and talk, but does not, himself, *think*, his words will not be acceptable even to his hearers—much less can he hope that they will be accepted by God! If you say that you worship God without thought, I answer that you worship not God at all, and that you rather mock Him than worship Him. If you kneel down to pray before you retire to rest, and when you rise up, you say to yourself, "I never thought of what I was saying," then, Sir, you did not really pray! There was no true prayer in the act—it was all a mockery and a sham. We must make the whole of our devotion an exercise of the inward spirit—not so much an act of the vocal organs as of the thoughtful part of our being—so that we may truly be able to say, "We have thought of Your loving kindness, O God, in the midst of Your Temple."

Now, this task of thinking of God's loving kindness ought to be a very easy one, for *there is abundance of material to think of in God's loving kindness*." Well did Joseph Addison sing—

"When all Your mercies, O my God
My rising soul surveys—
Transported with the view, I'm lost
In wonder, love and praise."

Each one of us who has been the subject of saving Grace may say to the Lord, "I have thought of Your loving kindness to me in Your eternal counsels, before the earth was, and of Your loving kindness to me long before the members of my body were curiously worked by Your mysterious power." Some of us can say to the Lord, "I have thought of Your loving kindness in having committed me to the care of a godly mother and a Christian father. I have thought of Your loving kindness to me in my infant days when I could not protect myself. I have thought of Your loving kindness to me in my wayward youth when I ran into divers follies, knowing not myself or You. And I have thought of Your loving kindness to me when I grew up to manhood and, alas, my folly ripened into sin. I have thought of Your pitying, restraining, forgiving loving kindness that watched over me in all my wanderings, always tracking the lost sheep that the Good Shepherd might always know where it was and, in due time, bring it home. I have thought of that loving kindness which, at last,

lovingly grasped me, laid me upon Your shoulders and bore me home rejoicing! Your loving kindness, O my God, where shall I end the story of it? Surely it shall last, not only as long as my existence here, but it shall be continued throughout eternity! Since the new birth of Your servant, how great have been Your loving kindnesses in instruction, in deliverance, in forgiveness, in comforting, in strengthening, in guiding, in answering prayer, in removing temptation, in conquering infirmity, in leading on from strength to strength!"

Oh, if we had to write the complete record, the roll would need to be written within and without to hold the list of all the Lord's loving kindnesses—and it would need to be long enough to belt the whole Heaven as with a zodiac of light—for His loving kindness is without end and altogether untellable! No man can truly say, "I have thought that subject dry. I have worked it threadbare." Oh, no! We have thought and we will still think of God's loving kindness to us! That is a theme not only worthy of thought, but beyond all thought. If any of you, Brothers and Sisters, think there is likely to be any lack of material for thought, I beg you to consider the various acts of Divine Grace, all of which are full of the loving kindness of the Lord—the Everlasting Covenant, personal election, redemption, effectual calling, adoption, sanctification, final perseverance. Touch on any point you please and you may think with joy and gratitude of God's marvelous loving kindness!

Then, each one of you turn to your own personal experience. I need not again remind you how gracious God has been to you. I have already given you a sort of outline sketch of it. But, oh, there are some of you who could tell—no, you would not like to tell—but you *know* some wonderful things about the Lord's loving kindness to you! As for myself, I know that my Master has done for me that which, if I were to tell it, would never be believed and, therefore, I shall keep the story of it till I get where doubt and incredulity will never be admitted. The loving kindness of the Lord is amazing! Oh, what blessed secrets there have been between Him and some of His most highly favored people! When they have been locked up in the darkest dungeons of the prison, then they have discovered that they were in the King's wine cellar and He has said to them, "Drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved." When they have been shut out from all natural light, they have found that they did not need the sunlight, for their Lord's Presence has given them all the brightness they have needed! I guarantee you that the Covenanters and our Puritan forefathers knew more of the loving kindness of the Lord than many of us do, though some of us know so much of it that we shall need all eternity to tell the wondrous story! Oh, He is a good and gracious God! If you do not think so, it is because you do not know Him. Perhaps you have not yet seen Him in the right light. Possibly, you have been living under the Law—if you were living under Grace, you would understand Him better.

Or perhaps you have been trying to live with just a little Grace, whereas, if you had more Grace, you would know the Lord better and then you would adore Him more. It is never with Him as it is with certain

earthly masters—the less they are known, the better they are liked—and the shorter the service under them is, the sweeter is it considered. Oh, no, our blessed Lord is better loved the better He is known! And the longer we serve Him, the easier does His yoke prove to be to our shoulders. Personally, I can testify that I find it an ever-increasing joy to be His servant and it is to me the source of pardonable pride that my two sons are in the service of the same Master—and I could not say that if I had found Him to be a bad Master. I know what some of you say, "I have such a hard taskmaster that I will never bring my boy to him, to be apprenticed—not I." But when you serve the Lord Jesus Christ, if you do but know Him as He really is, you will wish to have all whom you love to be beloved of Him—and it will be your heart's delight to see them all earnestly engaged in His blessed service!

Talking thus of the Lord's loving kindness to any one of you personally, we might, in time, get to the end of the story. But, Beloved, there are thousands of you here, who, unless you have grossly deceived yourselves, have a similar story to tell! The loving kindness of the Lord to any one of His children is a theme of wonder, but, to hundreds, to thousands, to millions, to a multitude that no man can number, O my blessed Lord, Your loving kindnesses are like the sand upon the seashore, or like the innumerable stars of Heaven! None but Yourself can fully understand Yourself—

"God only knows the love of God."

It is beyond all the bounds of human thought, or speech, or calculation, or imagination!

I think, dear Friends, that I have now shown you that there is plenty of room for thought upon the subject of the Lord's loving kindness. So now let me go on to say that *this is a kind of worship in which all of you who are God's people may engage*. When I go home, after this service, I shall be able to say, "I have preached Your loving kindness, O God, in the midst of Your Temple." You will not all be able to say that, for, if we were all preachers, where would be the hearers? But I hope you will be able to say, "I have thought of Your loving kindness, O God, in the midst of Your Temple." Perhaps your singing does not count for much, like mine—more of a growl than a song, our musical friends say. Never mind if it is so—if you cannot sing, you can say to the Lord, "I have *thought* of Your loving kindness" and that, after all, being the very essence and soul of worship, will be more profitable to you than if, without thought, you had spoken with the greatest eloquence, or sung only with your lips the sweetest notes of music!

Ah, my dear sick Sister over yonder, hardly fit to be out of your room, I hope you will be able to say, "I have thought of Your loving kindness, O God." My poor old friend up there in the gallery, who cannot even read the Scriptures, you, also, can join with us, my Brother, in saying, "We have thought of Your loving kindness, O God." Yes, my Friend, though you have not the talent of communicating anything to others, for you feel so bashful and are almost hiding your head even now while I am speak-

ing—and although you scarcely think yourself worthy to come to the Communion Table with the Lord's people, yet you know that you can chime in with us when we say, "We have thought of Your loving kindness, O God." I delight in any form of worship in which *everybody* can join—and this is such that no one who really loves the Lord need keep himself out of the happy united assembly!

Yet, Brothers and Sisters, *this practice of thinking of God's loving kindness is not universally followed*. I am afraid that in all congregations there are many people who do not think at all—and many others who do think, but they think about almost anything except the loving kindness of the Lord! You missed your ring from your finger! You say to yourself, "Where did I leave those keys?" You are wondering how that sick child is! You are thinking about that pair of horses to be sold tomorrow! Oh, yes, under the most faithful ministries, these odds and ends of daily life will force their way in if they can. But they must be rigidly excluded when they take the place of that one theme that is really worthy of our thought. When the birds came down to eat the sacrifice that Abraham was offering, he drove them away. Try, dear Friends, to do the same with all that is carnal, frivolous, worldly—that your sacrifices unto the Lord may be well pleasing in His sight, and that you may be able to join with the sons of Korah in saying, "We have thought of Your loving kindness, O God, in the midst of Your Temple."

II. Now, secondly, I want to show you that *the place was appropriate*—"in the midst of Your Temple."

The Temple at Jerusalem no longer stands. It is gone, but are there not temples of God now? Yes, a good many. Of what are they composed? They are composed of *living men and women*—there are no other temples of God! The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "Know you not that your body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you?" But those handsome buildings with spires and towers, and those barn-looking structures called Non-conformist places of worship, are they not temples? No. Or if they are called temples, then to them Stephen's words may be applied, "The Most High dwells not in temples made with hands." So let us cast aside the superstition which regards any particular place, or any set of bricks, mortar, stones and iron, as being in any sense or degree, holy! Holiness is not an attribute attaching to material substances. God says, "Heaven is My Throne, and earth is My footstool: what house will you build Me? Or what is the place of My rest? Have not My hands made all these things?"

But there is still a Temple of the living God and that Temple is made up of the aggregate of all the temples—the temples are the bodies of His people—and the whole Church, which is the mystical body of Christ, is the Temple of God. By the term, the Church, I mean the whole body of Believers throughout the world and in Heaven, too, for they together form the one "general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven." This is the Temple of the living God and I hope that many of us can say that we are in the midst of it. If we are numbered among

God's people—the tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands all over the world who love the Lord—we are surely in the most appropriate place to think of the loving kindness of the Lord!

And first, if we are in the midst of God's spiritual Temple, His true Church, we may *well think of His loving kindness in permitting us to be there*. "What," says one, "am I really one of the Lord's chosen people? Dare I hope that I have a part and a lot with His saints? Who would have thought that such a thing was possible? Who would have dreamed that it could ever be so?" Ah, Beloved, of all the wonders you will ever see in the Church of God, if you really know yourself, the greatest wonder of all will be to find yourself there! I am never tired of singing, with good Dr. Watts—

"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?
'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."

Cannot many of you say the same thing? Some of your old companions are not here—perhaps they even ridicule the idea of coming to such a place as this. Possibly some of your former associates are now where hope and mercy can never reach them. Why was it not your lot to reject Christ and to perish in your sin? What but the Sovereign Grace of God has made the difference between you and them? So well may you say, "We have thought of Your loving kindness, O God, in the midst of Your Temple; we have thought of Your loving kindness in putting us into Your Temple, and even making some of us to be pillars in that Temple."

Standing in the midst of that Temple, which is the true Church of God, we cannot help thinking of the loving kindness of the Lord, *for every stone in that Temple testifies to His loving kindness*. These are the living stones that are "built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone in whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto a holy Temple in the Lord." And, Brothers and Sisters, the very quarrying of every stone out of the pit of nature, and the squaring of every stone so as to make it fit to be built into God's Temple is such a work of loving kindness that as we look upon our Brothers and Sisters—the living stones that lie in the same course with ourselves, we may well think of God's loving kindness!

We may also think of the loving kindness of the Lord in the midst of His Temple *because everything in that Temple reminds us of His loving kindness*. There was, for instance, the altar of burnt offering. And we can say, "Thank God for the loving kindness which has provided for us the one great atoning Sacrifice by which our sin is forever put away." There stood, too, the golden altar of incense and every thoughtful Believer says, "Thank God for the loving kindness which has given us Christ to be our Intercessor before the Throne of God on high, where His prevailing pray-

ers are continually ascending on our behalf." There also stood the showbread upon the sacred table and we say, "Thank God for Him who, as the Bread of Life, is the ever-present and ever-satisfying food for His people." There, too, was the golden candlestick, or lamp stand, and we can say, "Thank God for His loving kindness in having provided the all-sufficient Light of God for His people."

There was nothing on which the intelligent, thoughtful eyes of a Believer could rest, in the tabernacle or the Temple, that would not remind him of the loving kindness of the Lord. And I think I may say the same concerning the Church of Christ to which we belong. Look where you will, everything speaks of the loving kindness of the Lord. There is, first of all, the great Head of the Church, your Lord and Savior, and mine. Oh, what loving kindness there is in Him! His Incarnation, His life, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, His intercession, His promised Second Advent—all these are full of loving kindness! Then look at the feet of that same mystical body, for the very poorest of the saints will also tell you of the loving kindness of the Lord. See how, in our Baptism, the Lord shows us His loving kindness by teaching us that the way to life lies through death and burial. Then see how, in that sacred Supper which we are about to celebrate, the Lord further shows His loving kindness by teaching us how the Divine life that He has imparted to us is to be nourished by the very body and blood of Christ received into us in a spiritual sense. It is loving kindness everywhere, Brothers and Sisters, in the Temple of the Lord! Turn which way you will, it is all loving kindness and nothing else!

Will you kindly pick that long word to pieces for a minute? It is a most expressive and instructive word—loving kindness. Not only kindness or kinneddness—God acting towards us as if He were near akin to us—but, loving kindness—the kindness of a brother to his brothers and sisters, the love of a father towards his children—no, these are poor things compared with the loving kindness of the Lord! Sing of it! Tell of it! And, as the sons of Korah did, *think* of it in the midst of the Temple of the Lord!

III. The third thing I was to prove to you was that *the result was beneficial*—"We have thought of Your loving kindness, O God, in the midst of Your Temple." Having done so, what was the result?

First, according to the context, *they were made joyous*—"Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad because of Your judgments." You know how you may think over a subject until you can produce within yourself the state of mind which naturally grows out of it. You may take your troubles and pore over them again, and again, and again, and again, until you make yourself as thoroughly miserable as a human being can be! I recollect someone writing to me to say that he had attended the Tabernacle, on one occasion, but that he would never do such a thing again, for he was certain that the tried and afflicted people of God did not meet there. He said, "As I looked around and saw the happy faces of the congregation, I said to myself, 'These are not the tried people of God.'" Then he went on to inform me that he had found a

brother, under whose preaching he could profit, for there were only eight people gathered to listen to him and they all looked so wretched—and the preacher unfolded such a deep and sorrowful experience, that the brother felt himself quite at home. I was glad that he did, for I like everybody to be where he feels at home. And if anyone is most happy when he is most miserable, I hope he will enjoy himself all he can! That state of mind would not suit me, yet there are persons of that sort who never are content till they are dissatisfied—who never are pleased with anything unless they can grumble and growl at it—and who never seem able to sing—

"My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this"

—until they feel that they cannot stay in it any longer!

But, Brothers and Sisters, I trust we are not "cut on the cross" after that fashion. We delight in being joyful in our God and we wish that our countenances could always shine as the face of Moses shone when he came down from the mount. So, Beloved, think of the loving kindness of the Lord to you and see if that does not make melody in your heart unto Him and cause the big bells in your soul to ring carillons of praise so full of jubilant gladness that your very body shall seem as if it could hardly bear the joy! I have sometimes seen an old church steeple rock and reel when a marriage peal has been rung out from the ancient belfry and, in like manner, at times, one has felt so happy that the poor physical frame seemed as if it could scarcely endure such excess of bliss as the soul was delighting in the loving kindness of the Lord!

Now, my dear Sister, you have talked about that rheumatism of yours to at least 50 people who have been to see you. Suppose you tell your next visitor about the loving kindness of the Lord to you? Yes, my dear Brother, we all know that trade is bad, for you have told us so, every day, for I do not know how many years! And you have always been losing money, though you had no capital when you started, yet, somehow or other, you have managed to have something left even now. Well, we know that old story—could you not change your note just a little and talk about the loving kindness of the Lord? Yes, my Friend, I know that many professing Christian people are not all that they profess to be. I have heard you say so ever so many times! You also say, "There is no love in the church." Well, so far as we can see, you are not overstocked with it. You say, "There is no zeal among the members," but have you any to give away to those who need it? Now, henceforward, instead of always harping on the faults and failing of God's people—which, certainly, are numerous enough, but have not become any fewer since you talked so much about them—would it not be better to *think* and *talk* of the loving kindness of the Lord?

I would like to have this for my theme until I die. If there could be such a sentence as this passed upon me now, "You are never to preach again except upon the loving kindness of the Lord," my soul would be delighted to have such a commission! I am sure that I would never exhaust

the subject, though I would try my hardest to do so. When I had gone as far as I could, I would call on some of you to tell what God had done for *you* and so I would start a fresh band of preachers, for each one of you would have a new story to tell of the loving kindness of the Lord—and the telling of that story would make your souls glad!

I have partly anticipated what I was going to say upon the next point, which is that thinking upon the loving kindness of the Lord *would unloose our tongues*. Notice what it says in the 12th and 13th verses—"Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark you well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that you may tell it to the generation following." If you have really tasted of God's loving kindness, you must tell others about it! You cannot keep the love of God to you a secret. The first instinct of a new-born soul is to tell its joy to somebody else. Think over this theme and you will find a tongue that you thought you had not. "While I was musing," said David, "the fire burned: then spoke I with my tongue." My Sister, you will yet take a Sunday school class if you will only think upon God's loving kindness to you! My dear Brother, you *can* talk to those few poor people in that hamlet where you live. You have been afraid to try to speak to them and so you have let them remain uninstructed. But you will not be able to be silent if you think upon God's loving kindness to you! There is a string that ties your tongue—get your heart so red-hot that it will burn that string and then, off you will go! And when once your tongue is unloosed by such a process as that, it will be said of you as it was of Naphtali, the hind let loose, "He gives goodly words." Tell to all around you that the Lord is good and that His mercy endures forever!

Does someone ask, "Is there any need to tell that?" Yes, there is, for it has got abroad that our Master is strict and hard to His servants. I should not wonder if there are some young people, even here, who imagine that religion is a very dull, dreary, miserable thing—and who say that they do not want to be Christians, for they would rather see a little life. They would not mind being converted afterwards, but they would like to have a little happiness first. Well, young people, it is a very good resolution—only let me tell you that it is a pity to look for life in the outskirts of death, for there is none there! It is advisable to have a little happiness and more advisable to have a good deal of it! And it is most of all advisable to have the greatest happiness possible. I, for one, will speak of the loving kindness of the Lord and I do not think any Believer here will contradict me. And I can say that I never knew what real happiness meant till I trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior. I have had plenty of trouble since then, and much pain of body and depression of spirit, but I can testify that my Master's service is the grandest possible service on earth and His love to me, and His tenderness and gentleness to me make me feel that if I had even to die for Him, I would rejoice to do it! And if I had to live as long as Methuselah did, I would only pray that during every hour and minute of the time, I might consecrate every faculty I had entirely to His praise! We must tell to the generation following the

Truth of God about the loving kindness of the Lord that they may not be deceived by the great enemy of souls and be made to think that Christ's service is a bondage to the soul.

Last of all, as we think of God's loving kindness, *we shall be confirmed in our loyalty to Him*. How does the Psalm finish? "For this God is our God forever and ever: He will be our Guide even unto death." There are some here who have known my Master for 50 years. I have preached Him to you for nearly 25 years and I knew Him a good while before that. Do I want to change my Master for a better one? Yes, if you can find a better one for me, but that you never will be able to do! Christian, do you believe that you will ever have a better Master than Christ, and a better service than His? No. I know what you will say, "I only want to know Him more, and to serve Him better. He has bored my ear to His door-post and I shall never go away from His service, for He is mine and I am His, forever and forever." "This God is our God." He was our father's God and our mother's God, and the God of the dear ones whom He took from us to be with Him in Heaven. And "this God is our God." He is the God to whom we looked in the day of our soul's distress, when we saw Him in Christ Jesus, reconciled unto us through the death of His Son. "This God is our God forever and ever." He is the God who wiped our tears away and filled our hearts with gladness, and started us on our pilgrimage to Heaven with new life in our souls and new songs on our lips! "This God is our God."

He is the God who has heard our prayers, the God who has been with us in our direst extremity, the God who spoke to us words of healing, words of peace and words of salvation when we lay on the verge of death and looked into eternity. He is the God on whom we have cast our unworthy selves, trusting Him with our souls and our all, for this world and the world to come, "this God is our God forever and ever." Place your hand on the altar's horn, my Brothers and Sisters, and say, "I am His forever and forever; never to draw back, never to backslide, never to apostatize, never, His Grace enabling me to be steadfast, to dishonor His sacred name, or to do despite to the precious blood of His Son, or to the purity of the indwelling Spirit. Your loving kindness, O God, has bound the sacrifice with cords, even to the horns of the altar." So let it be, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen and Amen.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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

"NON NOBIS, DOMINE!"
NO. 2784

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 22, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 16, 1878.

"Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto Your name give glory, for Your mercy, and for Your truth's sake."
Psalm 115:1.

EVERY careful reader can see the connection between this 115th Psalm and the one which precedes it. In the 114th Psalm we see the gracious and grateful Jews sitting around the Passover table, having eaten of the lamb and singing of the miracles of Jehovah at the Red Sea and the Jordan. It must have been a very jubilant song that they sang! I think I can hear them singing, "What ailed you, O you sea, that you fled? You Jordan, that you were driven back?" When that joyful hymn was finished and the cup of wine was passed around the table, they struck another note. They remembered their sad condition, as they heard the heathen say, "Where is now their God?" They remembered that perhaps for many a year there had been no miracle, no Prophet, no open vision—and then they began to chant a prayer that God would appear—not for their sakes, but for His own name's sake, that the ancient Glory which He won for Himself at the Red Sea and the Jordan might not be lost—and that the heathen might no longer be able to tauntingly say, "Where is now their God?" because the wonders worked by God would cause them to tremble before Him.

Remember that when the Israelites came up out of Egypt and were marching through the wilderness, the Lord put "the dread of them and the fear of them" upon all the nations in their track, so that they were half defeated through the terror that had made them almost like dead men in the Presence of the mighty God of Israel! So, the Psalmist's prayer here is, practically, "Lord, do the same again—not for our sakes, but for Your own name's sake—that once again the heathen all around may know that there is a God in the midst of Israel—and that they may be caused again to tremble as they did before—and no longer blaspheme or defy the God of Jacob." These observations will, I hope, show you how suitably this Psalm would be chanted while still the Paschal Supper was proceeding.

Now let us take the words of our text by themselves and examine them under the gracious guidance of the Holy Spirit. They are, I think, instructive to us in five ways."

I. First, they furnish us with A POWERFUL PLEA IN PRAYER—"Not unto us, O Jehovah, not unto us, but unto Your name give glory, for Your mercy, and for Your truth's sake."

There are time when *this is the only plea that God's people can use*. There are other occasions when we can plead with God to bless us for this reason or for that, but, sometimes, there come dark experiences when there seems to be no reason that can suggest itself to us why God should give us deliverance, or vouchsafe us a blessing except this one—that He would be pleased to do it in order to glorify His own name. Moses is an example of how this plea prevails with the Lord. When he was on the mount with God and Jehovah threatened to destroy the idolatrous Israelites, Moses pleaded, "Why should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did He bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from Your fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against Your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own Self, and said unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of Heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it forever. And the Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people."

Joshua also used the same plea when he said to the Lord, after Israel's defeat at Ai, "What will You do unto Your great name?" He could not say, "Lord, hear me for Israel's sake," for they were utterly unworthy. He did not dare to say, "Deliver us for my sake"—he had not conceit or self-righteousness enough to present such a plea as that! He could not even say, "Hear us for Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob's sake," for the people had broken the Covenant which God had made with their fathers. So he pleaded with the Lord, "Think of Your own honor. Think of Your great name. Think of Your repute among the heathen." And thus he prevailed. It is noteworthy that that awful attribute of holy jealousy, which, under some aspects, is like a terrible flame, is the very one which helps us when everything else fails. Jehovah is very jealous of His own honor and therefore it is that when the heathens say, "Where is now their God?" He answers their taunt by ceasing to chasten His people—not for their sakes, but for His own mercy and truth's sake, that the heathen may not think Him unmerciful to His people, nor be able to accuse Him of being unfaithful to His Covenant.

Brothers and Sisters, in all your times of distress, you will do well to urge this plea with the Lord. Possibly you are pleading for a certain class of men or women who have grossly sinned. It may be that you have on your heart the case of one person who has gone to great lengths of iniquity. You can always plead, "Lord, save that sinful soul to make Your Grace the more illustrious. Do it that others who have witnessed his sin may admire Your wonderful compassion—that his relatives and friends who have heard his blasphemies and been horrified by them, may see what You can do when You bare Your almighty arm and magnify Your deeds of Grace."

You may be emboldened to urge that plea, *notwithstanding the vileness of the person for whom you plead*. In fact, the sinfulness of the sinner may even be your plea that God's mercy and loving kindness may be seen the more resplendently by all who know of the sinful soul's guilt. And if your prayer should not be on behalf of some gross transgressor, but on behalf of a fallen church—suppose it should be for a church that has lost its first love, a church that has turned aside from the Truth of God, a church which has ceased to be zealous, a church like that of Laodicea, fit only to be spewed out of the mouth of Christ—you may still come before Him and say, "Lord, revive it—not for that church's sake, for You might well make it a desolation, like Shiloh, where the Ark of the Covenant was at the first—but do it for Your name's sake that all may see that You can trim the lamp when it already smokes and gives forth a nauseous stench—that You can take the fig tree before it is utterly barren, and dig about it, and dung it, and make it bring forth fruit, O You wondrous Vinedresser of the vineyard!" I leave that thought with you, suggesting that in your solitude when you withdraw to pray—I mean you who, like Jacob, have your Jabboks and your Peniels—you will find that this is one of the mightiest weapons that you can wield in that secret midnight conflict. There is a sacred art of gripping even the Angel of the Covenant in that time of mysterious wrestling. Say, "For Christ's sake, for God's name's sake, for His love's sake, for the Gospel's sake"—for all these are mightily prevalent pleas with the Most High.

Let me just whisper a word in the ear of anyone who has scarcely learned to pray. Poor Sinner—

"Laden with guilt and full of fears"—

you say, "How can I plead with God for mercy? I have rejected it for years. I have often been rebuked and I have hardened my neck. I fear I have no plea with which to urge my suit in craving God's mercy." Here is one for you to use—say to Him, "For Your mercy and Your love's sake, have pity upon me, the least deserving of all Your creatures, for, surely, if You will but save me, it will be an eternal wonder to men and to angels! If you will save me, then I will sing—

"All Your mercy's depths I prove,
All its heights are seen in me!"

I remember one who said, "Oh, if the Lord Jesus Christ will but pardon me, He shall never hear the last of it!" And this is what all poor guilty souls may truly say, "Should there be mercy for such a sinner as I am—so old a sinner—so daring a sinner—so God-provoking a sinner? God's Grace blot out *my* sin? Will the Lord put me into His family and call me His child? Then, tell it in the deeps of Hell and let all the devils know what great things God can do! And tell it in the heights of Heaven and let all the principalities and powers there learn new music as they sing of the greatness of the loving kindness of the Lord who can pardon and save the very chief of sinners!" I suggest that every seeking sinner here should plead the name of God and the Glory of Christ—plead that He will be honored, that men will magnify His great name and the preciousness of His atoning blood and the power of His Gospel if it shall save you. This is a good plea—take care that you use it.

II. Now, secondly, my text appears to me to embody THE TRUE SPIRIT OF PIETY. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Your name give glory, for Your mercy, and for Your truth's sake." That is to say, true religion does not seek its own honor.

Self-seeking is the exact opposite of the spirit of a true Christian. He would rather strip himself and say, "Not unto me, but unto You, O Lord, be all honor and glory!" He seeks no crown to put upon his own head. Twice he refused to wear it. Even if the world would press it upon him, he says, "Not unto me; not unto me." He does not wish for honor. He has done with self-seeking. His one great objective, now, is to glorify God—"Unto Your name give glory, for Your mercy, and for Your truth's sake." Do you not think, dear Friends, that if this is the true spirit of religion, we shall very often have to condemn ourselves for being so faulty in it?

For instance, suppose, *in preaching the Gospel*, a man has, even as a small part of his motive, that he may be esteemed an eloquent person, or that he may have influence over other men's minds—I will not suppose that he has so sordid a motive as worldly gain—but I need not "suppose" what I have suggested, for it is lamentably true that this mixture of motives may steal over the preacher's soul. Ah, but we must fight against this evil with all our might! Somebody once told Master John Bunyan that he had preached a delightful sermon. "You are too late," said John, "the devil told me that before I left the pulpit." Satan is very skillful in teaching us how to steal our Master's Glory. Yet, if ever we speak aright, it is because we are taught of the Spirit and not because of our own wisdom. Even when we have had the undoubted help of the Holy Spirit, we are far too apt to attribute at least some little power to ourselves. But a true servant of the Lord Jesus Christ loathes himself when he finds that this evil habit has fastened itself upon him—and he cries, "No, Lord! Not unto me, not unto me, but unto Your name give all the glory and praise." We are to preach so as to glorify God, not to glorify ourselves—and the man who occupies the pulpit merely that he may manifest his own cleverness ought to be hurled from it, forthwith, for he has no right there whatever! "Glory be to God," should always be the preacher's motto.

And as it should be so with our preaching, do you not think that the same thing is true concerning *our praying*? Are there no petitions presented at Prayer Meetings in which there is at least some idea that we are saying very proper things, and very pretty things, and that people will think we have a great gift of prayer? Did you ever have such a feeling as that steal over you? Yet, my Brothers, the only prayer of the right kind is that which is offered for the Glory of God. If I turn from your public prayers and look into your private supplications, shall I not see *self* there?

The right spirit in which to do everything is to do *all* to the Glory of God. In *almsgiving*, for instance—a practice which, I trust, will never die out, though there are some who tell us that it is wicked to give to the poor—in almsgiving is it not possible to do it simply to get rid of the applicant, or to satisfy your own conscience, or that you may be thought generous? That is not right! We must give our alms to God alone. Let not our right hand know what our left hand gives, for it is not to man that we

are giving it, but as unto the Lord. Let our offering be dropped into the box and nothing be said about it. Let us get as far as possible from the spoiling glance of the human eye, that the whole act may be as a spring shut up, a fountain sealed, something done for Jesus and for Jesus only, that He may have it and have all the glory of it.

And in *any service that you may render*, do you not know that it must be done simply and only for Christ's sake if it is to be acceptable to Him? Yet, often, you can scarcely set a man to open pew doors, or to give out a hymn, or to teach a Sunday school class, but "great I" will be sure to lift its head unless it is constantly kept under! Pride grows swiftly, like other weeds. Yet remember that whatever we do in order that we may make ourselves the end and object of it, is spoiled in the doing and is not pleasing to God. Indeed, we are not offering it to God—we are offering it to ourselves! May God grant us Grace that we may never be swayed by the fear of man, or the wish to win human approbation! May we do that which we believe to be right because it *is* right and because we wish to honor and glorify God in doing it! And when we are rendering any service to the Master, let us never wish for human eyes to see it. That is the true spirit of piety—may God grant that we may have it to the full!

But oftentimes we cherish another kind of spirit. Even the sweet singer among you may be singing a hymn "to the praise and glory of God," yet be thinking to himself or herself, all the while, "Do not those who are listening to me think that I have a very sweet voice?" Or, possibly, you are in the Sunday school and you feel, "Well, now, I really am one of the most efficient teachers here. They must think a great deal of me, or they ought to, at any rate." Very often, even in the household, when we have done some little thing, we congratulate ourselves upon it and feel that everybody ought to pat us on the back and burn a little incense in our honor. Ah, dear Friends, if we think anything like this, may the Lord speedily drive it out of us! Such poor creatures as we are, if the Lord would let us be doormats for all His saints to wipe their dirty boots upon, it would be an honor to us. If He only allows us to be hewers of wood or drawers of water, like the Gibeonites of old—and if He accepts what we do, it will be all of His Grace. But for us to set up on our own account, to live to ourselves and to want honor and glory for ourselves—this will never do! We say, of some people, that they are "poor and proud" and, truly, that is what we are when we begin to boast! Lord, take away our pride—our poverty will not so much matter then!

III. I leave that point and come, thirdly, to use the Psalmist's words in yet another sense. I think that the spirit of my text is A SAFE GUIDE IN THEOLOGY.

When I am going to read the Scriptures, to know what I am to believe, to learn what is to be my creed—even before I open my Bible, it is a good thing to say—"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Your name give glory, for Your mercy, and for Your truth's sake." This is, to my mind, a test of what is true and what is false. If you meet with a system of theology which magnifies man, flee from it as far as you can! If the minister, whom you usually hear, tries to make man out to be a very fine

fellow and says a great many things in his praise, you should let him have an empty place where you have been accustomed to sit. This shall be an infallible test to you concerning anyone's ministry. If it is man-praising and honors man, it is not of God! The Negro said of a certain preacher in America, "He do make God so great." I would that it might be said of all of us that our preaching made God great. That plan of salvation that makes man to be somebody, is a wrong one, depend upon it, for he is a nobody and nothing. That kind of preaching which leaves a great deal for man to do and tells him he can do it—well, Brothers and Sisters—let those people who are so very good, strong and great, go and listen to it! But as for you and me—at any rate, for the most of us—we know that, by nature, we are dead in trespasses and sins, that our strength is perfect weakness and, therefore, the kind of preaching that exalts man does not suit our experience. We do not ask for it, nor do we want it. It will poison those who receive it, for it comes not from God.

This is why I believe in *the Doctrines of Grace*. I believe in Divine Election because somebody must have the supreme will in this matter—and man's will must not occupy the Throne of God—only the will of God. The words of Jehovah stand fast like the great mountains. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." The Sovereignty of God is a Doctrine which lifts Him up high and, therefore, I accept it and reverently bow before it. According to some men, it seems that salvation is mainly the work of the creature. Christ died for him, but Christ may have died in vain unless he, by something that he does, makes Christ's death effectual. That kind of teaching I do not believe because it throws the onus of redemption, after all, upon man, and makes him to give efficacy to the redemption of Christ! No, verily, but I believe that those for whom Christ gave Himself as a ransom shall surely be His forever—and that He did really redeem them and needs not that they add anything to make that everlasting ransom price sufficient and available for their deliverance.

There are some who seem to think that the sinner takes certain steps towards God before God comes to him, but it is not so. The sinner is dead and life must come to him from God before he can stir from the grave, or even have a *wish* to stir from it. And there are some who teach that after man is saved, he still needs to keep himself and confirm himself in Grace—in fact that his salvation depends upon himself. But it is not so, for He who has called us and saved us, has given us gifts which He will never take back and, having once loved us, He will love us to the end. We are firmly persuaded that He who has begun a good work in us will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. From top to bottom, salvation is all of the Grace of God! From its first letter, Alpha, to its last letter, Omega, it is all Grace, Grace, Grace! There is no room for human merit and no room for confidence in self whatever! There is room for good works, yet no room for glorifying in them, "for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them." You know that jewelers have certain tests by which, if you take them a ring or a coin, they can tell you at once

whether it is gold or silver. Here is a test for you to apply and by it you may tell whether a thing is true or not. Does it glorify God? Then, accept it. If it does not, if it glorifies man—puts human will, human ability, human merit into the place of the mercy and the Grace of God—away with it, for it is not food fit for your souls to feed upon! I wish that all Christians were more concerned for the Glory of God than they are. Surely, then, they would become sounder in doctrine than many are nowadays.

IV. The fourth way of using our text is this. It seems to me to be A PRACTICAL DIRECTION IN LIFE.

You want to know, young man, how to direct your steps aright, and how to cleanse your way. This text will help you, dear Brother, *in the selection of your sphere of service*. You will always be safe in doing that which is not for your own glory, but which is distinctly for the Glory of God. Have you two situations offered to you? Are they equally remunerative, or equally difficult? Select that one in which you may hope to glorify God more than you could in the other! This is the voice behind you which says, "This is the way; walk you in it." Are you choosing a profession, or seeking an honorable career in life? Then, I pray you, let this text guide you. Adoniram Judson, full of ambition, seeking a great name, met with this text and rebelled against it. But he says that all his bright visions for the future seemed to vanish as these words sounded in his soul, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Your name give glory." Are you going to live, young man, to get glory to yourself? It will not do! It will not do. If the Lord loves you, He will not let it be so. "But what, then, am I to do?" you ask. Why, labor so to live, in any calling, that you may bring glory to God in it!

Sometimes my text will guide you as to which you should choose out of *two courses of action that lie before you*. Did I understand that you have had a little tiff with your brother or sister, and the question with you is, "What shall I do in this dispute?" Something says, "Go and make up and say that you were wrong." But something else says, "Oh, but you know that we must not always be giving way and yielding because some people, if you give them an inch, will take a mile!" So, possibly, you do not know which course to take. Which is the one you do not wish to follow? Why, you do not like to humble yourself! Then *that* is the plan you should adopt! What flesh revolts against, your spirit should choose. Say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Your name give glory. I will do that which will most honor my Lord and Master—and not that which would best please myself."

Or it may be that there are two ways in which you might serve God and you are rather perplexed about which one to choose. One of them would give you a good share of honor. The other would involve more work and you would not be likely to get much credit out of it. You really do not know which of the two you ought to choose. I suggest, Brother, that the probabilities are that that is the right one for you from which you will get the least credit. At any rate, I am afraid that if you hold the scales impartially, as you think, your hand will incline just a little to give the preponderance to that which would bring you into fame. Do not do it—school

yourself so that you can say, "For my Master's sake alone will I choose that which shall be my course, and I will follow where He leads the way, seeking to give Him all the glory." That is a direction post which, I think, will guide you out of many of the perplexities of life.

V. Now, fifthly, and lastly, my text seems to contain within itself THE ACCEPTABLE SPIRIT IN WHICH TO REVIEW THE PAST.

Brothers and Sisters, this *is the spirit in which to live*. Has God blessed us? Do we look back upon honorable and useful lives? Has our Sunday school class brought in souls for Christ? Have we been privileged to preach the Gospel and has the Lord given us converts? Then let us be sure to stick to the text—"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Your name give glory." Now, young man, if you are beginning to serve the Savior and He has given you success, your conduct in this first time of testing may decide the whole of your future life. "As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise." There are very few men who can bear success—none can do so unless great Grace is given to them! And if, after a little success, you begin to say, "There now, I am somebody. Did I not do that well? These poor old fogies do not know how to do it—I will teach them"—you will have to go into the back rank, Brother, you are not yet able to endure success! It is clear that you cannot stand praise. But if, when God gives you blessing, you give Him every atom of the glory and clear yourself of everything like boasting, then the Lord will continue to bless you because it will be safe for Him to do so. He is not going to put His treasure, let me tell you, into the leaky vessels of self-exaltation. No, no—He wants good sea-going ships which bear at the masthead the flag on which is inscribed, "Not unto us O Lord, not unto us, but unto Your name give glory."

Yes, and when the time comes for us to die, *this is the spirit in which to die, for it is the beginning of Heaven*. What are they doing in Heaven? If we could look in there, what would we see? There are crowns there, laid up for those that fight the good fight and finish their course—but do you see what the victors are doing with their crowns? They will not wear them! No, not they—they cast them down at Christ's feet, crying, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Your name give glory." Brother, Sister—living, dying—let this be your continual cry! If the Lord favors you, honors you, blesses you, always say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, be the glory." Are you prosperous in business? Do not be proud of your riches. Are you getting on in education? Do not boast of what you know, for there is a great deal more that you do not know. Has God given you a few converts? Do not begin thinking that you are a mighty soul-winner, for there are many more yet to be won. The way up is downward! Your Master descended that He might afterwards ascend and fill all things—and your way of ascent must be downward, downward, downward—so that you become less and less, and less. Say over and over again, "Not unto us, not unto us," till you utterly loathe the idea of human glory and let the Lord have all the praise!

As a Church we can look back upon many years of spiritual prosperity, but we must still sing, "*Non nobis, non nobis, non nobis, Domine*." We

can bless and magnify the Lord for unity, peace, concord and perpetual increase and success in all the works of our hands. Glory be unto the Lord for it! But, as Paul shook off the viper from his hand into the fire, so would we shake off everything that looks like attributing success to ourselves, even to our prayers, our tears, our devotion. Let all the glory be given to God alone, for—

"To Him all the glory belongs."

Now I finish by saying that perhaps there is someone here who is longing to be saved and the only thing that stands in his way is that he will not come to this point and say, "Not unto us, not unto us." Ah, my Friend! You want to be a little somebody! You want to do something, or be something. Brother, be nothing, for then shall Christ be your All-in-All! Remember that the end of the creature is the beginning of the Creator. When you have done with every other confidence, then you can have confidence in God. The Lord bless you to this end, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen,

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 115.

This is one of the Hallel Psalms which were sung by the Jews at the feast of the Passover. It is highly probable that they were sung by our Lord on that memorable night when He instituted the sacred feast which is to be the perpetual memorial of His death, "until He comes." They have, however, a message for us who are now gathered together here.

Verses 1, 2. *Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto Your name give glory, for Your mercy, and for Your truth's sake. Why should the heathen say, Where is now their God?* They talk about what He did when He brought His people up out of Egypt—but they tauntingly ask, "Where is now their God?" You are not dead, O God! Nor are You even waxing weak—will You not let the heathen know that they are resisting You in vain?

3. *But our God is in the heavens.* Where they cannot see Him. But that is just where He should be—in His own royal pavilion, seated upon His own Throne—out of gunshot of all His enemies—where He can survey the whole world, where He is dependent upon none, but absolutely supreme over all—"Our God is in the heavens."

3. *He has done whatever He has pleased.* What a grand sentence that is! After all, His eternal purposes are continually being fulfilled. His decrees can never fail to be accomplished. He is not a thwarted and defeated God—not One who has to wait upon His creatures to know their pleasure, but, "He has done whatever He has pleased." How absolute and unlimited those words are! "Whatever He has pleased." He has willed it and He has done it. As for the heathens who say, "Where is now their God?" we may ask, in holy derision, "Where are *their* gods, and what sort of gods are they?" The Psalmist gives the answer.

4. *Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.* Mere metal—called precious metal, yet, if made into idols, no better than any other metal. This shows the amount that a man will spend upon making to

himself a god that is no god—but what a fool he is to do so! How can a man call that a "god," which did not make him, but which he himself made? "Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands."

5. *They have mouths, but they speak not.* I want you to notice how the Psalmist seems to have an image before him and he points first to its head and mocks at its different parts. And then he points to its hands and its feet, and he utters scathing sarcasms about the whole person of the idol god.

5-7. *Eyes have they, but they see not: they have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: they have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat.* "They have mouths." To carry out their idea of God, the makers of idols have given them mouths, but they cannot speak through them—they are dumb. Shall a man believe a dumb thing to be a god? The idols cannot communicate anything to him—it is not possible for them to speak any word of encouragement, or threat, or promise—"They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they." Some idols had precious gems placed in their heads to appear like eyes, but they cannot see through them, for they are blind. Is it not a contradiction to speak of a blind god? What a blind man must he be who worships a blind god! "Eyes have they, but they see not: they have ears." Some Indian idols certainly have ears, for they have elephants' ears, monstrous lobes and I think, perhaps, the Psalmist was referring to such ears as those. "They have ears," he says, "but they hear not." Then what is the use of their ears? You cannot communicate anything to them, so, why do you utter prayers to a thing that cannot hear what you say? Why do you present praises to images that know not what you are saying? "They have ears, but they hear not." "Noses have they." I note the grim sarcasm of this remark of the Psalmist. It reminds me of Elijah's taunting words to the prophets of Baal, "Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or, perhaps he sleeps and must be awakened."

The ancient Hebrews were not accustomed to treat idolatry with any kind of respect. They poured all sorts of ridicule upon it. Nowadays we are expected to speak very respectfully concerning all false religions—and some philosophers and divines tell us that there is something good in them all. And they say that modern Catholicism, with its many gods, and its rotten rags and cast clouts, which they call relics, is to be treated very delicately. Perhaps someone asks, "Is it not a religion?" Yes, a religion for fools—but not for those who think! "Noses have they, but they smell not." Their devotees fill the room with the smoke of incense—they burn sweet spices before the idols but the idols nostrils are not thereby gratified. "They have hands," says the Psalmist. Their makers give them hands, "but they handle not." They cannot even receive the offerings presented to them! They cannot stretch out their hands to help their votaries. They are without feeling—so the original tells us, yet they have hands, but they are useless. "Feet have they, but they walk not." They could not

even mount to their shrines by themselves—they must be lifted there and fastened with nails into their sockets!

One of the saddest sights to my mind—too sad to be ludicrous—is to see a Catholic chapel, as I have often seen it, when the priest is up on the top of the altar, taking down the various images, and dusting the dolls. He, of course, pays them no sort of reverence, but dusts them as your maid does the things in your bedchamber or your drawing room. Yet these are the things that will be worshipped when the bell rings in an hour's time—these very things that have been dusted and treated in this fashion just like ordinary household ornaments! "Feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat." Their priests pretend that by a kind of sacred ventriloquism, they make an articulate muttering—but the Psalmist very properly says, "Neither speak they through their throat." They cannot whisper, they cannot even mutter! They cannot make even as much noise as a beast or a bird can, for they are lifeless and useless.

8. *They that make them are like unto them; so is everyone that trusts in them.* That is to say, they are as stupid and doltish as the idols they make. If they can bow down and worship such things as these, surely the worshippers are fitted for the gods and the gods for the worshippers! Now, Brothers and Sisters, remember that there is a spiritual idolatry that is very much in vogue nowadays. Certain "thinkers"—as they delight to call themselves, whose religion is known as "modern thought"—do not accept the one living and true God as He reveals Himself in the Old and the New Testaments—they make a god out of what they are pleased to call their own consciousness. Truly, their idols are reason and thought—the work of men's brains. Their god does not hear prayer because it would be absurd, they say, to suppose that prayer can have any effect on Deity. Their god has little or no regard for justice—according to them, you may live as you like, but all will come right at last. They hold out a "larger hope" that the wicked will all be restored to God's favor. If that should be the case, there would be no justice left upon the face of the earth or in Heaven either.

All this is false! A god that a man can comprehend is not really a god at all. A god that I could create from my own brain must, of necessity, be no god. There can only be the one God who is made known to us by Divine Revelation. God must be infinitely greater than the human mind—He must be beyond our utmost conception—of whom we can know but little compared with what He really is, and that little He must Himself reveal to us. Beware, I pray you, of a god that you make for yourself! Take God as you find Him in this Book and worship Him. Otherwise, you will find that there may be mental idols as well as idols of silver, gold, wood and stone.

"The God of Abraham praise." "The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob," the God of the whole earth shall He be called. "The God that led His people out of Egypt, the God of Sinai is the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." And "this God is our God forever and ev-

er." Ours is no new religion—it is the religion of Jehovah worship, and to this we will cling, whoever may oppose.

9-11. *O Israel, trust you in the LORD: He is their help and their shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD: He is their help and their shield. You that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD: He is their help and their shield.* The first of this set of sentences seems to me to be addressed by way of exhortation, but the second is a sort of soliloquy in which the Psalmist, having exhorted others to trust, says, "Well they may trust, for God is both their active and their passive Helper—their help and their shield." O you who know Him, and love Him, you who are of the house of Israel, however other men may turn aside to idols, keep yourselves steadfast to Jehovah and trust in Him even when He is mocked and ridiculed! O you who are His ministers, the house of Aaron, especially devoted to His service, you know Him best and you should trust Him most! O all of you, proselytes of the gate, who are not of the seed of Israel, still fear Jehovah and trust in Him, for He is your help and your shield!

12. *The LORD has been mindful of us: He will bless, He will bless the house of Israel, He will bless the house of Aaron.* He had been mindful of Israel and this guaranteed that He would still bless His people. "The times are dark and cloudy," the Psalmist seems to say, "but by His ancient mercies, our faith is established, and our hope encouraged."

13. *He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great.* Now, little ones, look out for the blessing that is meant for you—"He will bless them that fear the Lord, both small and great." Those who have but little faith, little joy, little Divine Grace, little growth, He will still bless!

14-16. *The LORD shall increase you more and more, you and your children. You are blessed of the LORD which made Heaven and earth. The Heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD'S: but the earth has He given to the children of men.* This may in part account for the fact that He is not known, and not honored among men. He is, Himself, in Heaven and, for a while, He has left men to follow their own devices. Hence it is that they have set up false gods. But, whatever others may do, or not do, let us praise the name of the Lord!

17. *The dead praise not the LORD.* No song comes up from that dark morgue, no praise ascends to God from those that are asleep in the grave. The living among them praise Him in Heaven, but "the dead praise not the Lord."

17, 18. *Neither any that go down into silence. But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and forevermore. Praise the LORD.* "Praise the Lord," that is, "Hallelujah!" The Psalm could not end with a better note than that. So may all our lives end, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—152, 242, 219.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, 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 LOVE FOR HIS VINEYARD
NO. 2785

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 29, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A THURSDAY EVENING, DURING THE SUMMER OF 1860.

"My vineyard, which is Mine, is before Me: you, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred."
Song of Solomon 8:12.

You are aware that these Canticles are responsive songs—that one sentence is uttered by Solomon and the next by Solyma, his spouse. We believe that in this "Song of Songs, which is Solomon's," we also hear Christ speaking to His Church, His bride, and the Church responding to His words of love in tones which His love has suggested to her. The fact that it is a responsive song sometimes renders it the more difficult to understand because it is not easy, in every case, to discover whether it is Solomon or Solyma—Christ or His Church—who is speaking. The first sentence in our text is just of that character. It may be Christ who says, "My vineyard, which is Mine, is before Me." Or it may be His Church, who is saying, "My vineyard, which is mine, is before me." With regard to the latter part of the verse, we have no difficulty, for we can see, upon the very face of it, that it is addressed by the spouse, the bride, to her Divine Bridegroom, to whom she says "You, O Solomon, must have a thousand."

I. Let us look at the first sentence: "My vineyard, which is Mine, is before Me." We have no difficulty in understanding that this vineyard is Christ's Church. She is not compared to a grove of trees—even of fruit-bearing trees—because there are many trees which are valuable, not only for their fruit, but also for their timber. And should they bring forth no fruit, they would still be of some value. Not so is it with the members of Christ's Church—they are like the vine, for the vine, if it brings forth no fruit, is fit for nothing, it cumbers the ground. The Lord said to the Prophet Ezekiel, "What is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest? Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? Or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon? Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel: the fire devours both the ends of it, and the midst of it is burned. Is it meet for any work?" No, if it is fruitless, it is useless. It must bear fruit, or it is of no value whatever. Hence the Church is always compared to a vineyard because if she does not bring forth fruit to the Lord Jesus Christ, she is less useful even than an ordinary mercantile and commercial community. That mercantile

community, or corporate body instituted for wise purposes, may further some useful design, but the Church is of no use whatever unless she brings forth the fruits of holiness and of gratitude to her Lord, her Divine Vinedresser. Better that she be not called a church at all than that she should pretend to be the Church of Christ and yet bring forth no fruit to His praise.

So we have no difficulty in understanding that the vineyard mentioned in the text is Christ's Church because it is so significantly a symbol of the body of Believers banded together in love to their Savior—and known by the name of "the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ." We must, therefore, consider the opening sentence of our text as being, first, THE WORDS OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. And here you see at once two things—first, that Christ claims a special property in His Church and, secondly, that He has special regard and care for her—"*My* vineyard, which is *Mine*, is before *Me*."

The Master here, then, claims *a special property in His Church*. Twice does He mention that claim—"My vineyard, which is Mine," as if He meant to assert His rights and to maintain them against all comers, being ready to defend them in Heaven's High Court of Chancery, or before all the hosts of His enemies who might seek to snatch His inheritance from Him. "Whatever is not Mine," says the Divine Lover, "My Church is. She is so Mine that if I gave up Lebanon, if I should renounce Bashan and give up all the rest of My possessions, I must retain Zion, My vineyard, My best-beloved." We know that the Church is Christ's by special bonds—not simply by creation. It is true that the Lord Jesus has created all His people, but then He does not claim them merely upon that ground—because all men are His by creation. No, the very devils in Hell are His in that sense and, therefore, He does not claim His Church simply by the right of being her Creator. Nor does He claim her merely by the prerogatives of Providence, for, in that sense, the cattle on a thousand hills are His and the lions of the forest and the young ravens which cry to Him, for He supplies their needs. All things are His by Providence, from the stars of Heaven down to the gnat in the summer's air, or the worm that conceals itself in the grass at eventide. But our Lord Jesus claims His Church by a far higher title than that of creation or Providence. Nor is the Church His merely by right of conquest. It is true that He has fought for His people and that they may be considered as the spoils that He has taken in war. He has rescued His people from the hand of him that was stronger than they—all of them, as He shall take them with Him into Heaven, may be looked upon as signs and wonders, trophies of what His strong arm has done in delivering them from their mighty and malignant foes. But, Beloved, Christ claims His Church by a better title even than this!

First, He claims the Church as His own by His Father's gift. You know that the Church is the property of all the three Persons of the holy and blessed Trinity. She is the Father's property by election. She is the Son's property by donation, passing from the hand of the Father to that of the Mediator. And, then, the Church is the Spirit's by His indwelling and in-

habitation—so that all three of the Divine Persons have a right to the Church for some special office which they exercise towards her. So Christ claims His Church as His Father's gift, a love-token, a reward, a sign of the Father's favor and regard towards Him. He looks on His people as being dear, not only for their own sakes, but for the sake of Him who gave them to His Son, to be His forever and ever. They are His, then, by donation and, as such, since the Father gave them to Him, they are very, very precious in His sight!

Next, Christ's Church is His by purchase. There are some who say that all men are Christ's by purchase. But, Beloved, you and I do not believe in a sham redemption which does not redeem! We do not believe in a universal redemption which extends even to those who were in Hell before the Savior died and which includes the fallen angels as well as unrepentant men. We believe in an *effectual* redemption and can never agree with those who would teach us that Christ's blood was shed in vain. The Good Shepherd laid down His life for His sheep. Christ loved His Church and gave Himself for it. He bought His own people with His blood. He purchased not the world's wide wilderness, but the "spot enclosed by Grace," the vineyard which His own right hand has planted! Dear, then, to the heart of Jesus is every vine, and every cluster of grapes in this vineyard, because He bought the whole of it with His blood! As Naboth, when asked to sell his vineyard to Ahab, answered the king, "The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto you," and kept it even at the cost of his life! And do you think that our Lord Jesus will ever part with His vineyard which is not only His by inheritance from His Father, but also His by purchase—"not with corruptible things, as silver and gold"—but with His own most precious blood? On every leaf in that vineyard, His blood has fallen. The red juice that flows so freely from the clusters, when pressed, is but His blood in another form! If the soil of the vineyard is rich, it is because He has enriched it with His blood. If the vines bring forth plenteously, it is because of the care He has taken with them.

More than this, the Church is Christ's by one other tie, which, perhaps, makes it still dearer to Him. She is His bride, His spouse. Now, whatever a man may not have a right to, he certainly has a right to his own wife! Whatever legal quibbles may be raised about a piece of earth, about a man's title to his freehold property, to his own wife he certainly has a clear right and title. And Jesus looks into the eyes of His spouse, when He has redeemed her out of the hand of the enemy, and taken her unto Himself—when He has placed the jewels of His Grace about her neck, in her ears and on her hands, when He has adorned her with the robe of His own righteousness and made her beautiful in His beauty—He looks at her and He says, "You are Mine; you are Mine; and no one else can claim you. My spouse, you are no harlot, you shall not play the part of an adulteress with many lovers, for you are Mine, and no one but Myself can claim you. None but Myself shall partake of your embraces, none but Myself shall receive of the love of your heart."

By these three ties, then, O Church of Christ, you are His special property—and by each of these you are endeared to Him! Jesus sees in you, O Church of God, the mark of His Father's love-gift! He sees, too, the evidence of His own loving purchase and His espousal of you unto Himself, to be His forever and ever.

But we must pass on to notice that in the first sentence of our text, we are not only told about Christ's special right to His Church, but also about *His special care and observation of her*—"My vineyard, which is Mine, is before Me."

The Church is "before" Christ in the sense that He so loves her that He never has her out of His Presence. The vineyard is so dear to the Vine-dresser that He never leaves it! He may sometimes hide Himself among the vines, but He is always close at hand, watching how they progress and delighting Himself with their fragrance and fruitfulness. The Bride-groom is never absent from His spouse, for He loves her too much to be separated from her. Is it not a sweet thought that Believers are always under the eyes of Christ? He would not be happy unless He had them continually before Him. His Church may be willing to endure His absence for a while, but He loves her so much that He cannot bear to be away from her. She may grow so cold towards Him that His absence may seem, to her, to be but a small matter, but the decay of her love is not a little matter to Him. His love is strong as death and His jealousy is cruel as the grave, so He cannot bear to have her out of His sight even for a minute. He will always pour upon her the beams of His love and always fix upon her the affection of His whole heart.

The expression, "My vineyard, which is Mine, is before Me," may also mean that Jesus is always caring for it, as well as always loving it. There is never a moment when Christ ceases to care for His vineyard. He Him-self said, "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." What? Water it every moment? Keep it night and day? Yes, He will never neglect it. His word to His Church is, "Lo, I am with you always"—not merely for half a day, or for an hour in the day, leaving His ministers to care for them at other times—but, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Jesus still walks among the golden candlesticks. He does not light the candles and then leave them to burn by themselves—He walks among them and so keeps them from going out. "My vineyard, which is Mine, is before Me." Christ is always in His Church, always caring for His Church, always bidding His Providence assist her agencies, always upholding her in her hours of trial, leading her into all Truth, instructing her sons and daughters, and making all her members "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

There is also in this expression, not only the sense of love and care, but also of knowledge—"My vineyard, which is Mine, is before Me." Christ knows every vine in the vineyard and He knows all the fruit that is on each vine, and how much there was last year and how much there will be in years to come. Before there was a vine in that vineyard, Christ knew how many plants would be planted, where they would be planted, of

what sort they would be and how much fruit they would bring forth. He did not find out by degrees what His inheritance was to be—He knew all about it long before the worlds were formed! There is nothing in His Church that is new to Him—He foreknew, and foresaw, and foreordained every single particle of mold that lies in that vineyard, every stone that is in its walls and every vine growing within them! Yes, and every leaf. Yes, and every particle of blight or mildew that falls upon a leaf—all has been settled and ordained, or foreknown and prepared for by the great Proprietor.

"My vineyard, which is Mine, is before Me." There is a sweet thought here for all who love the Savior. You, as His Church, and each one of you who are His people, are especially preserved by Him. Then, "why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord and my judgment is passed over from my God?" I tell you, Soul, that He sees you as much as if there were no others for His eyes to look upon! And He cares for you as infinitely and with as undivided a heart as if you were the only soul that He ever bought with His blood! If you were His only elect one, His only redeemed one, His only loved one, He could not deal with you more tenderly and more lovingly than He is dealing with you now! If you are Christ's, you are never behind His back—you are always before Him. He can always see you, though you cannot always see Him. When the eyes of your faith is dim, the eyes of His care is not. When your heart seems dead and cold, His heart is still hot with Infinite affection—and when you say, "My God has ceased to be gracious," you belie Him and slander Him! He is really manifesting His graciousness in another fashion. He has changed the manifestation of His purpose of love and mercy, but His purpose is the same as ever—to drench you with floods of mercy, to wash you with streams of Grace and to fertilize you till you shall be like that Eshcol "branch with one cluster of grapes," which was so large and weighty that "they bore it between two upon a staff!" No, more—till the great Vinedresser shall make of you such a vine as earth has scarcely seen as yet, and shall, therefore, have to transplant you to a better vineyard, even to the hill-top of Glory!

I think, then, if we regard the first sentence as the language of Christ, it is very sweet to hear Him say, "My vineyard, which is Mine, is before Me." My Brothers and Sisters, the deacons and elders of the church must always take comfort from this thought. If there is anything in the church that grieves us, we must feel, "It is His vineyard, not ours. It is before Him, so He will know what to do with it." I am sure, dear Brothers, we would lay down our tasks if we had not our Master with us. I would not dare to be a minister and you would not dare to be church officers unless we felt that it was before Him. In your different districts, let the sick, the sorrowful, the backsliding all be carried before your God—and let all the members feel that although we are but feeble creatures to be the leaders of so great a host, yet that the church may grow and increase until we are not only fifteen hundred, but 15,000 if the Lord wills—and that the church would then be just as carefully looked after as it is now, for it would still be before Him! He who is the Vinedresser is just as able to

care for His vines when they are most numerous as if there were only one—and that one had the whole of His attention!

II. Now, very briefly, I want you to regard this first sentence of our text as THE LANGUAGE OF THE CHURCH ITSELF.

According to the 11th verse, "Solomon had a vineyard at Baal Hamon. He let out the vineyard unto keepers—everyone, for the fruit thereof, was to bring a thousand pieces of silver." So, dear Brothers and Sisters, everyone of us whom the Lord has brought to Himself, has a part of His vineyard to keep for Him. We do not sing, with Wesley—

"A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify,
A never-dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky,"

because we do not believe anything of the kind! We leave the work of saving our souls in higher hands than our own—but after our souls are saved, then we have a charge to keep and that charge is to publish the name and fame of Jesus to the utmost of our power—to seek to bring others under the sound of the Gospel—and to tell them what they must do to be saved.

There are a great many people who seem to forget that they have a vineyard of their own to keep. Or else if they remember it, they cannot say, "My vineyard, which is mine, is before me," for they go about gazing on other people's vineyards instead of keeping their eyes fixed upon their own. They say, "Look at So-and-So's vineyard. I don't think he trims his vines in the new style." I usually notice that those persons who have such wonderful plans of their own and who are always finding fault with other people's plans, never do anything except find fault. I like the deacons and elders of the church, and the teachers in the Sunday school to have no other plan than this—to do all the good they can and to do it in the name of the Lord Jesus. When they are doing that, let other people not interfere with them, but themselves do all the good that they can. It is always well when a man has his work before him, knows what he is going to do and then goes straight at it. There are far too many people gadding about to see what others are doing and to find out their plans and methods of working. Let me tell you, Brothers and Sisters, that the best way to succeed is to have no plan but this—"Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might." When I see the members of a church laying down a multiplicity of rules, I know that they are getting themselves into a multiplicity of troubles. If they will but leave rules and regulations to come up when they are needed, they will find them when they need them. Let every man who has the Spirit of God within him, set about the work which he is called to do. Let him attend to the portion of the vineyard which is before him and try to get his thousand pieces of silver out of his own portion—and not out of another's. There is always a set of grumblers about who think they could preach better and manage Sunday schools better than anybody else. They are the people who generally do nothing at all.

I sometimes receive anonymous letters asking me to amend my style in this way or the other. I know where they come from—they are either

from people who are very idle, to whom the penny post gives occupation for their idle hours—or from those who think they can bring themselves to our notice by their communications. I usually thrust all such letters into the fire. Now, if these people, instead of wasting their time in that way, would write a letter with good sound Gospel teaching in it to some poor sinner who wants to know the way of salvation. Or if, instead of wasting their pennies upon me—for I think I can do better without their advice than with it—they would bestow them upon some poor crossing-sweeper, they would do more good! It is always the grumbling souls who are the idle souls—but the men who get the thousand pieces of silver out of their vineyard have their own work so constantly before them that they have no leisure to look upon the work of other people with the view of finding fault with it! They know right well that they have no right to interfere between other men and their Master and that, to their own Master, each one must stand or fall.

I pray that this church, and every member of it, may always be able to say, in the words of our text, "My vineyard, which is mine, is before me." I am not responsible for my brother, but I am responsible for myself. I will always keep my own work before my eyes. I will go about it and do what I have to do just as if there were nobody else in the world to do anything. I will work as hard as if I were the only Christian alive and, at the same time, I will always comfort myself with the thought that my feeble labors are not all that are being rendered to the Master, but that there are more than seventy thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal and who are serving the one living and true God! I will, while I am working, wish to every other worker greater success than I have myself. If I see any prospering more than I am, I will bless God for it, but I will still say, "My vineyard, which is mine, is before me." However well my neighbor is getting on, that is no reason why I should slacken my efforts—and however badly another may succeed, that is no reason why I should neglect my own duty in order to chide him. "My vineyard, which is mine, is before me."

The next time you are tempted to complain of some Brother or Sister, check yourself and say, "It is my vineyard which is before me. There are some ugly thistles in it and some great nettles over there in the corner. I have not trimmed my vines this summer. I have not taken the little foxes which spoil the vines, but, from now on I will attend more diligently to 'my vineyard, which is mine."' A blessed way of keeping from finding fault with other people is to look well to your own vineyard.

III. I will now turn to the second part of our text which is THE LANGUAGE OF THE CHURCH TO HER GREAT PROPRIETOR LORD. "You, O Solomon, must have a thousand"—"must have a thousand." Whatever others have, our Lord must have Solomon's portion—"and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred." So, then, in the first place, the fruit of the vineyard belongs to Christ, but, in the second place, both Christ and His Church agree to reward the keepers of the vineyard and to let them have their two hundred.

First, then, *all the fruit of the vineyard belongs to Christ and He must have it*. Dwell on that word, "must," and let each one of you feel the blessed necessity. There are some churches where if they have any fruit, they keep it to themselves. The Word has free course and is glorified—sinners are saved, saints are comforted—and then they take the honor and glory to themselves. Other churches there are which give all the glory to the minister. The work succeeds well, everything prospers and then the keeper of the vineyard has the thousand pieces of silver. There are other churches which give all the glory to the rich people in their midst. "Everything will go well," they say, "while the squire attends with us, while Mr. So-and-So is one of our deacons and Mr. So-and-So is so generous a subscriber to our funds." So that, there, also, the thousand pieces of silver are given to *man*. Ah, but that must not be, Brothers and Sisters. Stand back you intruders! We dare not give you so much as a farthing's worth of the fruit of this vineyard! The vineyard is Christ's. He purchased it with His own life's blood, so the fruit is all His and He must have it all—none of it must be given to anyone else. Open wide your hand, O thief, and give up the fruit you have taken unto yourself! We demand it of you imperatively! Give it all up, Sir, for Jesus Christ must have it all, even as Solomon had the thousand pieces of silver.

But, Brothers and Sisters, it sometimes happens that in a church there is no glory at all. The church is so badly off, the congregation is so small, there is such an absence of zeal and so very feeble has the spirit of prayer become, that there is no glory to be given to anyone! What shall we say to such a church as that? "Brethren, do not rest satisfied with such a state of things as that. Do not say, 'Solomon must be content with a hundred.' No, He must have His thousand." I want all the members of this church to feel that our Solomon, our Lord Jesus Christ, must have His thousand pieces of silver! We must not allow one year to go below the mark of the previous one. If Christ received Glory through us last year, He must have as much or more Glory through us this year. If we had a revival in years gone by, we must have a revival now. If Solomon had a thousand pieces of silver from us once, we must never let our tribute to Him be any less. Souls must still be brought to the Savior, even should—

"The wide world esteem it strange,
Gaze and admire, and hate the change."

The ministry must still be powerful, the Prayer Meetings must continue to be full of faith and fervor, the members must keep on striving together in love for the extension of Christ's Kingdom. His Kingdom must come and His will must be done on earth as it is in Heaven! We will not put in an, "if," or a, "perhaps"—it must be so and we will not be satisfied unless it is. "You, O Solomon, must have a thousand."

Suppose, my Brothers and Sisters, in looking back upon the past year, we find that we have not had as much of the Master's Presence, and have not done as much for Him as in years gone by? Shall we say that we will make it up next year? Oh, no! That will not do! Our Solomon must have His thousand this year! Shall He have less than the stipulated rental for

His vineyard? Shall I contribute less, today, to my Lord's honor than I did yesterday? Shall I be less zealous, less useful, less laborious? Shall the minister preach less than he did? Shall the elders visit less than they used to do? Will you, church members, pray less and serve Christ less? If you love Him less, you will do so. But, Brothers and Sisters, I trust that you do *not* love Him less and I am sure that you owe Him more—you are plunging deeper and deeper into debt to Him every day! He is continually revealing to you more and more of the heights and depths, and lengths and breadths of His love that passes knowledge! He is always leading you further and yet still further into the mysteries of His Kingdom and teaching you to know Himself which is much more than knowing mere doctrine.

So I ask you—Can you love Him less than you did in the years gone by? Will you pray to Him less earnestly and praise Him less fervently? No, Brothers and Sisters, I think that as Christians we shall unanimously cry, "As we come nearer to You, O Lord, make us more fruitful! And as years increase upon us, let it not be said that we do less for our Master at 50 than we did at twenty-five." Let not people be able to say concerning any of us, "He ran well—what hindered him?" Let not the Spirit of God have to chide any of us and say, "You have left your first love." Let us insist upon it that as we began, so we will continue, or, rather, that we will not simply go on as we began, but that we will seek to go "from strength to strength" until everyone of us shall appear in Zion before our God! I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem, by the undiminished beauty and the undivided love of your Lord, that you love Him no less than you did in the day of your espousal to Him! O you keepers of the vineyard, my Brothers in the ministry, and you who go out from this church to preach the Word of God—if you gave Him glory last year. If you loved the souls of men. If you knew how to wrestle with the Angel of the Covenant in months gone by—you must do the same now! You must not do less than you used to do! You must not preach less earnestly, you must not pray less fervently—but rather you must love Him more and serve Him better! May the Spirit of God enable you to do so!

But, alas, there are some of you who never give our King Solomon anything! Perhaps you are the people of God—at least you profess to be so—but what are you doing for Him? I do not think there are many members of my own church of whom I have cause to complain, but there may be some. Perhaps you have been converted for years, yet you do not know that you were ever the means of bringing a soul to Jesus. You say that you love the Savior, but what are you doing for Him? It is not doing anything for Him merely to come here on the Sabbath or on week-nights, to listen to His Word—there are other and better ways of showing your love to the Savior than by simply coming to hear another man talk to you about Him. Oh, if I have one idle member in the church who talks of loving Christ, but does nothing for Him, I would look that member in the face if I knew which one it was and I would say that faith without works is dead—that the love which does not show itself in practical piety is a pretended love, a painted flame—and not the gift of Heaven!

I feel that I must also say that if we are all doing something for Christ, we are none of us doing enough for Him. I feel, sometimes, Beloved, as if I wished that I had a thousand tongues with which to tell the story of His Grace—and as if I longed that each day were a year and each year a century in which I could keep on telling of His love! Often, when the sermon is over, I chide myself because I seem to have spoken so coldly of the theme that demands a tongue of fire. I have painted so badly that lovely face which, if you could but see it, would so captivate your hearts that you would never want to see anything else. Yet I can honestly say, from my very heart, that I desire to give my Lord and Master His thousand pieces of silver—

"I'll praise my Maker with my breath,
And when my voice is lost in death,
Praise shall employ my nobler powers."

I cannot stop preaching, Brothers and Sisters, and you cannot cease praying—we cannot, any of us, if we truly love our Lord, give up working for Him! I am sure that if we should live to be so very old, and so very feeble, that we could hardly get outside our own door, we would still try to serve Him to the very last—we would find some means of praising Him even on our dying bed.

Now I will conclude with a few remarks upon the last words of the text—"and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred," which means that the keepers of the vineyard are to receive a reward. Christ's ministers are to receive the love, regard and esteem of His people for His sake. Joseph Irons put this thought very prettily. I forget His exact words, but they are to the effect that Christ's ministers really do get their two hundred. They have 100 while they are preaching, in their own enjoyment of the sweetness of the mystery which they open up to others—and then they have another hundred in the success of their ministry—in the joy of seeing sinners saved, harlots reclaimed and drunks converted. Our Master is a blessed Paymaster, for He pays us while we are doing His work, in the work itself! He pays us when the work is done and then He says that He has only begun to pay us, for, when the whole of our work is over, here, we shall enter into His joy and receive the fullness of our reward!

I may, perhaps, have some members of country churches present who are not kind to their minister. I can speak plainly upon this point because my people are almost too kind to me. But I say to members of other churches—Take care of your minister, for you will never get a blessing unless you are kind to him whom God has set over you. If your minister does not have his two hundred—that is, if he has not your love and respect, and if you do not give him sufficient wages to keep him above his needs—you cannot expect the Spirit of God to work with you. I believe there are scores of churches in which no good is ever done for this very reason. God says, "You starve My minister, so I will starve you. You find fault with him and quarrel with him—then I will find fault with you and quarrel with you. There shall be no blessing upon you—you shall be like Gilboa—there shall be neither dew nor rain upon you."

I sometimes hear sad stories of what is done in some churches to the minister of Christ. He is looked upon as the drudge and slave of the community. Some self-important, pompous man lords it over both pastor and people—and that poor man, even when he is preaching the everlasting Gospel, often has to wonder how he will get his next coat in which he is to appear in the pulpit. The one he has is nearly out at the elbows, but, if he were to hint that another is needed, he would receive notice to go elsewhere. They would tell him that he was a mere hireling, looking for loaves and fishes—as if there were either loaves or fishes to be gotten out of such people as they are! I have often heard it remarked that the minister has a certain sum paid to him, but the great mass of the people never think, "He is our pastor. We must try to cheer his heart and make glad his spirit." This state of things ought not to be and until it is altered, the Lord will have a quarrel with those who act thus!

I will say no more upon that point, but repeat that our great Solomon must have His thousand. The minister will cry, even though he is starving, "Solomon must have His thousand." I was once travelling through Hertfordshire and stayed the night at a certain place and the minister said to me, "Will you preach here this evening, Sir?" "Yes," I replied, "I should like an opportunity of talking to your people if you will give them notice." I went into the minister's house and I found that they only gave him 13 shillings a week and I saw that his coat was threadbare. When I went into the pulpit, I thought," I will give these people something"—and I did, too, I can assure you! And after that, I gave him something and they gave him something—and we just managed to contribute together enough to get him a new suit of livery, as he called it—and I do not think that Brother has been quite as low down in the depths of poverty as he was then!

There are scores of places in the country where ministers are treated as that poor man was, but it ought not to be so. The minister of Christ must have some regard, some esteem, some honor in his church, but, after all, our Lord Jesus Christ must have His thousand. My own people may take home to themselves the first part of my discourse, but you big farmer deacons must take the latter part to yourselves. Don't you go to sleep tonight until you have thought, "What can we do for that poor dear man who is to preach for us next Sunday?" As for my own members, you can think about the first part. Let it be your joy to know that the vineyard is Christ's vineyard and that it always lies before Him—and let each one of you seek to give to Jesus His thousand pieces of silver—all the honor, the glory, the praise, the love and the service that you can render to Him from the beginning of the year to the end!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 47.

Verses 1-5. *O clap your hands, all you people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph. For the LORD most high is terrible; He is a great King over all the earth. He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under*

our feet. He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom He loved. Selah. God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.

One of our sacred poets has written—

"All His work and warfare done,
He into His Heaven is gone,
And beside His Father's Throne,
Now is pleading for His own"

—but, not merely is He "beside His Father's Throne," He is with Him sitting upon the throne—and waiting until His foes are made His footstool.

6-9. *Sing praises to God, sing praises, sing praises unto our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth: sing you praises with understanding. God reigns over the heathen: God sits upon the Throne of His holiness. The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth belong unto God: He is greatly exalted.* There are some in these days who have, according to their own confession, cast off the God of Abraham. They do not believe in the Jehovah who is revealed in the Old Testament—they are like those of whom Moses said, "They sacrificed to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not." But as for us, we still delight to sing—

"The God of Abraham praise
Who reigns enthroned above
Ancient of everlasting days,
And God of love!
Jehovah, great I AM!
By earth and Heaven confess.
I bow, and bless the sacred name
Forever blest!"

"But the God of Abraham is very stern," says someone. Assuredly He is! He is terrible in the majesty of His justice! Yet we worship and adore Him for that very reason. No effeminate deity such as modern thought has invented, has even an atom of our admiration, much less of our adoration! But the glorious God of the Sinai thunders who is equally terrible as the God of Justice on Calvary—this God, who, nevertheless, is Love, our hearts adore and worship!

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, 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 SOUL'S BEST FOOD
NO. 2786

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 6, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 13, 1878.

"Eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."
Isaiah 55:2.

ALL life here below needs to be sustained from without by food of some kind or other. We know not how the angels live, yet the Psalmist's expression, "Man did eat angels' food," might lead us to imagine that even *they* need to be supplied with nourishment from without, but, certainly, all earthly life requires appropriate nutriment. The physical life of man cannot be sustained unless he has bread to eat. His mental life, too, though that is often forgotten, cannot be in a healthy condition without an adequate supply of understanding and knowledge. The poor creatures which have been confined in prison cells, year after year, with nothing to read or to think upon, have come forth to liberty as imbeciles—quite unfit to go into society because the mind has wasted away in starvation. You must feed the mental, as well as the physical man, if it is to be in a right and healthy state.

And this is pre-eminently true of the spiritual nature which God has implanted within His people at the time of their regeneration. That higher nature must be nourished—God has been pleased to give us an ordinance on purpose to remind us of this great fact. Baptism is the symbol of the entrance upon the new life by passing through death in the type of the Savior's tomb—"buried with Him by baptism into death." And then, when that life is once obtained, there follows the sacred feast of the Lord's Supper wherein, under the emblems of the bread and the wine, we are taught that Jesus Christ must be, in a spiritual sense, both meat and drink to our souls. We derive our life from Him and He must sustain it. We receive spiritual life by hearing concerning Him and that life is to be sustained by our still hearing the truth concerning Him. Our spiritual life must have spiritual food—it cannot possibly do without it.

The great mercy is that, according to our text, there is abundant provision for sustaining the life of our souls. The Lord would not have said to us, "Listen diligently unto Me," if He had not had something good to say to us. He would not have said, "Eat what is good," in such a connection as this, if He had not provided it! Nor would He have said, "Let your soul delight itself in fatness," if that "fatness" had not been already prepared by the great Host of the Gospel feast! So we are taught two things

on the very threshold of our subject—first, that our soul must be fed and, next, that God has provided the best food for our soul.

When God creates the beasts of the field, "he causes the grass to grow for the cattle." He does not make a single bird without providing the seeds or the insects upon which that bird shall live. There is not a tiny minnow in the brook but has its own special provision—while the great leviathan, that "makes the deep to boil like a pot," through his terrific and powerful activity, has all that he needs to feed his vast bulk, for God simply opens His hands and so satisfies the desire of every living thing. As this is so manifestly the case, it would not be conceivable that He should make spiritual life, which is the nearest akin to His own, in that it is the life of God in man, and yet not provide that it should continue to exist, expand, develop and become perfected! So, while the truth of our necessity can never be shaken off from our consciousness, the other great Truth of God of the Divine provision, which is the counterpart of it, must never be forgotten by us.

To stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, I am going to speak about the soul's best food. First, *let us note the reason for the exhortation of our text.* Then, secondly, *let us note the benefits which will flow from our obedience to that exhortation.*

I. First, then, LET US NOTE THE REASON FOR THE EXHORTATION IN OUR TEXT—"Eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

The first reason which I shall mention is *the exceeding bountifulness of God in Christ Jesus.* The invitation here given is in accordance with the Character of the God who gives it. He is not stingy—He never stints His guests, or keeps His children on a low diet. He is so good that He delights to give to them of His goodness and to give of it freely. As it is of the very essence of the sun that it should not only be bright, but that it should scatter its beams far and wide, so is it of the very Essence of God that He should not only be Goodness intrinsically, but that He should generously bestow His goodness upon us. He delights to give out of His fullness and, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, that fullness is stored up on purpose that there might be human receivers of it. Blessed be His holy name, "of His fullness have all we received, and Grace for Grace." The invitation in our text seems to me to come naturally from the very Nature of our Covenant God. He delights not in starving His creatures, nor in seeing them pining in need—but He rejoices in their being filled to the utmost fullness of satisfaction and, therefore, He says to us, "Eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

This invitation, too, seems to me to come naturally from God when we remember the abundant provision that He has made for the supply of our needs. If any of you prepared a feast, it would be very grievous to you if your friends did not eat what you had provided. What host or hostess, with a bountiful heart and a liberal hand, ever felt pleased to see food remaining on the table untouched? It is an insult to us if we have taken care to provide fit provision for our guests and then that dish after dish should be brought in and carried back again—nobody caring, even, to

taste it. And the great Lord of All has, in the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ, made such plentiful provision for our needs that He cannot bear the idea that it should be left neglected and that none should partake of it. So He says, "Eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." It is the very heart of God speaking in these words—and it is the provision of God's Grace claiming to be consumed—God's love pleading that what He has provided so bountifully should not be lost or wasted! Blessed be His name, it cannot be!

It seems to me to also be *an expression of the Divine desire for fellowship*, for, almost always, when fellowship is spoken of in relation to God, expressions which concern eating are used. Fellowship begins, as it were, at the Passover, at the eating of the lamb. In the tabernacle in the wilderness, the offerings were not all burnt upon the altar—many of them were partaken of by both the offerer and the priest—and by God as represented by the devouring flame. Fellowship was thus established in eating and drinking and so, when Jesus instituted that blessed memorial Supper, He said to His disciples concerning the bread, "Take, eat." And, concerning the cup, "Drink you all of it." When, in the Revelation, He said to the angel of the church in Laodicea, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock," you know how He goes on to say, "If any man hears My voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me." This appears to be God's favorite image to express fellowship.

So, when I read, "Eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness," I understand our great Father in Heaven to mean, "Come, My children, come into close communion with Me—come and eat with Me." I also understand the blessed Son of God to be saying to us, "Come, My Brothers and Sisters, and let our hearts be linked together in choicest fellowship, and let us feast together." I understand the Holy Spirit, too, as saying here, "Enter into the secret chamber of communion, shut the door and let your fellowship be with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ." That seems to me to be the drift of the expression, "Eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." So, you see, the exhortation is given to us for these reasons—it comes from the bountiful heart of God and is congruous with the provision made for us by Him and with the inward desire for fellowship which the great Father always feels towards His children.

A further reason for the exhortation is found *in our exceedingly great necessities*. You must eat, so "eat that which is good." Your soul needs the best food, so "let your soul delight itself in fatness"—in the fat and dainty morsels which the great God, who understands us even better than we understand ourselves, has so generously provided for us. He sees the present and the future necessities of His children and He knows that the main supply for those necessities must come through their inward partaking of the abundant provision made for them in His Everlasting Covenant. Yes, Brothers and Sisters, we must eat, or else hunger of soul will come upon us and we shall have a gnawing at the heart which will be insatiable. There will be the daughters of the horseleech within us

crying, "Give, give," and they will make their voices heard—and their craving will become more and more intolerable!

A true Believer, when he loses the company of his Lord, seems to have in his soul a wolf that is hungry to the last degree, and howls and cries after its food. Yes, Beloved, you must have spiritual food to satisfy your soul's hunger! No, I may go further than that and say that you will pine away unless your spiritual nature receives suitable nutriment. Need of food is the cause and the nurse of many diseases. When the constitution is not sustained by proper nourishment, the famished flesh becomes fit soil for disease to grow upon. And we, Beloved, shall soon be filled with all manner of inward doubts and fears if we do not fall into outward sin. Unless our spiritual constitution is kept strong and our inner man is built up with spiritual meat, we shall become like Pharaoh's lean cattle and who among us wishes to be in that condition? When the body is kept without food for a long time, it is liable to faint and swoon. Many a man has fallen into unconsciousness upon the very threshold of black death simply for lack of bread and, in like manner, and for a similar reason, the child of God may get into a state of *spiritual coma*, in which he will be insensible, indifferent, incapable. Prayer, even in its simplest form, and all spiritual exercises may become almost impossible to his fainting spirit. We must have food for our souls!

It is not enough for the minister to come into the pulpit and tell the child of God to do this and to do that—God's people must have suitable food, or they can do nothing of the kind. A farmer is always wise when he puts his whip in the barn—that is to say, when he makes his horses able to work by feeding them well—and this is the way in which God enables His children to perform their spiritual duties—by giving them spiritual meat.

I may go even further and say that if the child of God did not have spiritual meat, he would absolutely die. We must be fed upon Divine food, or else the life within us will expire. Will it ever expire? No, never, because we shall be fed. But, still, we must be fed, we must have the Word of God which lives and abides forever, to nourish our souls. I do not say that we may have it, but that we *must* have it—we must feed or die, depend upon that! The branch that is in the vine must have sap rising from the root and flowing to it through the stem or it will wither—so is it with us. We must have spiritual food, or spiritually we must cease to be—but that shall never come to pass. "The Lord is my Shepherd" and, therefore, "I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures." He will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish, but He will give us our portion of meat in due season, and so we shall be fed. The Bread of Heaven will continue to feed us until we need no more. Now, Brothers and Sisters, you see, at least in some measure, what are your spiritual necessities and the reason why the Lord says so emphatically, "Eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

Another reason for the exhortation before us *is our extreme foolishness*. What a stupid animal man must be to need to be told to eat and be urged to eat that which is good! The little lamb in the meadow has

scarcely come into the world before it finds out where its mother's milk is and very soon it begins to crop the tender herbage and to find food for itself. Most creatures, by what we call, instinct, discover their own natural food, but here is man, so foolish, so mad, so much more wild than the wild ass's colt, that he needs to be told to eat, spiritually—and he will never eat until the Lord puts the bread into his mouth—and He never will, by any kind of discernment, eat that which is good unless the Lord shall teach Him to discern between the good and the evil and give him a spiritual appetite and taste by which he shall distinguish the wholesome from the poisonous!

One part of human foolishness lies in the fact that we so often seek that which is not good for us, so that the Lord has to say to us, "Why do you spend money for that which is not bread?" Man is described in Scripture as feeding upon ashes. That is strange food for a human being! We have heard of cases of insanity in which persons have swallowed ashes, eaten earth, devoured pins and needles and all sorts of strange things. That is only a feeble example of the absolute insanity of the unregenerate heart! You remember that the Prophet Hosea said, "Ephraim feeds on wind." He opens his mouth to eat nothing at all and thinks himself to be filled when there is nothing whatever that can satisfy his hunger. O strange bewilderment of man, who was made in God's image and once ate the fruits that grew in the paradise of the Most High! Yet, by nature, we choose the husks that the swine eat and would gladly fill our bellies with them if we could! But God's Grace will not let His people act so foolishly as that.

Then, again, it is not only that we are willing to eat that which is evil, but that we are unwilling to eat that which is good! Many persons will hear that which is good and will even assent to our declaration that it is good—yet they do not eat it. What is spiritual eating? It is the inward reception of the Truth of God into the soul. To *hear* the Truth is, as it were, to *see* the bread. To *think* upon the Truth is, as it were, to cut the bread and put it on the plate. But this will never nourish any man—he must *take* the bread into his inward parts and digest and assimilate it. And so, *by faith*, a man must take the Truth of God into his inmost soul and make that which was outward become inward to him till his soul eats it, drinks it and so absorbs it into its own self that it lives upon it. The most of mankind never do this with the sermons they hear. They criticize the preacher's manner of expression and mode of utterance, but they do not feed upon the Truths of God he sets before them. I like the Hearer who can say, "My soul was fed by that sermon. There was real spiritual nourishment in it for me, for that is the true way in which to receive the Word of the Lord. It is "bread for the eater" as well as "seed for the sower," and we must eat it, otherwise we do not put it to its proper use. God grant us Grace to be willing to feed upon the Word! But man, by nature, will not eat spiritual food.

Then, Brothers and Sisters, there is this folly about even God's own children, that they do not eat that which is good according to *the lavish inexhaustible fullness provided by God*—"Let your soul delight itself in

fatness." How very few minutes in a day most of us spend in feeding our soul! There are some countries in which the people eat quickly—they bolt their food, instead of properly masticating and digesting it and, in consequence, they are easily angered and suffer greatly from indigestion. And there are some people who act in a similar fashion with regard to spiritual meat—they seem to bolt their food. They have two or three minutes for their morning prayer and just a few verses of Scripture. There are some who go all day without any spiritual meat at all! But among those of the better sort who feed their souls, how very little time is given to real feeding upon the Word of God—very little reading and much less meditation! Sermon-hearing we attend to rather better—some of us even come out on a wet weeknight, which is something to our credit—yet we do not feed enough, we do not go in for the fatness of which our text speaks. "Let your soul delight itself in fatness."

I have known some Christians pick a sermon over, and eat nothing except the gristle—not a morsel of that "fatness" which is the very part that God's finger points out. It is too rich for them. They leave the fat doctrines for those whom they call "the high-doctrine people." But that is not the right way to feed—everything that God puts on His table is good to eat and it is a point of spiritual etiquette for everyone at the table of the Lord to eat all that Christ puts on his plate! You never do right unless you take it all, for it is all yours and especially that part which seems even too good for you! You are to be sure not to miss *that*—"Eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." There is something of the touch of a gourmet about this verse. I wish that we would all learn how, spiritually, to be connoisseurs, for, if we were to go to that length, we would not go further than the emphatic expression of our text warrants. Go in for a thorough hearty meal and keep on eating! Devour the Word of God! Feast upon it and feed again and again and again—"Eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

I must tell you one other reason why this exhortation is given in the text, and that is, *because of our fears*. There is many a dear child of God who longs for spiritual food, but he is afraid that he would be guilty of presumption if he ate it. So, when there is a very fat piece that is just going into his mouth, he says, "No, that cannot be for me," and he draws back from it. Now, just look at the text—"Let your soul delight itself in fatness." Do not restrain yourself from taking that to which you have a perfect right. Believe the message that the preacher brings you from his Master! When you hear it, do not say, "Oh, that I could believe that the eternal love of God were mine! Oh, that I could know that my name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life and engraved on His hands and heart!" Do not say that, but believe that it is so if you have really trusted in Jesus. "Let your soul delight itself in fatness." Do not say, "Oh, that He would keep me to the end, even me!" A fat morsel is that precious Doctrine of unchanging love and final preservation—do not hold back from feeding upon it! "Let your soul delight itself in fatness." You are like a flock of sheep close to a clover field, with the gate set wide open. Go in, go in! You cannot eat too much of that which is before you. It will not

hurt you—you may lie down in the pastures of tender grass and eat to the full.

I know that Satan, your own unbelief and especially that natural fear of presumption will combine to make you say, "But I dare not claim a share in such a privilege as that. I am afraid I have no right to it." Then, listen to the exhortation of the text, "Let your soul delight itself in fatness." Do not even the dogs under the table eat of the crumbs that fall where the children are feeding? They ask nobody's leave, but they eat what they find. So, surely you, who are the children sitting at the table, ought to take as much liberty as the dogs! Eat what the Master gives you, just as the little dogs under the table eat what their masters (the children) give to them, for that is really the meaning of that passage. Be bold enough and trustful enough to take what your Lord so freely offers you! It is foolish to be poor when He invites you to be rich! It is a pity for you to starve when He entreats you to feast! With such an exhortation as this, it is sad, indeed, that any of us should not eat that which is good and let our soul delight itself in fatness.

II. Now, secondly, LET US NOTE THE BENEFITS OF OBEYING THE COMMAND OF THE TEXT.

The first benefit is *the pleasure of it*—"Eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." I remember the time when I used to look upon the precious things of God as many a poor street Arab has gazed at the dainties in a confectioner's window, wishing that he could get a taste and feeling all the more hungry because of that which was stored behind the glass out of his reach. But when the Master takes us into His banqueting house and His banner over us is LOVE—and when He says to us, "Eat, Friends. Drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved," then we have a grand time of it and we feel almost as if Heaven had begun below! Have we not, sometimes, on a Sabbath, when the great King of Glory has feasted us to the full, felt so happy that we did not think we could be any happier unless we went straight away to Heaven? Each of us has been ready to sing, at such a time as that—

"My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this,
And sit and sing herself away
To everlasting bliss."

O dear Friends, search out one of the exceeding great and precious promises of the Word—feed upon it, get it right into your soul and then you may feel that your soul can no more be troubled, for you believe in God and you believe in Christ and, therefore, you are full of gladness! "Let your soul delight itself in fatness." There is this joy as one of the benefits of obedience to the exhortation of the text.

The second benefit is *the great preserving power of good spiritual food.* It helps to keep us out of temptation. I do not think a man is ever so likely to be tempted as when he has neglected to eat his spiritual meat. We have this Truth of God in a parable, in Christ's own life on earth. Of course it is only a parable, for in Him there was no lack of spiritual meat, but, after He had fasted, when He was hungry, then it was that He was tempted of the devil. And if your soul has been, for a long time, without

spiritual food, you are very likely to meet the devil. I have known men go away for a holiday on the Continent and when they have been away, there has been no hearing of the Word, and, possibly, no private reading of the Word. Or they may have gone to live in a country town where the Gospel was not faithfully preached and they have made a terrible shipwreck of character because their inward strength was not sustained by spiritual meat—and then the Tempter fell upon them!

There is a rather interesting remark that someone makes, though I do not vouch for the truth of it. You know that when the Lord put Adam in the Garden of Eden, He said to him, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it." And, says one, "If Eve had availed herself of that gracious permission on that fatal day, and if she had eaten freely of all the other trees in the garden, of which she might have eaten, she would not have been so likely to wish to eat of that which was forbidden." I know this—when my soul is full of Christ, I can defy the devil, himself, for what can he bring me when I need nothing? He puts down poisoned meat to tempt us to eat, but when we are filled with all the fullness of Christ, we do not need his meat and we will not touch it except to fling it far from us! He who has Christ, has all things and abounds, and he is, by this Divine strengthening of his spirit, made strong to resist temptation!

I have heard people say that if they have to go through a feverish part of the city, there is nothing like having a good coating inside, well lining the interior—and I am sure it is so spiritually. Line your soul well with spiritual meat and, then, if you have to go through the most feverish parts of the earth where temptations fill the very air, you will be preserved from them by Divine Grace! Remember what happened when King Saul, in his folly, ordained that anyone who ate food would be accursed? The soldiers were not able to smite the Philistines as they might have done if they had not been so faint and, then, as soon as the sun went down, "the people flew upon the spoil, and took sheep, and oxen, and calves, and slew them on the ground," and devoured them raw, "with the blood," so breaking the commandment of the Jewish Law and bringing severe condemnation upon themselves. Hungry men will do such things as that, for hunger makes them break through stone walls and through God's Laws, too. But he who is filled with good things walks in the way of God's commandments.

A third blessing is this. *Spiritual food comforts mourners*. The analogy of this will be found in the Book of Nehemiah, the 8th Chapter and the 9th and 10th verses, where we read that Nehemiah said to the people, "This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep…Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared." A feast is a good way of breaking a fast. He that eats forgets his former misery and remembers his sorrow no more, especially if he eats the mystic meat which God provides so abundantly for His sorrowing children. It was of this that Mary sang, "He has filled the hungry with good things."

Spiritual meat has another excellence. It *revives the fainting ones*. Did you ever study the sermon that was once preached by an angel to a desponding Prophet? It consisted of only three words and he preached it twice. The Prophet was Elijah, who, after the wondrous victory and excitement on the top of Carmel, fainted in spirit and was afraid of Jezebel and said, "Let me die." And so he fled from the field of battle and longed to expire. In his weariness and sorrow, he fell asleep and an angel came and awoke him. And this was the sermon he preached to him, "Arise and eat." And when he opened his eyes, he saw that "there was a cake baking on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink and laid him down again." The very best thing he could do. But the angel awoke him the second time and preached the same sermon to him, "Arise and eat." And I pass on that little sermon to some of you who feel faint in heart just now. You do not know how it is, but you are very low-spirited—here is a message for you—"Arise and eat." I will not prescribe you any medicine, but I say, "Arise and eat." Get to the Bible and study it—search out the promises and feed upon them. Get away to Christ and feed upon Him! "Arise and eat." Often, the best possible cure for a poor, dispirited, fainting soul is a good meal of Gospel food! Your bright spirits will, in that way, come back to you. You will not be afraid of Jezebel and you will not say, "Let me die," but you will go, in the strength of that food, for many a day according to the will of God. So I give this as God's message to any discouraged, dispirited ones whom I may now be addressing, "Arise and eat."

This spiritual eating is also *a great strength for service*, for he who eats that which is good and lets his soul delight itself in fatness will be strong to run in the way of the Divine commands, or to perform any work that may be required of him. You recollect what Jonathan said, concerning that long day of fasting to which I have already alluded? Jonathan said, "My eyes have been enlightened because I tasted a little of this honey. How much more, if haply the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies which they found? For had there not been now a much greater slaughter among the Philistines?" Quite right, Jonathan—as the old proverb puts it, "Prayer and provender hinder no man's journey." And, for a soul to wait upon God to be fed is to gather such strength thereby that it can do much more work than it could otherwise have done! Sunday school teachers are apt to think, "We cannot attend a weeknight service—we must be thinking about the lesson of our class." Your soul must be fed, my dear Brother! Young men are very apt to think that they can begin preaching and they have no need to stay even a few months after conversion to learn from those who might instruct them. You will be wrong, Brother, you will be wrong if you do so! He who begins to run a race and who thinks that it is a waste of time to pull on his boots, will make a great mistake! You had better not begin your journey till you are properly shod. You had better not go to the battle till you have put on all your armor. All the time that is taken to fit that armor on properly is time wonderfully well spent! It will be true economy in the long run. To keep men always working like slaves and to give them little to eat would be a

very wretched, as well as a very cruel, policy. Eat well, that you may work well. "Eat what is good," that you may be able to do good to others. "Let your soul delight itself in fatness," that you may have the delight of being useful in the service of your Lord!

I must very rapidly mention other blessings which result from our partaking of spiritual food. One is that *it fits us to feed others*. Ezekiel had to go and speak to the house of Israel in the name of the Lord. Do you remember his preparation for that task—the college to which he went? Well, he saw a hand which held a roll of a book—and a Voice said to him, "Son of man, eat what you find; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel." He cannot preach till he has eaten the roll! I believe that in the courts of law young men have to eat themselves into the profession—beside all other qualifications, they must eat a certain number of dinners before they can be fully certified. It is a strange regulation with regard to earthly courts, but it is a right and proper thing in the courts of Heaven.

Young Brothers in the College, you must eat your way into the ministry! You will never be able to say to others, "Eat what is good," unless you have feasted upon those things yourselves! Unless you have an inward appreciation of their sweetness and have sucked them into your very being, you will never be able to talk with power to others concerning them. Paul wrote to Timothy, "The husbandman that labors, must first be partaker of the fruits," so Christian ministers, Sunday school teachers, and all workers for Christ must eat that which is good if they are to be used in feeding others with spiritual food!

And, then, as I have already said—but I must mention it again to make my recapitulation complete—*this is the best mode of fellowship*. Christ's Word to you, Beloved, when He would most show His love is, "Take, eat." And your risen Master, when He spoke most familiarly to His disciples, said, "Children, have you any meat?" And then gave to them the invitation, "Come and dine." And again I repeat that gracious message to the lukewarm Laodiceans. "If any man hears My voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me." Even throughout eternity this is to be the fashion of fellowship, for the glorified are to sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb. So, Beloved, feed on the Word of God—especially feed on the Incarnate Word, Christ Himself—otherwise, you cannot possibly enter into true spiritual fellowship with God.

There is just this one more remark that I must make upon this point. *Feeding upon the Word of God is the best way of promoting praise*. You know how the 103rd Psalm begins—"Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name." Then, a little further on, the Psalmist says, "Who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's." A hungry soul cannot sing well—the soul that best sings the praises of God is the one that has delighted itself with the fatness of the Divine provision and, therefore, has its mouth filled with the praises of its God.

Now, dear Friends, I am sure that the topic on which I have been speaking is a very important one, yet it is a very neglected one. A great many young Christians and, I am afraid, some old Christian people, especially women, read no end of tales and novels. That is not eating that which is good—it is doing that which is worse than useless! There is no spiritual nutriment and little if any mental food in most of the stories that come out nowadays. We used to keep our tales for our children—our babies—but, now, the stories are written for grown-up people—and newspapers and magazines sell best if they contain pretty stories for the great babies of the present day. Nothing will suit them but stories. "Eat what is good." But they eat ashes! They feed upon the wind—that is their spiritual meat. Sometimes we complain of present-day Christians that they have no backbone, no stamina, no strength compared with the Christians of past ages. I should think so—they do not eat the food out of which spiritual manhood can grow. They eat what would not nourish a mouse and then hope that they may be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."

And, then, how common is the neglect of reading the Word of God itself! A great many persons take all their religion secondhand. They never go to the good old Book themselves. Years ago it was a very difficult thing to get milk—it was not milk that was called by that name. The only way to be sure of having milk was to keep a cow—and I recommend everybody to ensure getting the unadulterated milk of the Word of God by keeping his own cow, that is, by reading the Bible for himself. If you want to get pure water, go to the fountainhead. I was once going over the mountains in Northern Italy and I wanted to drink from a little stream, but my guide would not allow me to taste of it. I did not understand why, but he went on some considerable distance and then he allowed me to drink as much as I liked. And I noticed that I was drinking at a spring just where the water flowed out, but, the time before the stream had been running down the mountainside and was full of all sorts of impurities and, besides, it had lost its freshness and sweetness by travelling over the earth in the warm sun. The guide wanted me to have water that was worth drinking—to drink that which was good.

And so I would advise you, my Friends, to take no notice of anything I say that is not according to the Word of God! Put it away among the lumber, for it is good for nothing—and whoever it is that preaches and whatever book you read—if it is not according to this Book, say to yourself, "Well, I have not any time to try experiments. If I do eat, I want to eat that which is good. And if I do delight myself, I want to delight myself in what God calls fatness." There is plenty of carrion about—plenty of religious carrion, I mean—tainted through and through with false doctrine. And unhappy is that man who has a taste for it—it looks as if he were no true child of God.

Dear Friends, what we need is to feed on the Gospel and nothing but the Gospel! To feed on the Scriptures and to keep to them alone! To feed on the promises—to get a promise and turn it over and over—to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest! To feed upon the teachings of the Holy

Spirit within our own soul and to feed upon Christ Himself, for His flesh is meat, indeed, and His blood is drink, indeed! I would to God that some here present, who have never known what spiritual life is and, therefore, cannot know what spiritual feeding is, might be quickened, this evening, by the Divine Spirit! And if they are, the first thing that they will do will be to listen to Christ that they may live! "Incline your ears," He says, "and come unto Me. Hear, and your soul shall live." And as soon as you have heard His life-giving Word, then go on to hear it again and yet again! "Hearken diligently unto Me and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

And listen to this. If you believe in Christ Jesus, within a short time that head of yours shall wear a coronet of glory that shall outshine the stars of Heaven! Your feet shall be in sandals with light and your whole being shall be full of indescribable ecstasy. Then, though you deserve to be cast into the lowest Hell, you shall have a place above the angels, where the white-robed host forever chant their hallelujahs to the redeeming Lamb. Yes, as surely as that you now live, you shall be there! Now what say you with such a prospect before you? Will you walk any longer in the ways of dishonesty? Will you go home to your cups and be found among the drunks? Will you take upon you that dear name by which you are to be called in Heaven and yet be found among the ungodly? I know that you would sooner die than that should be the case, for your heart cries out to your Lord, "Deliver me from sin, O my gracious God! This great love of Yours which promises me Heaven and gives me a nature fit to live in Glory—how can I rebel against it? No, let it hold me fast, with golden chains, to obey You, my Lord, and to keep Your commandments from now and forever." The Lord grant it, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, 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 TRIPLE CHARACTER
NO. 2787

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 13, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 16, 1878.

"Behold, I have given Him for a Witness to the people,
a Leader and Commander to the people."
Isaiah 55:4.

THERE is no Gospel apart from our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the essence of it. He is everything in it. There would be no Gospel without Him. In this chapter the Holy Spirit had been speaking, very largely, through the Prophet, of Gospel bounties and privileges. He had bid the thirsty to "come to the waters," and the penniless to come and "buy wine and milk without money and without price." When He had commanded men to listen diligently to Him, to eat that which was good and to let their soul delight itself in fatness, you might be quite sure that He would not so speak without very soon mentioning Christ. For if, in His Gospel, there are waters for the thirsty, those waters do not exist apart from Christ! Is not the Gospel that which proceeds out of His lips—no, more—is not Christ Himself—the Water of Life? He still says, "If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me, and drink." It is true that wine and milk are provided, but out of what cluster comes that wine—and where shall the unadulterated milk of the Word be found but in Him? Christ not only supplies the necessities of His people, but He gives them abundant and superabundant joy in the luxuries of His Grace. You do not really preach the Gospel if you leave Christ out—if He is omitted, it is not the Gospel! You may invite men to listen to your message, but you are only inviting them to gaze upon an empty table unless Christ is the very center and substance of all that you set before them!

Hence, it is not at all amazing that, after the glorious Gospel invitations, expostulations and exhortations of the first three verses of this Chapter, we should come, in the 4th verse, to these words—"'Behold, I have given HIM.' I have talked to you about waters, and about wine and milk, and about bread, and about fatness; but, behold, I have given HIM,' for He is all these—water, wine, milk, bread, fatness. I have spoken to you about 'an Everlasting Covenant, even the sure mercies of David,' but I mean HIM, for He is the great Surety of the Covenant and I have given Him for a Covenant of the people." Beloved, we cannot do without a *personal* Christ. The preacher must preach Him and we must trust in Him,

even in Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the Son of God, the one and only Savior of sinners!

The first word in our text, "Behold," reminds us that this is a theme for wonder. It is a matter that calls for attention and admiration. "*Behold*, I have given Him." Is not this something that is worth admiring? Is not this the great marvel of time—yes, and the miracle of eternity—that God should so love the world as to give His only-begotten Son? I can understand His giving light to a dark world. I can comprehend His giving life, that men might live—but that He should give His beloved Son to be Light and Life to a dark and dead race—that He should give Him to become Incarnate and to take upon Himself the form of a Servant—that He should give Him to be despised and rejected of men and, at last, should give Him up to die—oh, behold! Behold! Behold! This is a sight to gaze upon forever and we do not wonder that the Apostle wrote, "Which things the angels desire to look into."

A part of the wonder concerning Christ consists in the fact that His Father has given Him to the people—"I have given Him for a Witness to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people." Not to you, O kings and princes—not to you, a few aristocrats picked here and there—but, "I have given Him for a Witness to the people." "I have exalted One chosen out of the people." He is the people's Christ, the people's Leader, the people's Friend, the people's King. And the wonder increases when you recollect that the word translated, "people," might be just as accurately rendered, "nations." No doubt the Lord's intention, here, is to refer to the Gentiles—"Behold, I have given Him for a Witness to the Gentiles, a Leader and Commander to the Gentiles"—not to the chosen people, Israel, alone, but even to us, "sinners of the Gentiles," who were outside the favored family of the Jews!

The Gentiles seemed to have been passed by and left to perish. But now, behold this wonder—"more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife." Christ has been given as "a Light to lighten the Gentiles," as well as "the glory of His people Israel" and now, to us, in these far-off isles of the sea, where our forefathers worshipped gods that were no gods, even to us is Jehovah-Jesus preached! And He has come from the courts of God to be to us a Witness, a Leader and a Commander. All glory be to His blessed name! Well does the text say, "Behold," concerning the Giver, the Gift and the persons who receive the Gift. Take care that you pass not by without thought and admiration that which the Holy Spirit commends to your notice by the use of the word, "Behold."

I want you, dear Friends, to look upon Christ's triple Character as it is described in our text. And, first, *we may see Him, here, in three Characters or relationships in which we shall next see three excellencies, demanding from us three duties, and ensuring three benefits.*

I. First, then, let us, with believing eyes, SEE OUR LORD IN THREE CHARACTERS OR RELATIONSHIPS. First, He is a Witness for the Father. Secondly, He is a Leader for His saved people. And, thirdly, He is a Commander for those who, as yet, are not saved, of whom the next verse

says, "You shall call a nation that You know not, and nations that knew not You shall run unto You."

Well, then, first, our blessed Lord, to whom be all honor and reverence, is *a Witness for the Father*—a Witness concerning the Father. We would never have known what God was like if it had not been that "the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." God was pleased to reveal Himself, to some extent, in types and emblems under the old Law of God, yet very little of Him was known in that way. The request of Thomas, "Lord, show us the Father," would still be the request of men if Christ had not made Him known to us. He came to show us the Father, for He that has seen Christ has seen the Father! If you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus! Would you know what God thinks? Then, read what Jesus thinks! Would you know how God feels? Behold how Jesus feels! Would you know, in fact, as much of the Character of God as can possibly be revealed to men? You need not look upon the green fields and swelling floods in the hope of seeing God in His works—but study the Character of Christ, for there you have the fullness of the Godhead so manifested that it can be understood, as far as it is possible, by the finite mind. It is God in human flesh—Emmanuel, God With Us—whom you must study if you would know God!

And, oh, if, indeed, I do see God in Christ, then, what a blessed God He is to me! For who would not love Jesus? Even those who have denied His Deity have been fascinated by the beauty of His Character. Surely, everyone who has ever read the Gospels of the four Evangelists, must have been enraptured with their biographies of the Christ of God! What a matchless Character His was! Just and good, honest and tender, full of mental power and energy, yet all the while like a holy child—was there ever anything so unique as the life of Christ?

Nor is Christ merely the Witness concerning God's Character, but He is also a Witness concerning God's bearings toward us. How does God feel with regard to His rebellious creatures? Will He destroy them in His anger, or is He ready to restore them to His favor if they repent? Has He gracious feelings toward them? This is a question which might well subdue the whole world to a solemn hush until it was answered. But Christ has come to answer it—His very coming answers it. The angels thought so, for they came with Him and they sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Their song clearly meant that, now, God delight in mercy! He has opened His stores of love to the unthankful and the undeserving. Since Jesus Christ has come to die that sinners might live, and to live again that sinners might not die, it becomes certain that God's bearing towards man is not that of wrath and indignation—of stern severity which refuses to accept the penitent—but that all is mercy, all is Grace and that Christ is the Witness that it is so! True, His death, as the Substitute for His people, revealed the Justice of God, but it also showed us how even Justice could no longer refuse that Mercy should have sway since all its demands had been satisfied by the great Sacrifice of Christ. So Christ is the Witness to us of how the Father feels towards the sons of men.

And He also came to be a Witness of another matter, namely, that God has set up a Kingdom among the sons of men. That was a faithful and true Witness of Christ when He said, "My Kingdom is not of this world"—witnessing a good confession before Pontius Pilate and, while claiming that He was a King, revealing the true Character of His reign. There is a *spiritual* Kingdom set up in the world and it comprises those who are born-again to a spiritual life, enlisted under spiritual laws, to serve God, who is a Spirit, and who must be served in spirit and in truth. Christ came to tell us all this. Do we know anything about it? He has told us how to enter that Kingdom—have we entered it? "You must be born-again," He said to Nicodemus, for, "except a man be born-again, He cannot see the Kingdom of God." "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." There is no way of entrance into the Kingdom of Divine Grace except by regeneration! And Jesus Christ is the Witness of that great Truth of God!

Having many things to say to you, I cannot fully describe the office of Christ as a Witness for the Father—that would be a sufficient theme for a whole discourse—and for many discourses. But I may briefly say that whatever Christ has taught concerning any Truth of God which has to do with our salvation, is His Witness upon that point. And if we want to know the truth about anything, we must go to Christ to learn it. If we want to know how we may be reconciled to God and effectually saved, we must sit at the feet of Jesus Christ and receive His testimony, for He is the Witness for the Father in all that affects our relationship to Him.

The second office of Christ mentioned in the text *is that of a Leader to His own people*. The word, "Leader," might be rendered, "the Foremost," and truly, beloved Brothers and Sisters, Christ is the Foremost of all His people—the Standard-Bearer among ten thousand and the altogether lovely. Christ is in the forefront of the whole army of the faithful. He leads the van. There is none like He among the sons of men, and none to be compared with Him. We delight to accord to Him His rightful pre-eminence in all things. In the Church of God, Jesus Christ is the Leader because His life is the perfect example of practical holiness. First, He is God's Witness revealing to us the Truth of God. Then, next, He is our Example, working out the practical part of that revelation in His own life. He who would be saved, then, must follow the lead of Christ. He who is saved does, by the help of the Divine Spirit, follow that lead. Wherever you see His footprint, there put down your foot. Wherever He bids you go, there go. Though the way may be rough, and treading it may cost you much self-denial, you must go that way, for the God who gave you Christ to save you, gave Him to you, not merely to enlighten your intellect as a Witness, but to affect your life as a Leader and Example. Have we accepted Him in both capacities? I know some who seem willing to take Christ for their Leader, but not as a Witness to the Truth. That will not do. "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder." I know others who are willing to follow Christ doctrinally, but not practically. They would accept Him as a Witness, but not as a Leader. That, also, will not do. A half-Christ is no Christ at all! You must have Christ as a whole and

take Him in all the Characters and relationships in which God gives Him to you, or you cannot have Him at all.

The third Character our Lord bears, according to our text, is that *of Commander*. There may be many meanings given to that title, but it seems to me that it must relate mainly to those of His people who are not yet saved. To them, He is a Commander. To them He issues laws as a Law-Giver, for such is also the sense of the term. What are the Laws which He has given? They are all in this blessed Book, but these are some of them. "Repent you, and believe the Gospel." "Come unto Me." "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me." "Go you," He says to His servants," into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." This message is to be delivered to men, not as a request to them to do it if they will, but as a *command* from Christ which, if they obey, He has said that they shall be saved. But if they disobey it, He has declared that they shall be damned. I am afraid that sometimes we pitch the Gospel note in much too low a key—I like to reach the higher key, for I believe it to be the right one. In the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, we say to you, O sons and daughters of men—you are to believe in Him, to trust Him, to rely upon His atoning death and so to take Him to be your Savior! If you will not do so, you will justly be condemned! But if you will do as He commands you, you shall be saved. The moment you have believed in Him and yielded to His Divine authority, you are, in fact, saved! But this royal proclamation must not be despised or neglected, for, "how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

But I think there is more in this title of Christ than the mere fact of His making the Law and bidding us publish it abroad in His name. He is also a Commander because He has power to enforce His proclamations. He calls a nation that knew Him not and then they learn to know Him. He invites them and then they run to Him. There is never a sinner who comes to Christ till Christ calls him and makes him come. We are bound to preach the Gospel to every creature, but sinners unanimously reject the command till Christ effectually calls them by His Grace! But when He calls them, then they come to Him. Oh, it is delightful to think that if the preacher's voice is powerless, His Master's voice is not! If He will but speak, and say to the careless soul, "Turn from your wicked way, and begin to think," you shall see the careless one become thoughtful and repent of his sin and trust his Savior! If He shall find some Zacchaeus, and say to him, "Today I must abide at your house," He will abide at that house! If, tonight, Christ must go through Newington Butts—as it was written, "He must needs go through Samaria"—He will find some woman who little thought that she would ever meet with Him, and she shall afterwards say, as did that other woman, "Come see a Man, who told me all things that I ever did: is not this the Christ?" If there were no Divine Power over the will of man, no man would ever be saved. If, the Gospel being preached, it were left to men to accept it or reject it—and there were no exercise of Divine Power to lead them to receive it, we might preach our tongues out, we might weep our eyes out, we might pray till

our knees refused any longer to bear us up—but never a soul would come to Christ! But He is set forth, first, as a Witness to the Truth of God. Next, as an Example, setting that Truth before us in His life and then, further, clothed with Divine Authority and girt about with Almighty Power, making the Truth to be effectual so that men come to Him, and live! Witness, Leader, Commander—you see the range and compass of our great Master's work. God grant us Grace to accept Him in all three relationships!

II. Now, secondly, I am to speak briefly upon THE THREE EXCELLENCIES OF CHRIST IN CONNECTION WITH THESE THREE OFFICES.

First, is Christ a Witness? Then He is a true Witness. There are no falsehoods or mistakes in the Witness which Christ bears concerning His Father. He is intimately acquainted with the Father, for He came forth from the Father and, therefore, His testimony is wholly reliable. That which He had seen and heard of the Father, even that He made known to us. There is no possibility of the entrance of any error into the mind of Christ—all His utterances are Infallible Truths of God, for the Spirit of God was upon Him and in Him without measure. It is a trite saying, but a very comforting one, that whenever Christ speaks a good word to a sinner, He speaks according to the mind of His Father. Whenever He promises rest and peace, and pardon, to those that come unto Him, He promises all this in His Father's name and on His Father's behalf. So, if you have laid hold of Christ, you have not grasped a sham or a counterfeit. It is all true—in fact, He is the Truth of God as well as the Way and the Life! He will never deceive you, or mislead you—you can be sure of that!

We, His poor servants, make many a blunder in speaking of Him, but even the Jewish officers had to confess, "Never man spoke like this Man." He never makes a mistake in anything that He says, so if He lets fall any word that just suits your case and if you have caught hold of it, and lived upon it, let no one rob you of the consolation, for it is true! Jesus Christ is "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness." When He was upon the earth, He used to often say, "Verily, verily, I say unto you," because He knew that He was speaking the truth and you may be quite sure of it, too. We have had many who have called themselves God's witnesses, but we have had to question the truth of their testimony. Sometimes one of these witnesses has given the lie to another—and when the witnesses disagree, who is to decide between them? But Jesus Christ's witness is never self-contradictory. It is true throughout and he that will sit at His feet and drink in what Christ has spoken, has learned the Truth of God which he will never have to unlearn! He has laid hold of the substance—and not of a shadow.

Then, next, if our Lord is a Leader, He has, in that capacity, the quality of *holiness*. God has given Him to lead His people and you may safely follow wherever He leads you. Brothers and Sisters, be quite sure of this—Christ will never lead you into any sin and He will never conduct you into any folly, or error, or mistake. In His highest moods, Christ is never fanatical—and in His lowest He is never unbelieving. He meets with sinners of all sorts and even with publicans and harlots—yet there is no

one more pure than He is at all times! He gets away alone, but it is not in order that He may act the part of the cynic and skeptic, but that, there, He may commune with His Father and pray for both saints and sinners. If you will follow Him in His silence or in His speech—if you will follow Him in His honor or in His dishonor—if you will follow Him in private or in public, in His thoughts or in His words, you will never go amiss! Perfect holiness is written across the whole biography of the Son of Man. So, what a mercy it is that if we have a Witness, it is all the Truth of God that He speaks! And if we have a Leader, His leadership conducts us to perfect holiness and, therefore, we may gladly follow Him!

Then, further, if He is a Commander, which is the third Character mentioned in our text, you see Divine Power in Him. It is no use having a commander-in-chief who issues proclamations, but who has neither wit nor wisdom in the day of battle! It is no use having for a chieftain, one who knows nothing of war, and who, in the hour of conflict, is driven away like chaff before the wind. But, Beloved, if Christ is a Commander, there is no fear that we shall be defeated if we obey His orders. The strongest battalions are the battalions of God! The greatest force in all the world is the force of truth and righteousness! Men have not usually thought so, for fraud and plunder, cruelty and bloodshed have been the agents by which earthly monarchs have sought to win their victories. But the Lord has kept His great guns in the rear though He will bring them to the front, some day, and then it shall be seen that the might is with the right, for the Truth of God, love, Divine Grace and holiness shall be proven to have in them an Omnipotence before which all the powers of darkness and of sin shall fall defeated or fly confounded!

It is a grand thing, in time of battle, to have a commander who knows how to lead. When Oliver Cromwell came into the field, the Ironsides felt that his presence was worth more to them than that of ten thousand ordinary soldiers—and every man became a hero then! When Henry of Navarre rode down the French lines before the battle of Ivry, the courage of every warrior rose as he fastened on his white-plumed helmet and said to them, "Yonder is the enemy! Here is your king. God is on our side. Should you lose your standards in the battle, rally round my plume—you will always find it on the path of victory and honor." Alas, his later history proved that this was an empty boast, for he became unfaithful to the faith, yet it availed to inspire his followers on that occasion. But our great King, when He comes to the front, as soon He will—when He comes to the front by His Spirit, as even now He does—gives courage to the coward and strength to the weak! And He makes each one among us, who treats Him as He should be treated—with implicit confidence—to feel that we shall conquer through His might!

So, you see, we have three grand excellencies in our Lord Jesus Christ. As a Witness, we have the Truth of God. As a Leader, we have holiness. And as a Commander, we have power. Physical, mental, moral, *spiritual* power—all this is in Christ, for He could truly say, "All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth." And, therefore, He is a Com-

mander whose orders we may delight to obey, for He will certainly lead us to victory!

III. Very solemnly, though very briefly, I want to refer to the third division of my subject, which is that THESE RELATIONSHIPS AND EXCELLENCIES DEMAND FROM US THREE DUTIES.

Is Christ a true Witness? Then, *believe Him.* Generally, in this house, I speak to persons who believe in the Bible—who believe, therefore, in the Deity of Christ and who believe also in the Truth of all that Christ spoke. But, my dear Hearers, some of you are very inconsistent, for, while you believe all this, you do not believe in Jesus Himself! I mean that you do not trust Him as your Savior, which is the practical way of believing in Him. You may believe every Word in the Bible and yet be lost—it is *trusting Christ alone* that will save you! Now, if all that is in this Bible is true—and you say that it is, from the time when you were at your mother's knee, you believed it to be true—then, why do you believe it only with your brain? Believe it with your heart, "for with the heart man believes unto righteousness." He who wishes to cross a river and who believes in the stability of the bridge that spans it, crosses by the bridge. Do you believe in Christ's ability to carry you over the river of Death and to take you to Heaven? Then, trust Him to do it! He who believes in the genuineness of gold will take it if it is offered to him. You say that you believe in the Truthfulness of Christ—then trust Him as your Savior!

The only way to have Christ is to take Him as your own—to accept Him. Some people seem to fancy that faith in Jesus is something very wonderful and mysterious—and they try to go round thousands of miles to get at it—but the Scripture says, "The Word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." What does a man do, if he is hungry, and there is bread set before him? Does he begin to analyze it and see how many grains of this and how many of that there are in it? He may do so if he pleases, but that will not feed him! The greatest chemical analyst in the world is not one single inch ahead of the poorest child in the matter of feeding. If he will live by bread, he must eat it, and the poor beggar boy can do the same. He puts it into his mouth, lets it go down into his inmost being and so forms part of himself! Now, this is all you have to do in order to be saved!

Dear Hearer, you are bothering yourself about feeling this and feeling that, and going about trying to experience this wonderful sensation and the other. All this is folly, or something worse! Will you trust Christ, or not? God sets Him forth to bear Witness to His Truth—will you believe Him who is the Truth? That is, will you take Christ to be your Savior? His Word says that the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all—the context shows that it is His own people who are meant—and that He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Will you believe that it is so? Will you just take Christ as God gives Him? That is all you have to do! God says, "I have given Him." What is the proper sequel to that? "Lord, I

take Him! If you have given Him as Witness, Leader, Commander, Lord, I take Him as Witness, Leader, Commander, and I am only too glad to have Him in all those capacities. 'Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief!'"

Next, the Lord Jesus is set forth as Leader. What is the duty arising out of that? If He is a Leader and holiness is the mark of His leadership, then, let us imitate Him! Christ will not blot out your sins in the past unless you are willing to be cured of the love of sin in the present and, of the pursuit of sin in the future! Are you willing, you who have been given to drunkenness, to be cured of the desire to drink as well as forgiven for your drunkenness? If your tongue has spoken that which is not true, do you wish to be made truthful, in the future, as well as to be forgiven the lies of the past? You who have been forgetful of God, and hard-hearted towards Him—are you as anxious to have new hearts and right spirits as you are to be saved from going down to Hell? You ought to be, for sin is the very essence of Hell—the eternal fire is a heart burning with iniquity! The worm that dies not is a conscience that shall forever torture the immortal spirit on account of its rebellion against God! We must be willing to be like Christ if we wish to be saved by Christ. He has not come to excuse or palliate human sin—He saves His people *from their sins*. He, who becomes to us our salvation from the punishment of sin, also becomes our salvation from the power of sin! Are you willing, then, to imitate Him—to live, as far as you can, as He lived—to be led by His Spirit? It should be so. If God gave Him to that end, let us take Him to that end.

Then, if He is a Commander, what does He require of us? Why, *obedience*, of course. There is an end to military power altogether if there is no discipline. Soldiers must obey their officers' orders. Then, if God gives Christ to be a Commander, the question is, are you willing to obey Him? Do you know of anything that has been said by Christ? Then, there must be no question about that—it must be obeyed by us. If we have trusted Christ to save us, it is not becoming for us to reason and argue, and question about it—the only enquiry we have to make is, "Is that the plain message of the Master?" Then, like the 600 who rode into the valley of death, it is—

"Ours not to reason why,
Ours not to make reply,
Ours but to dare and die,"

if so it must be—not turning to this book or that, but only to God's Book—"to the Law and to the Testimony"—not looking to this religious leader or that, but always to the King, Himself, the Captain of our salvation, the Christ of God. Thus it must be with us if we are His true followers.

Now, my dear Hearer, very earnestly do I put this question to you—Are you seeking in all things to obey Christ? There are great numbers of professing Christians who never think about whether a thing has Christ's sanction or not. If man has ordained it—if the denomination practices it—if it has the stamp of the bishop upon it and, especially, if it is fixed by the High Court of Parliament, which is a wonderful authority in matters of religion, then they yield to it. But true Christians care nothing for

all the high courts under Heaven—they go by the Laws of the highest Court of all—the Word of the Lord Jesus—the will of the Most High God, for, in the Church of Christ there is but one Head, and that is Christ. To us, there is but one Master, and one Law-Giver—and that is the great Son of David—and His will we will do, and before His scepter we will bow. And unto no one else will we yield obedience in this matter—no, not for an hour!

What is that which brings men to Christ's Church sooner than anything else in the whole world? It is the Presence of Christ Himself. Today the only true and worthy attraction which the Church has for the world is Christ's Cross. We may gather people together, if we please, by fine sermons and gorgeous dresses. We may charm their ears with sweet music, but when we have done so, what have we accomplished more than might be done in the theater or the music hall? And even if we delight their nostrils with the smell of incense and their eyes with an abundance of flowers, what have we done more than could have been accomplished by the chemist or the florist? The real attraction of the Church is Christ Crucified, according to His own saying, "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." And when the charms of everything else shall have faded and passed away, the charms of Christ will be as fresh as ever!

The spouse said of Him, in the Song of Solomon, "His locks are bushy and black as a raven." But, in the Book of the Revelation, John speaks of Him as having His head and His hairs white like wool, as white as snow! The one symbolizes His antiquity—the other, His perennial youth—for He is always young, always strong, always beautiful, always attractive and, if the Church will but preach Christ, she will always have the best attraction for the ears and for the hearts of men that even God Himself could send down here below!

So, Beloved, I put it to you—Christ being true, do you believe Him? Christ being holy, do you imitate Him? Christ being clothed with Divine Authority and Power, do you obey Him? May those questions sink into your souls—and may you be able to answer each one of them in the affirmative!

IV. For, lastly, there are THREE BENEFITS WHICH WILL BE SECURED BY THE PERFORMANCE OF THESE DUTIES.

The first is this. If you believe Christ, "the faithful and true Witness," then you have this benefit—*you have certainty as to what you believe*, and that is something that is worth having! The other day a gentleman uttered to another a skeptical expression which is very common just now. Many men seem to think it is a sign of great wisdom not to believe anything at all. When he had made his skeptical remark, the other pretty sharply rebuked him by saying, "Now, look here, I must believe something! And I would sooner believe in Jupiter and Juno than be as you are and believe nothing, at all." So would I, but, blessed be God, we have no need to believe in fabled deities, for we have the God of Truth and the Truth of God in which we may always safely believe! Whenever you can say, concerning any matter, "Jesus says such-and-such," do not you stir

an inch from that! Stand there, for you are safe enough on such a rock as that!

I do not wonder that Roman Catholics wanted infallibility, but I do wonder that they ever believed the Pope had it—especially the last one—who made more blunders than almost anybody else who ever lived! Poor soul, how could he ever imagine himself to be Infallible? If he had but been married, he would have known better, I am quite sure, but, perhaps living all alone, and quietly, in his big palace, he may have thought himself so, but it was a grave mistake. Still, we must have infallibility somewhere. The Romanist has his infallibility in the Pope—where have I mine? In Christ, for, whatever He said is Infallibly true! And I also have Infallibility in this Book. If anything is but in the Bible, I never for a single moment think of questioning it. Miracles? Strong historical statements? I believe them all! I can almost go as far as the old woman who said that she not only believed that the whale swallowed Jonah, but that if the Bible had said that Jonah swallowed the whale, she would have believed it! It says nothing of the kind, but I would go even to that length if it were a clear, positive statement of the Scriptures.

This is my Master's Book and I accept it all. I say, sometimes, that there are things in it that I do not understand, but then I do not need to understand everything. I do not see what good it does to have such a wonderful understanding. I would sooner not understand some things, because it gives me the more reason to show reverence to my God by believing what I cannot comprehend. If I could comprehend God, He would not be a God to me. If I could understand all that He tells me, I would feel sure that He had either left something out of His Revelation, or that there must be some mistake, somewhere, for the Infinite things of God cannot be grasped by finite beings!

There, then, is our Infallibility. Some have gone off to bold blatant infidelity in order to get something sure. And others have turned to Popery in the attempt to get something sure, but as for us, we cast our anchor down where the Cross stands above the surging billows—and there we rest! Christ says, "I am the Truth." We believe that, and we take every Word He says as being Infallibly true, and so we secure absolute certainty. That is a great thing to have in these unsettled times—and a comfortable thing to have in these disturbed times. It is a very practical benefit, too, for when we have once thoroughly made up our mind upon any point, we can say, "That is so. Now we do not need to keep on bothering and questioning about that matter and we can go on with our work—and also seek to make advances in the Divine life." So, the first benefit we secure is that of certainty.

Then, secondly, if Jesus Christ is our Example and we imitate Him, the next benefit that we obtain is *safety*. The way of holiness is always the path of safety. When a man is in the wrong, he is in danger. When he is doing wrong, his conscience generally tells him that he is in some kind of peril. If you and I were perfectly holy, we must, necessarily, be perfectly happy unless we voluntarily put aside that happiness for the good of others. And even the putting of it aside would not involve our altogether

losing it, for I do not doubt that Christ was perfectly happy even when He was, Himself, "a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief," and that He found an intense under-current of delight in laying aside His own joy for our sakes. Brothers and Sisters, if you are right all round, you are safe all round. There cannot be any power that can hurt the man who has become right in his relationships with God, with time, with eternity, with all things! Not even evil can injure the man who is perfectly holy, for it finds nothing in him on which it can operate. It strikes its sparks, but there is no tinder to ignite. It hurls its darts and shoots its arrows, but the man is cased in triple steel and the points of the barbed shafts cannot pierce his armor. Happy, then, is the man who follows the leadership of Christ. Following the Lamb wherever He goes, he may go to his bed and rest, for he dwells under the wings of the Eternal. He may go forth into the midst of the world without fear, for neither the arrow that flies by day, nor the snare which is placed in secret, shall be able to hurt him, for the Lord covers him all the daylong!

The last blessing that comes to us is *victory,* for, if Christ is our Commander and He has all power and we obey Him, then victory is sure and every human heart loves to get the victory. The dying General Wolfe, when he heard those round him say, "They run," anxiously asked who they were that ran. And when they said, "The enemy," he could close his eyes in peace. I have no doubt that the dying Admiral, Lord Nelson, rejoiced when he knew that Trafalgar was won. Only let a man know that in the low and carnal sense, he is to be a victor, and his spirit is revived. But what will it be to hear the exultant shouts when we shall be passing into the next world? "Victory! Victory! Victory through the blood of the Lamb!" How awful would it be to hear that dreadful dirge, "The last fight has been fought and the campaign is lost forever." Will that happen to any of you? Not if Christ is the Captain of your salvation and you are one of the rank and file of His army! But dying and, by faith even now living, you may hear the triumphant shout, "The battle is fought and the victory is won forever! From now on enter into the joy of your Lord and rest in Him, world without end!" The Lord bring us all there, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—720, 372, 236.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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

PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH
NO. 2788

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 20, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 20, 1878.

"Cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary."
Daniel 9:17.

A TRUE-HEARTED Believer does not live for himself. Where there is abundance of Grace and great strength of mind in the service of God, there is sure to be a spirit of unselfishness. It was so with Daniel, who was a model man in the matter of decision of character and a holy, believing walk before the Lord. That "man greatly beloved" was, in all respects, faithful to his convictions. No lion's den could silence his courageous prayer. No presence of mighty monarch or of his festive guests could turn him aside from delivering his fateful message.

Yet Daniel was not satisfied. Whatever might be his own condition, he remembered what Jerusalem was and what the people to whom he belonged were and, in the depths of his soul he sorrowed, notwithstanding all that God's Grace had worked within him. I firmly believe that the better a man's own character becomes and the more joy in the Lord he has in his own heart, the more capable is he of sympathetic sorrow and, probably, the more of it he will have. If you have room in your soul for sacred joy, you have equal room for holy grief and, depend upon it, you will have both of these emotions if the Lord has perfectly consecrated you and purposes to use you for His Glory.

Daniel was also a man of many visions. With the exception of John, whom Daniel greatly resembles, it has scarcely fallen to the lot of any man, unless it is Ezekiel, to have so many wondrous visions of God. Yet his visions did not make him visionary. There are many persons who could not be trusted to see the tip of an angel's wing—for they would become so proud, afterwards, that there would be no holding them. But he who is fully consecrated to God may see vision after vision and he will make a practical use of what he sees—and try to find out something to be done, something to be repented of, something to be prayed for—something that shall be for the good of the Church of God.

Daniel had also been studying the prophecies, and he knew, by what he had discovered, when certain predictions would be fulfilled. But he was not, like some students of prophecy in our day, utterly unpractical. They seem to be so taken up with the future that they do nothing in the present! They are so fully occupied in looking up to the sky, with their mouths wide open, waiting for the coming of the Lord, that they forget

that the very best way to wait for the coming of the Master is to be found doing His will! "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when He comes, shall find so doing." What Daniel learned from the study of the Sacred Books, he turned to practical account and, finding that a certain time was near, of which good things were foretold, he set his face toward the Lord and began to pray—not for himself, but for his people, many of whom were at Jerusalem, hundreds of miles away from him, or scattered in various places all over the face of the earth. For them he used those bright and sparkling eyes which had looked up into the celestial fires. For them he used that thoughtful and enlightened mind which had studied the Oracles of God. For them he used those knees which were so familiar with the attitude of prayer and, getting alone by himself, he wrestled mightily—as Jacob had done of old—only Daniel's pleading was for a far greater number of people who were in a still direr trouble—and he, too, wrestled until he came off more than a conqueror!

I am anxious, dear Friends, that Daniel's prayer should, by the blessing of God's Spirit, inspire us with the spirit of prayer—and that his example, in forgetting himself and remembering his people, would help us to be unselfish and lead us to care for our people—even God's people—to whom we have the honor and privilege to belong. Patriotism is an instinct which is found, I think, in every true Englishman. And most of the other nations of the earth can also boast of their patriots. Let it never be said that the Church of God has no feeling of patriotism for the Holy City, for the Heavenly Land and for her glorious King enthroned above. To us, Christian patriotism means love to the Church of God, for—

"There our best friends, our kindred dwell,
There God our Savior reigns."

Let us have loyalty, by all means, but, chiefly, loyalty to Christ! Let us have true patriotism, but, especially that patriotism which consists in love to "the land of the living" of which Christ is the one King and Ruler.

In meditating upon Daniel's prayer, "Cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary," I shall, first of all, speak upon *the holy place*—"Your sanctuary." Then, secondly, we will consider *the earnest prayer itself*. And, lastly, we will think of *the conduct consistent with such a prayer as this*.

I. First, then, Daniel speaks of THE HOLY PLACE. "Your sanctuary." Of course, he refers to the Temple at Jerusalem, which was then in utter ruin. It had been broken down and burned by the Chaldeans and Daniel, therefore, rightly calls it desolate—but fervently prays that God would cause His face to shine even upon its ruins!

My first remark is that *the Temple at Jerusalem was typical of the Church of God*. We are never to regard any building now upon earth as a sanctuary, a *holy place*. We do, very incorrectly, speak of places as being consecrated to Divine worship, but it is utterly impossible that there should be any more holiness in any one building than in another. Holiness is not an attribute of material substances—it does not appertain to iron, stone, mortar, brick, or timber. It is something which belongs to the mind and to the spirit of man and, from the time of our Lord, there has been no building which was even typically holy. Sitting on the well at Sy-

char, he said to the woman of Samaria, "The hour comes when you shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father…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." Stephen declared to the Jewish Sanhedrim, "The Most High dwells not in temples made with hands," and proved the truth of his statement by quoting the Lord's own declaration by the mouth of the Prophet Isaiah, "Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool: what house will you build Me? says the Lord." Talk of *holy* buildings—can anything that man has made be as holy as yon bright blue sky which the Lord has spread out like a curtain, and as a tent to dwell in? Talk of *holy* water—can any water be holier than that which drops in blessed showers straight from Heaven?

"But," says someone, "if the Temple was typical, of what was it a type? Why, of the Church of God! There is still a Temple upon the earth, but it is a Temple not made with hands—a Temple reared not by human masons, and hewers of stone, and carpenters, and other artificers, but built by God Himself! This Temple is the Church of God. "Which church?" asks someone. There never was more than one—that is, the Church which Christ has redeemed with His own blood. The living stones, which compose this living Temple, were all chosen by God from before the foundation of the world! They are, one by one, being quarried by effectual Grace and built up by the power of the Divine Spirit, so as to grow unto a holy Temple in the Lord!

So we learn that as the Temple was typical, so also was it *unique*. There were never two temples at one time. True, there was a second, which was built upon the foundations of the first. Still, there was only one at a time—the second was the continuation of the former one with less of splendor. All through the land of Canaan there was only one spot where sacrifice might be lawfully offered—only one shrine where, on high occasions, the multitudes met together for worship. And, in like manner, there is only one Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Which church is that?" someone again asks. None of them all—but there are some people, in all the visible churches, who belong to the one sanctuary of God. We may hope that even in those churches which have most departed from primitive simplicity, there is a remnant according to the election of Grace! And that there is a still larger proportion among those who keep more closely to the Word of God and to the Truth of God as it is in Jesus. You cannot say of any part, or of the whole of what is called the visible church, that it is the sanctuary of God—it is a sort of shell in which the real Church of God is encased and which it helps, perhaps, to preserve—but which it also certainly disfigures.

There is an elect people to be found on earth. Do you ask, "Who are they?" I answer, "The Lord knows them that are His." They are a people redeemed from among men by a special and peculiar purchase of our Lord—a people quickened with one life, in whom there is but one living and incorruptible seed, which lives and abides forever—a people in mystical, real, spiritual, indissoluble union with their great Covenant Head, the Lord Jesus Christ—a people who are, some of them, very poor and

quite unknown. Some of them, however, are in the high places of the earth—a few may be found even there. They are scattered up and down in the world and some of them do not know one another, but the Lord knows them all. And whether they know it or not, there is a communion between them all.

Some friends talk about exclusive communion, but it is impossible to practice such a thing, for all true communion is with Christ the Head, and also with all the rest of the members, just as, in the body, every member communicates with every other member and, unless it should cut itself off, and kill itself, it must commune with all the rest. It may tie little pieces of red tape around itself and try to stop the circulation of the blood, but, as long as there is life, the heart beats through the whole body. Every pulse has its effect upon the whole, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot—and so is it with the communion of saints. We are all one body! One life pulsates through all the living Church of the living God. There was but one Temple and there is but one Church.

People try to get a visible form of that one Church, but I believe that is utterly impossible. The Church of Rome claims to be that one Church—and we know what sort of a church it is! And, on the other hand, there are certain brethren who profess to be the one assembly of God. Well, I will not say what kind of church they have made, but I believe that all schemes for comprehending all the saints in one visible church must fail. Adam never saw Eve until God had perfectly fashioned her—and you will never see the Church, the Bride of Christ, till she is perfect and complete! And when she is, you will clap your hands with joy at the sight of the exquisite beauty which God shall have given to her before she is presented to her Heavenly Bridegroom. The process of perfecting her is going on now—and Christ's Bride is being "curiously worked" out of material taken from Christ's own side. And she will be able to say to Him, "Your eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfected." Yes, He sees and He knows it all.

There was but one Temple, then, and there is but one Church, the sanctuary of God, and for that Church we ought to pray. This should correct the idea of some who, when they pray for God to bless His sanctuary, mean, "Lord, bless little Bethel! or, "Lord, bless the parish church!" or, "Lord, bless the extremely orthodox community to which I belong!" or "Lord, bless the select few that gather to hear our dear minister!" I say, "The Lord bless all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and, wherever there lives upon the face of the earth a man who has anything of the Grace of God in him, the Lord lift up His Countenance upon him! May He deliver him from all errors and mistakes into which even God's children fall in a measure, and may He bring them all to the one Lord, the one faith and the one baptism!" If there is good evidence that anyone is, indeed, a living one in God's one true, spiritual Temple, shall we not all wish every blessing to such an one in the name of the Most High?

The Temple at Jerusalem was, further, *the fabric of wisdom.* It could only have been built by a Solomon. And Solomon found a band of men whom God had prepared to carry out the extraordinary work of the Temple, for, from its marvelous foundations, which have been lately unco-

vered, even to its topmost pinnacle, it excelled all the architecture which the world had ever seen! But the Church which God is erecting is a far more wonderful work of wisdom infinitely superior to that of Solomon! Wisdom planned it in election. Wisdom has worked marvelously and continues to work in the calling out of the saints. Wisdom fits each living stone for its proper place and puts each one into its right position. When it shall be all finished, it will be the marvel of all intelligence as they see what a matchless sanctuary God, and not man, has reared, and note how, in every single detail, His Infinite Wisdom is manifest!

The Temple that Solomon built was also *the result of great cost*. Immense wealth was lavished upon it and you do not need that I should try to tell you at what cost the Lord is building up His true sanctuary here among men. The cost of any one of us, if we are, indeed, living stones, no arithmetic can ever calculate! Nowhere but in the heart of Christ could our ransom price be found—and even that heart had to be pierced to find it. Well does Peter say, "You were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold…but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." How marvelous, then, is that Temple which is erected at such a cost! Everything about it is according to God's riches in Glory by Christ Jesus. Solomon's Temple, glorious though it was, had not about the whole edifice so much of splendor as God displays in even the least of the living stones which He builds upon the one foundation, Jesus Christ our Lord!

Again, the Temple of old *was the shrine of God's indwelling*. It was the one place under the old dispensation of types, now done away with, where God dwelt in visible manifestation among His ancient people. We are told that a peculiar light shone between the wings of the cherubim over the Ark of the Covenant and that pillar, which looked like a cloud by day, flamed like a mighty beacon by night! It was there that men must go, or, at least, to that spot that they must look if they sought the Lord. And therefore it was that Daniel worshipped and prayed with his windows open toward Jerusalem. At the present time, the one place in all the world, where God dwells, is His Church. You can find Him anywhere upon the earth as the Creator, but the Glory of the Godhead comes out most brilliantly in Redemption, for it is of His redeemed people that it is written, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." God has not said, of any one country, "England, America, Russia, Spain, shall be Mine." But Moses truly said, "the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance."

It is in His Church that God dwells. Sometimes men take us into some gorgeous building with ornamental roof and wondrous architecture and, as we are led up to a brass railing, we are told that, inside that barrier, it is peculiarly holy. And then we are pointed to some steps and we are told that at the top of those step, it is much holier than it is anywhere else. To my mind, it is an amazing thing that men should entertain such absurd notions for which there is not the slightest shadow of a foundation! But you get where there is a true child of God—and *there* the place is holy. I declare that I have often stood on holy ground, but it has been by the bedside of some poor, expiring saint with whom the Lord has been dwel-

ling and through whom He has manifested the wonders of His Grace. That is where God dwells—in that godly woman dying in the workhouse! That is where He dwells—in that humble-minded man plodding at the plow tail to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow! That is where He dwells—in that saintly woman who endures a daily martyrdom for Christ's sake—and in that man whose holy life adorns the Doctrine of God, his Savior, in all things! These are the true holy places—the sacred shrines of God wherein the Holy Spirit delights to dwell!

The Temple at Jerusalem was also *the place of God's peculiar worship*—and where is God worshipped now, Beloved, but in His living Church? A number of us may meet together and call ourselves Christians, and think that we are worshipping God, but, unless we are really regenerate and the Spirit of God is in us, there is no true worship. You cannot offer acceptable worship to God by forms, or ceremonies, or the sweetest music, or even in the simplest style of worship in the most plain meeting house, or by sitting still, and saying nothing, as the members of the Society of Friends do, unless you worship God, who is a Spirit, in spirit and in truth! It is heart-work, soul-work, the work of the Spirit of God drawing us near to God which alone is acceptable to Him. I dare say it yet again—there is no worship under Heaven that can be pleasing to God except the worship of the one true Church, the sanctuary of God—and that Church is composed of believers in Jesus, whose hearts are knit together into one in Christ!

The Temple at Jerusalem was also *the throne of Jehovah's power*. It was out of Zion that He sent forth His rod and from that sacred shrine that He spoke, by His ancient Prophets, the Word that was full of power. Who could stand against Him when He was angry and spoke in His fury out of His Holy Place? And Christ's power, through the Holy Spirit, still goes forth from His Church. The man who is to preach with power, must be one of those who are quickened by the Holy Spirit and through whom the Spirit speaks with Divine energy. Mere human eloquence is nothing in this matter! Nor is learning, by itself, of any account! Though you may have gone to 20 universities and received from them all the degrees with which men delight to bedizen them, all is in vain without the Spirit of God! It is the life of Christ in a man, the Holy Spirit being with him, that enables him to speak with power! It is the work of the Church of God to evangelize the world. It cannot be evangelized from any other source. God will not send angels to do that which He has committed unto men and, certainly, He will not employ the wicked to declare His statutes—so His Church must do it. The living waters flowed forth from Jerusalem. Light, instruction and the Oracles of God went forth from Jerusalem of old. And now they must go forth from the Church of God, which is among men to this day. Let us, each one, take care that we have our share in this blessed employment!

See, then, what the sanctuary of God is. Our Lord Jesus Christ, speaking of the Temple of His body, said to the unbelieving Jews, "Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up." But now He is gone from us and we know Him no more after the flesh—but we still have God among us! That God is the sacred third Person of the ever-blessed

Trinity in Unity—the Holy Spirit—and though we may not say that He is Incarnate among men, yet we can truly say that He dwells among men. There is still a Divine indwelling, the Holy Spirit is here on earth right now, dwelling in His people, as Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "Know you not that your body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you?" The whole body of Believers put together makes up the one great spiritual Temple, which is the sanctuary of the living God!

II. Now, secondly, I must speak more briefly upon THE EARNEST PRAYER—"Cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary."

And, first, I note that it is a prayer *quite free from selfishness*. Daniel does not even say to the Lord, "Cause Your face to shine upon me." Have you not, Beloved, sometimes felt that you could almost forego the Light of God's Countenance, yourself, if He would but bless His Church? O Souls, if God will but save some of you—if God will but make you into pillars in His eternal Temple, some of His saints will be well pleased even if they themselves have to go mourning on their own account!

Further, Daniel's prayer was *the child of thought*. He had thought over the condition of the Temple at Jerusalem and, thinking it over, he had become troubled in his mind. It was lying desolate, but he knew that there was a promise that it should be rebuilt. He thought over these two things—he let his soul lie soaked in the Truth of God about His sanctuary—and then he prayed. It often happens that there is very little power in those prayers that leap out of our lips without premeditation—born in a minute, like gnats, and dying just as soon. But the prayer that lies in the soul, like eggs in a nest, and that has to be sat upon, as it were, and hatched, and brought forth—there is life in such supplication as that and that is the kind of prayer which prevails with God! Such was the prayer of Daniel.

It was also *a prayer which cast itself entirely upon God*—"Cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary." He does not say, "Lord, send more Prophets." Or, "Raise up new kings." Or, "Do this or that," but only, "Cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary." Oh, that we might learn how to pray so that God would be the Subject as well as the Object of our supplications! O God, Your Church needs You above everything else! A poor, little, sick, neglected child needs 50 things, but you can put all those needs into one if you say that the child needs its mother. So, the Church of God needs a thousand things, but you can put them all into one if you say, "The Church of God needs her God."

There was also *great faith in this prayer*—"Cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary." Daniel seems to say, "Lord, it scarcely needs Your command, it only needs You to smile upon Your sanctuary and all shall be well!" But, Daniel, the Temple is all in ruins! There was scarcely a column standing upon its proper pedestal—and hardly one stone left upon another. "Ah," he says, "that is true. But, Lord, cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary." The face of God is as the sun when it shines in its strength. The favor of God is not merely something to His Church, but it is everything! The revelation of His love to His people is not simply a blessing, but it is all the blessings of the Covenant in one! Cause Your

face, O infinitely glorious Jehovah, to shine upon Your Church here below! Will you not, Beloved, all join in that prayer?

It was, however, *a very comprehensive prayer* because wherever God's face shines upon His Church, note what happens. First, her walls are rebuilt. Desolations, when God shines upon them, glow into perfection! We shall soon see our church members multiplied and all things in proper order if the Lord will but shine upon us! Then shall you see each one of the Lord's servants in his right place, ministering before the Lord. I hope we all pray for ministers, but I am afraid we do not pray for them as often and as earnestly as we ought. But, Lord, if You will cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary, we shall have ministers enough and of the best sort, too! If Your face is but turned Zionward, You will find the man who will tell of the love of Jesus. When the Lord shines upon a Church, then its worship will be acceptable to Him—even the most humble form of it will be acceptable in His sight. We know, Beloved, what it is to have God's face shining upon us, do we not? How sweet the service is then! How intense the prayers! How fervent the praise! How you feel fed! How glad your souls are! In this land of weeping skies and gathering clouds, we know what it is to have a long time of dullness—but how different is the prospect when the sun shines forth in its glory—and how different is our worship when the Lord lifts upon us the Light of His reconciled Countenance!

Then, too, truth will be proclaimed in all its clearness. We shall not have to complain of the cloudy preaching of which we hear so much nowadays, or of the men whose cleverness consists in confusing the minds of their hearers, or, to speak in plain language, in inventing lies to contradict the blessed Word of God and to seek to undermine everything for which we have ever had respect and regard! They have tried to quench Hell, and to pull down Heaven! There is nothing that their unholy fingers have not sought to pollute! But if God shall cause His face to shine upon us, we shall have the old Truth of God declared once again in all its clearness.

Then, too, we shall see the beauty of holiness in all the members of God's spiritual Church. We may well pray for that, for there are many professors, in the present day, who are the enemies of the Cross of Christ—enemies because they manage to get into the Church and then dishonor it by their ungodly conduct. O Lord, cause Your face to shine upon Your Church, that all Your people may walk in the beauty of holiness!

Then, also, there will be delightful fellowship. In the sunlight of God's Presence, we have fellowship with one another, and with the Lord Jesus Christ, and our hearts are exceedingly glad.

And then there will be power in the testimony. With God's face shining upon His sanctuary, His Word goes forth from His servants with energy and force which none can resist. Join, then, Beloved, in this prayer of Daniel, "Cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary." Do it for the Church's own sake. What a sad thing it is when the Church is like Samson after the Lord had departed from him—when she shakes herself, as at other times, but can perform none of her former feats! What wretched Sabbaths some of our Brothers and Sisters have to spend when they go

and listen to a profitless ministry and mingle with Brethren as dull, and cold, and dissatisfied as themselves! Join also in this prayer for the world's sake. If the Church has not the Lord to shine upon her, what is the poor world to do? What hope, what light, what knowledge of the Truth of God, what salvation can come to a perishing world of sinners except through a living Church? What are your own children to do without this shining of God's Countenance? If you take them to a place where the worship is dull and lifeless—if they are compelled to listen to something that never interests them at all, and to go where there is no one to care about their souls, you may live to see them grow up to break your hearts. Therefore pray God to bless His Church for your dear children's sake.

And, then, for God's sake, for Christ's sake, for the Holy Spirit's sake—for a lifeless Church is a dishonor to God—and the better a Church has been, the more of a nuisance does it become when the Presence of God is gone from it. May the Lord grant that we may never know what this means in our own case and, for all these reasons, let us pray to God to cause His face to shine upon His sanctuary.

III. Now I am to conclude by briefly reminding you of THE CONDUCT THAT IS CONSISTENT WITH THIS PRAYER. If you and I have been praying this prayer—and I hope we have—what kind of conduct will be consistent with it?

Well, first, we shall consider the state of the Church. Some professing Christians do not seem to me as if they ever thought of the Church at all. Some do not think much about the church with which they are connected. Do all of you, who are members of this church, know whether the Sunday school is getting on well or not? Now, speak the truth—do you? Did you ever make any enquiry about it? Then there are various Societies for the spread of the Gospel connected with this church—do all of you know that there are such Societies and do you help them all you can? Come, now, put the matter to your own consciences! Then there are numbers of people who are members of various little churches, but who never care anything about other churches. They are like the mouse that lived in a box and when the lid was opened, one day, it came out into the cupboard and said that it had no idea that the world was so big! Yet it was only then looking at the inside of a cupboard! And there are many professing Christians who have not a much wider range of vision than that mouse had in the cupboard—they have no idea of the size of the Church of Christ, or of its various interests. That should not be the case with any of us who are members of the Church of the living God! Let us look over all that is in our Master's house! Let us count His flocks and His herds, and see how everything that is His flourishes and increases.

The next thing for us to do is *to lay to heart the evil or the good of Zion.* Consider it well and then be grieved if you see sin triumphant, or error rampant—and do not perceive that the cause of God is advancing in the world! I am afraid there are many nominally Christian people who look, every morning, to check the price of eggs, who have not examined the last Missionary Society's Report, nor have they any clear idea as to the increase or decrease of the work of the Lord. This ought not to be true of

any professed follower of Christ! How can we expect the Lord to cause His face to shine upon His sanctuary when His people have little or no care about that sanctuary?

Then, if we begin to think, and begin to care, *we shall try to do what we can for God's Church*. It is all very well for a man to pray, but the value of his prayer very much depends upon its sincerity, and that sincerity will be proven by his doing something that will help to answer his own prayer. What are you doing, my Brother? What are you doing, my Sister, to promote the Glory of God in His sanctuary? All the living members of the body of Christ contribute something to the general welfare of the whole body. The little finger would be missed if it were cut off and there is not a tiny valve near the heart, nor a minute vessel anywhere in the human system which could be taken away without inflicting an injury upon the whole body. Just so is it in the Church of Christ—we cannot afford to spare any part of the mystical body of Christ. But what use are you, Brother, in that body? What are you doing, Sister, for the well-being of your fellow members? There is something which you should be doing, or else you would not have any portion in the Lord's spiritual sanctuary.

But when we have done all that we can, *let us pray much more than we ever have done*. Oh, for a praying Church! I rejoice that ever since I have been with you, the spirit of prayer has never died out among us and I earnestly entreat you never to let it do so. May our Prayer Meetings be sustained in fervor and increased in number! Praying is, after all, the chief matter. Praying is the end of preaching! Preaching has its right use, and must never be neglected, but real heart devotion is worth more than anything else. Prayer is the power which brings God's blessing down upon all our work. I beg you, day by day, as you walk the streets, to have this petition in your hearts and in your mouths, "'Cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary.' O God, bless Your Church all over the world—in Europe, in America, in Asia, in Africa, in Australia! Everywhere prosper Your work among the heathen, and in our own highly-favored land, too, cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary.'" And do not cease to present that prayer until, to the fullest possible extent, it shall be answered. And when will that be? When He comes, for whose coming we look with joyful expectation! The Lord blesses you for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALMS 114; 48.

Psalm 114. *When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language; Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion. The sea saw it, and fled: Jordan was driven back. The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs. What ailed you, O you sea, that you fled? You Jordan, that you were driven back? You mountains, that you skipped like rams; and you little hills, like lambs? Tremble, you earth, at the Presence of the Lord, at the Presence of the God of Jacob; who turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters.*

I did not interrupt the reading of the Psalm by any exposition. It is a perfect whole and could not well be divided without spoiling it. We may admire the poetry as well as the Inspiration of this Psalm. It begins with rugged abruptness—"When Israel went out of Egypt." It only gives just a hint of the discomfort of the Israelites while in Egypt, arising from the fact that they did not understand the Egyptians—"strange language." No doubt they were often beaten by their taskmasters for not obeying orders, when they really did not understand what must have seemed to them the barbarous speech of their Egyptian oppressors. But God led them up out of the house of bondage, the tribe of Judah leading the van, and all the people following in due order.

How beautifully the Psalmist describes the dividing of the Red Sea! He represents the waters as perceiving the Presence of God and fleeing away, not because Israel came to the bank, but because God was in the midst of His people—"The sea saw it and fled"—as if abashed at the Presence of its Maker, alarmed at the terror of Jehovah's might. So was it with the Jordan, that swiftly-flowing river was "driven back" by a very special miracle. The dividing of the Red Sea was a marvelous act of God's power, but the driving back of that rushing river has some extraordinary points about it peculiar to itself. And all this happened because God was there. The sea flees before Him, the river is driven back by Him. In like manner, my Brothers and Sisters, if God is in the midst of our church, nothing can withstand its onward march! If the Lord is in any man, that man need not even think or talk of difficulties, for, with God nothing is impossible!

So mighty was the influence of God's Presence that the mountains themselves began to move and even to skip like rams, and to leap like lambs. There was some fear there, for they trembled in their solid sockets, "at the Presence of the God of Jacob." There was joy, too. We speak of "the everlasting hills," yet the Psalmist depicts them as moving as easily as the lambs frisk in the meadows in the springtime—"The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs." How grand is the poetic utterance! "What ailed you, O you sea, that you fled? You Jordan, that you were driven back?" "You could no longer rush in your accustomed channel, but must needs return to the source from where you came. What ailed you, O you mountains, that you trembled as if a palsy had seized upon you? 'What ailed you, O you little hills?'"

Now comes the answer, which yet is not given in the form of an answer. The Inspired poet, in order to heighten the grandeur of his language, kept the name of God out of the Psalm until he came to the end, when he thus answered his own riddle—"Tremble, you earth, at the Presence of the Lord, at the Presence of the God of Jacob; which turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters"—another miracle, for God multiplied His marvels. Having brought His people out of Egypt and led them through the wilderness, and made the hills to move at His majestic Presence, now He performs a converting work—changing the rock into a lake, so plenteous was the effusion of water—and making the flint to gush into a veritable river which followed the children of Israel through the wilderness, for, as Paul says, "they drank of that spiritual

Rock that followed them, (the margin is, "that went with them,") and that Rock was Christ."

Psalm 48:1-3. *Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. God is known in her palaces for a refuge.* It was so with the literal Jerusalem and it is so now with the Church of Christ, of which, "the city of the great King" was a type. God still dwells among men. His Spirit abides with His people and His Church stands securely upon the rock of His eternal purposes, evermore the same.

4. *For, lo, the kings were assembled.* The adversaries who boasted that they would destroy Jerusalem—"the kings were assembled,"

4-7. *They passed by together. They saw it, and so they marveled; they were troubled, and hasted away. Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail. You broke the ships of Tarshish with an east wind.* The adversaries of Zion looked up at the city set on that high hill and they despaired of being able to capture it. And, in like manner, those who attack the Truth of God as it is in Jesus—if they did but know how well it is garrisoned by the Omnipotence of Jehovah, they, also, would faint with fear and give up the assault. If they do not, the Lord can break them in pieces as He broke the ships of Tarshish with His strong east wind.

8-14. *As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD of Hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it forever. Selah. We have thought of Your loving kindness, O God, in the midst of Your Temple. According to Your name, O God, so is Your praise unto the ends of the earth: Your right hand is full of righteousness. Let Mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad because of Your judgments. Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark you well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that you may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God forever and ever: He will be our Guide even unto death.* According to Alexander and Bonar, this last clause should be read, "He will be our Guide at death and over death." He will lead us across the Jordan, and be our God and our Guide in the land that flows with milk and honey, wherever we are bound. So, glory be unto the God of Abraham—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, forever and ever! Amen.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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

PERFECT JUSTIFICATION AND PERFECT PARDON
NO. 2789

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 27, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DURING THE SUMMER OF 1860.

"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 preserve."
Jeremiah 50:20.

I do not profess to have attained sufficient proficiency in interpreting the prophetical parts of Holy Scripture to be able to enter, as some can, into the minutes of the future and to tell when any particular promise will have its actual, literal fulfillment and, indeed, if I could do so, it would not serve my purpose at this time, for I wish to take my text—perhaps you may think by way of accommodation—as describing what shall be the case with all God's people when, having crossed the Jordan of death, they shall stand before the Great White Throne—and, indeed, what is now the case with all those "who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

I shall use my text thus—first, I shall say something about *the great iniquities and sins mentioned in the text.* And then, secondly, I shall speak, at greater length, upon *the great forgiveness by which these sins have been put away*. May God grant that many of us may feel that we have a sweet and undoubted participation in the complete pardon and deliverance which are here spoken of!

I. So, first, let us meditate for a little while upon THE GREAT INIQUITIES AND SINS MENTIONED IN THE TEXT.

Those sins were of no common order. Israel was a nation, chosen out of the world, to be the peculiar people of the Lord. They were chosen, not because of anything especially good in them, for they were always a stiff-necked and rebellious race, but because of God's Sovereign Grace. Because of this special privilege, even if they had been only ordinary sinners, their sin would have assumed a most serious aspect, for never does sin seem to be so black as when it is committed in spite of great love, special peace, high privileges and other Divine blessings.

The Israelites were not an ignorant people. They did not sin, as the Philistines did, in the dark. They were not left in the dim twilight of nature, but they had the fullest Revelation of God's mind and will that was

afforded to any people in those days. They were not taught the Truth of God by a system that was too high for them to understand, for the types and symbols of the ancient sanctuary were exactly adapted to the infant state of the Jewish commonwealth and to the immature condition of the Israelites' spiritual life. Well might the Lord say concerning them, "What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it?" He had brought the goodly vine up out of Egypt. He had planted it in the richest soil in the whole earth. He had built a wall around it by making His chosen people to be separate from all the other nations in the world and He had dug a winepress for the gathering in of the fruits of the vineyard. And so He might well ask, "Why, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"

Therefore, I repeat what I said just now—If the children of Israel had only sinned as other nations did, yet their sins would have been of the most heinous character because of the greatness of their privileges and the peculiar and special love that had been lavished upon them. But they were sinners of an unusual kind—they were positively unmatched in guilt by any nation under Heaven! What other nation forsook the gods whom they worshipped, even though they were only idols? Did not the idolaters cleave to Baal and hold fast to Ashtaroth? Do we find that even when the heathen nations were smitten, they forsook the god they professed to worship? Did they not still blindly and foolishly cling to their worthless idols and bow before them?

Yet the children of Israel cast away their God—they who had worshipped Jehovah turned aside from Him and bowed down before Baal and, oftentimes did they grieve the Lord and provoke Him to anger because they went after other gods and worshipped idols that were not gods. This was a new evil under Heaven—a thing unheard of and unknown. The heathen would sooner have lost their nationality than they would have forsaken the idols that they adored, but Israel had played the harlot with many lovers. She, who ought to have been the most chaste of spouses, was unfaithful to her Lord and went gadding abroad among those whom He abhorred!

Besides, my Brethren, I would have you remember that the children of Israel provoked God, perhaps, more than any other nation that has ever been upon the face of the earth by reason of the fact that *the provocations of other nations were speedily punished and not permitted to continue as long as those of Israel*. God commanded that the Canaanites should be exterminated because of their abominable sins, yet they were not greater sinners than some, at least, of the Israelites were! Some of the incidents recorded in the Old Testament evince a state of morality in the commonwealth of Israel as low, as sensual, as degraded as even the criminality of Sodom itself! As a nation, they had sinned as foully as others and, in some respects, still more foully because, when they were often smitten and chastened for their sin, they returned to it, like the dog to his vomit, "and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." Think of the provocation that Israel gave to the Lord in the wilderness! Remember that time when Jehovah said to Moses, "I have seen this

people and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people: let Me alone, that I may destroy them, and blot out their name from under Heaven: and I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they." Though the Lord turned from the fierceness of His anger, yet His anger was fierce and terrible against the rebellious people.

Think, too, of their continual revolts under the Judges—to omit, for the while, the possibly better state they were in under Joshua's leadership. They were first in bondage to one power and then to another, for the simple reason that there was hardly one false god that they had not worshipped, nor was there any form of lust or crime which Israel had not learned. Then remember the abominable iniquities of the house of Israel during the days of the kings who followed Solomon—how they offered incense to false gods in all their high places, and bowed down to idols in all their groves and under almost every green tree. They adopted the very worst forms of idolatry—they made their children pass through the fire—they offered up their little ones as a sacrifice to Moloch! The murder of infants was common among them. They were not content to imitate the better part of the heathen idolatries, but they must take the whole and drain the black cup to its dregs—and they even seem to have exceeded the wickedness of those whom they imitated! The provocations of Rome have been many. The iniquities of the great Grecian empire were intolerable. The pride of Babylon was more than God could endure. The crying sins of Nineveh reached unto Heaven. The guilt of Sodom and Gomorrah was very great. But the children of Israel, in the race for the prize of evil, distanced all these who were, apparently, greater sinners than themselves!

I feel that we must give the pre-eminence to them, especially when we consider their transgressions in the light of the love and favor which the Lord God had displayed towards them. Yet, Brothers and Sisters, our text is true. Let us read it again, remembering what I have been saying about Israel's iniquity. "In those days, and at 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 preserve." Their provocations, their idolatries, their lusts were all to be swept away and to be forgotten! Crimes which had accumulated upon crimes were all to be covered in the depths of the sea! Surely, this should give hope to the very chief of sinners! If any of you are sorely depressed because of your great guiltiness, this passage should afford you much encouragement for, if God took so completely away, not the sins of those who had lightly offended against Him, but the crimes of the very blackest of criminals, why may He not wash away yours, also? And why may not you hope and even be confidently assured that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses you from all sin?

II. Now I turn, in the second place, to look, for a little while, at THE COMPLETE PARDON SPOKEN OF IN THE TEXT. Let us first consider the words and then the sense of them—"The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found."

First, look *at the words of the text*. This is a metaphorical form of speech—"The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found." You remember that Rachel hid the image under the seat on which she sat, so that when her father searched for it, he could not find it—yet it was there all the while. But it is not to be so with our sins! They are to be searched for, but there shall be none. They are to be sought for, but so effectually shall they have been put away that they shall not be found. Not only shall they not be discovered, but there shall not be *any to be discovered*. They shall be so completely removed, so absolutely annihilated, that they shall have ceased to exist! Come, let me draw a picture for you. Are there any who will ever search for the sins of God's people? There are many who would do so if they could—and there are some who must do so.

There is, first of all, *an awakened conscience*. One of the first things which an awakened conscience does is to search for sin. It will never rest content in the house where there is sin—it will go through every chamber of the heart and track sin to its most secret recesses. A blind, dead, sensual conscience may lie in the same bed with sin and not be disturbed, but an awakened conscience can detect it afar off and will have nothing to do with it. The lie, or any other form of iniquity, cannot tarry within sight of a conscience, the eyes of which have been spiritually opened. But, Believer, you are so fully pardoned that, though your tender conscience may search for sin, it shall not be found! Even when your conscience shall be illuminated with the sunlight of Heaven and all its obliquity and dimness of vision shall be taken away—if it should in *Heaven* look for sin, "there shall be none." It is not difficult to realize that a blind man cannot see sin and a man with a blind conscience cannot see sin in himself, but I say that the man with the keenest spiritual sight, the man with the enlightened, the intelligent, the instructed, the perfect conscience may search the forgiven soul through and through, but there shall not, upon that soul, be found even the shadow of a spot! So thorough shall the washing be that the eyes, which now run with tears day and night because of the consciousness of sin, shall then be free from tears, for it shall see no sin to weep over—it shall behold no iniquity over which it has to grieve and no crime for which it has to mourn. Oh, glorious cleansing is this, when even an awakened conscience shall search and find no sin!

But more than this, there is within us another eye which is even quicker in seeing sin than is our conscience, and that is the eye of *our unbelief*. It is amazing, my Brothers and Sisters, how soon our unbelief finds a ground for fear lest we should be lost. It seems to find such a reason, often, when there is none. It will catch at any little circumstance in our daily life to make us imagine that God has forgotten us. Unbelief is blind to good and to God, but it is very quick of sight to everything that is fearful and terrifying. I have known some Christians so full of unbelief that it was very difficult to give them any comfort—they were most dexterous in finding out the worst parts of their character and history—and very crafty in, as it were, seeking to neutralize the force of God's promis-

es by mentioning some evil thing in their own experience which seemed as if it deprived them of their right to receive the promised gift. But God so fully pardons His people that even their doubts, their fears, or their searching unbelief shall not be able to find a flaw in it!

If it were possible for me to be smitten with unbelief even in Heaven, so that I should begin to mistrust my standing in Christ, or to try to find a reason why I should mistrust, I should not be able to do so. However much I might seek to find any speck or spot of sin, I would be obliged to say at the last, "Great God, I am clean through Jesus' blood, I am clean every whit." And even now, Beloved, and even here, though your unbelief thinks it sees a dozen sins, yet remember that those sins, at least as far as the guilt of them is concerned, are not really there. They are forever put away! Christ has drowned them in the Red Sea of His precious blood! There may seem to you to still be guiltiness upon you, but there is none if God has pardoned you, for "there is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." You may think that there is, but there is not—God now sees no sin in Judah, nor iniquity in Israel. He may see it to reprove it, or to chastise it, but judicially to avenge it, He sees none. Our Lord has made us so perfectly white that there is no spot to be found in us. He has so completely covered us with the robe of His matchless righteousness that no imperfection shall be seen in us even when we come to the perfect world where we are to dwell with Him forever! What a precious thought is this! Lord, give us Grace to believe it and to dwell in Christ—and enjoy to the fullest all our privileges in Him!

But, further, there are other eyes, besides our own, which are always searching for our sins and, among them, there is the *quick eye of the envious world*. There are some of us who have good reason to be dead to the world, for the world has never spoken a good word concerning us, but has always been ready to magnify our faults when it could find any, or to lie against us where there was no fault at all. I, of all men, have no reason to respect public rumor! I do not respect it and I cannot, for, of all lying things, public rumor seems almost to exceed Satan, himself, in the lies which it will invent! Thus men who are to stand pre-eminent as God's ministers must make up their minds, when they commence their ministry, that they will probably be accused of every crime in the calendar! I should not be greatly surprised if you were to be told that I had committed the grossest iniquity that ever was perpetrated and, my Brothers and Sisters, should you hear such a thing, it will not so much distress my spirit as it might have done in years gone by, now that I know that the world's tongue is always ready to speak the worst word it can against the man who does it the most harm. If I am to fight the Lord's battles, I may leave Him to fight mine! If I defend His Character, He will defend mine! I shall not defend my own—that I know—it is always a bad thing for a man to be his own defender!

You must, all of you, have noticed in your more private capacity, how quick the men of the world are to find fault with you. You just stumble and they say that you have had a serious fall. There is one spot upon your cheek and they declare that your face is covered with mire. You

stooped to pick up a pin and they affirm that you stole a ton of gold. That is the style in which they usually magnify our faults—and if they cannot find any, then they tell lies and invent them! It is a grand testimony to a man's uprightness when worldlings cannot say anything against him without lying, for it shows that there is nothing of which they can truthfully accuse him! It is a noble thing for a man to be in such a position and then he can say, "Now have I come where I desire to be—there is no love lost between the world and me. The world is dead to me and I am dead to the world." If we say hard things of the world—as we are bound to do if we are faithful—of course it will say hard things of us. If we say that it is a flaunting harlot, that its beauty is only painted and its joys are a sham, we must not be surprised if it says the same concerning us. Have you never noticed how, if two men are driving in the street, and one of them is on the wrong side, he is generally the one to call out to the other, "What are you doing?" So is it usually with the Church and the world—the world, because it is on the wrong side, will be sure to cry out to the Church, "What are you doing there?"

Well, Christian, there is a joyous thought for all who have been slandered and abused! The day is coming when "the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found"—when, *before the eyes of an assembled universe*, God's despised servants shall be fully vindicated and against them not a dog shall move his tongue, even as it was in the day when Israel came up out of Egypt. Oh, glorious shall be that resurrection of buried reputations when there shall come up from the grave, not only God's people, but also their characters, and they who have served the Lord faithfully shall shine as the stars in the firmament of Heaven forever and ever! It is to me a joyous thought that sinners who hate the Word of God, and hate God's people, shall search for their sins, but shall not be able to find them!

Yet again, Brothers and Sisters, there is one whose eye is even quicker than that of the world! One who is always searching for our faults—and that is our *infernal enemy, Satan*—Apollyon, the destroyer! Oh, how he watches us to do us harm! Never did a lion, crouching ready to spring upon its prey, watch the harmless deer feeding upon the plain, or drinking at the spring, more keenly and more fiercely than Satan watches us. He is always seeking to find faults in God's people, that he may accuse them, sometimes through their own conscience and, at other times, by himself bringing the accusation against them up to the very Throne of the King! Happy, happy shall be the day when even Satan shall not be able to find fault with us! For then, in the Pit, he may bite at his iron bonds and may in secret hate and long to slander us, but his malice will all be in vain! The old serpent shall be unable to spit his venom upon the people of God. It will be a glorious triumph for you, poor devil-tried child of God, when you shall put your foot upon the old dragon's neck and he shall be powerless to harm you!

But there is One, whose eyes are quicker than those of the world, and whose sight is keener than that of Satan—it is HE, the all-seeing One, our Father and our God. "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes

of Him with whom we have to do." If there were the faintest trail of sin upon us, He would discover it, for does He not search the heart and try the reins of the children of men? Can we hide ourselves anywhere from His Presence? Would the top of Carmel be too high for Him, or the depths of the sea too deep? If we seek to mount above the clouds to escape Him, or fly beyond the western sea to get beyond His sight, He is still there—everywhere, above, beneath, around—all eyes, all ears, seeing all things, hearing all things, knowing—even before they are our own—the unformed thoughts that are within our inmost soul. But what a joy it is for us to know that even He will not be able to find a sin in any one of His blood-washed children! Up from the blessed bath we come and even Omniscience, itself, can see no spot remaining upon us. In the full blaze of the awful glory of the Day of Judgment, when God's eyes shall read the most secret thoughts of the ungodly, and when His voice shall wake the echoes of every conscience, His eyes shall see no sin in those for whom Christ died! And His voice shall awaken in them no accusing thought, but only cause them unsullied joy because He perceives in them not even the shadow of a fault, for they are "accepted in the Beloved."

This is a sweet Truth of God and it is easy to utter, but how difficult it sometimes seems to grasp and hold it firmly! Yet, if we are believers in Jesus, we are complete in Him, perfect in Christ Jesus, for He has put away all our iniquities and cast all our sins behind His back into the depths of the sea. His own declaration to each of His redeemed ones, is, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins." Fly, Gabriel, to all the countless hosts of Christ's elect! Look upon each one as they now gather before the eternal Throne of God and say, you bright discerning angel, have you found a fault in any one of them? There is Mary Magdalene and there the penitent thief and yonder are Saul of Tarsus and Manasseh, and many more who were great sinners while here below—but can you see any sin in them now? There, too, stand the glorious hosts of those who, in these later days, have crossed the stream and entered their eternal rest. I charge you, O you watchers, you holy ones, tell me, can you find a fault in any one of them? The answer of all of them is, "No, the fact that they are here proves that they are without sin, for of this city it is written, 'There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defiles.'" Yes, when the Last Great Day shall come, and the whole family of the redeemed shall be safely housed in their Father's home above, if each one should, individually, be put into the scales of the sanctuary, there is not one of whom it would be said, "Tekel: you are weighed in the balances, and are found wanting." If they were all to be cast into the crucible, not one grain of dross would be found in the whole of them! Though many of them were, once, among the very chief of sinners, yet if they were all to be examined—as they will be—by the eyes of Infinite Justice, yet, in them all, no trace or shadow of sin shall be discovered!

Now, in closing, I want you to take *the sense of the words*, which I understand to be that when God pardons His people, He pardons all their sins at once—not half, but all! Their blasphemy, their lust, their theft,

their pride, their lying, or whatever their sin may have been—this is God's receipt in full for all their indebtedness to Him—"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses from all sin." If you believe in Jesus now, my Hearer, there is not one sin recorded against you in God's Book of Remembrance, nor a tithe of a sin, nor a shadow of iniquity!

Not only does God pardon all the sins of His people, but He pardons in all senses of the term. You know that, sometimes, a man pardons his son for his wrongdoing, yet he cannot fully reinstate him in his confidence. He will not trust him with his money as he does his son who never wandered away from home. But God pardons completely. He harbors no ill thought of you, but loves you no less than He would have done if you had never sinned. If you had been as Adam was once—perfect and pure, without spot—God could not love you more than He does now, nor could He give you greater privileges, or higher honors. He has given you the promise of a crown and a share in His Son's Throne and Glory! He has made you joint-heir with Christ of all that He has—what more could He have done for you had you been an absolutely perfect being?

But, further, when God pardons a sinner, He puts away all his sin forever. The cloud may return after the rain, but the cloud of my sin comes back no more. When the winter is gone and the springtime and the summer have made their presence felt, yet we know that winter will come again and the leaves will fall from the trees. But the winter of my spirit's sin will never return. The great sea, when it rolls up in its might, must go out again at the ebbing of the tide. But that ocean of the love of God, which covers up my sins, will never roll back, but shall abide at the full forever and ever! The sun of God's mercy never sets when it has once risen. The stream of Divine Love never dries up when it has once begun to flow. It is no brook like Cherith, at the side of which a Prophet might sit down for a little while and then its waters fail—but it is an ever-flowing river, as perpetual as the eternal Fountain in the heart of God Himself!

I know not where my brethren who think that pardoned sin may come back again, ever get any comfort. O Beloved, this Bible would be to me like a casket emptied of its jewels if you could ever take from me the firm belief that once forgiven, sin is no more imputed! Once washed away, the filthiness never returns! That was a magnificent argument of the Apostle Paul—"If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." Do you see the pith of the argument? If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled—the harder work—how much more, being *friends*, we shall be saved! And if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled by His death, how much more, being *friends*, shall we be saved by His life!

If we are washed in Jesus' blood, verily we are clean, so clean that—

"Not the shadow of a spot
Shall on our soul be found."

Come death when it may, we shall meet it with joy, and not with sorrow, for—

"With our Savior's garments on"

we shall be—

"Holy as the Holy One!"

Sinner, if you have never known what it is to be pardoned, let it not seem like a dream to you. If you ask, "May I be forgiven?" I answer—Yes, certainly you may! Listen to what God Himself has said—"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." Sinner, if you believe in Christ, be your sins ever so many, they shall be blotted out, for—

"The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in His crucified God,
His pardon at once He receives,
Redemption in full through His blood."

So, without delay, just as you are, come and trust in Christ! and your sins, which are many, shall be forgiven you, and you shall go on your way rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, even as you are rejoicing in the assurance of the love of God. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 18:1-35.

Verse 1. *I will love You, O LORD, my strength.* What a blessed "I will"—"I will love You"! He does love the Lord, and he declares that he will continue to do so. He feels that he must do so, for the Lord has been his strength. There are many aspects under which the love of our heart is most justly and fitly given to God and this is one of them. If the Lord has been the strength of our heart, then let our heart love Him.

2. *The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my selection, and my high tower.* How David heaps up the epithets! When the Believer once begins to praise the Lord, there is no end to it. He can never even satisfy himself, much less can he hope to rise to the height of this great argument! Notice how many of those little pronouns there are. Luther used to say that the very marrow of divinity lies in the pronouns. Certainly the sweetness—the honey of it lies here. Let me read the verse again, putting the emphasis on the pronouns—"The Lord is *my* rock, and *my* fortress, and *my* deliverer; *my* God, *my* strength, in whom *I* will trust; *my* buckler, and the horn of *my* salvation, and *my* high tower."

3. *I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from my enemies.* Calling upon Him in prayer, and rendering praise to Him, "so shall I be saved from my enemies." You remember how the army of Jehoshaphat marched forth into the valley of Berachah, singing and praising the Lord? They had no need to strike a blow, for the Lord gave them a glorious victory when they began to sing and to praise! And we might have more victories if we had more praise and more prayer. Now David goes on to tell us what had happened to him and what happened to the children of Israel when they came up out of the land of Egypt and went into the wilderness.

4, 5. *The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. The sorrows of Hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me.* That is, "went before me," "lay in my pathway."

Did you ever have a window opened in your heart so that you could see all the ruin of your nature—all the possibilities of evil that lay asleep within your soul? Did you ever feel, as you gazed upon that sight, as if you were looking over the edge of the bottomless Pit? Ah, then, you have been in the condition which the Psalmist here describes—"The sorrows of Hell compassed me about: the snares of death lay in my pathway."

6. *In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God; He heard my voice out of His Temple, and my cry came before Him, even into His ears.* That is a wonderful expression, "My cry came before Him, even into His ears." That is, of course, speaking after the manner of men—and we cannot speak in any other manner. God appeared to hear David's cry as you and I hear a thing when we say, "It seemed to ring in my ears, I could not get rid of the sound of it." What happened then?

7. *Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because He was angry.* The Lord was angry with those who had made His child cry, as a father is angry with one who injures a beloved child of his, or as a mother is angry with one who puts her babe to pain. The Lord made the earth to tremble because He was angry at the oppressors of His servant.

8. *There went up a smoke out of His nostrils, and fire out of His mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it.* That is David's graphic and striking representation of the indignation of God on his behalf.

9. *He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under His feet.* This is a wonderful description of the interposition of God on behalf of His people. The scene referred to by David is probably the destruction of the Egyptians at the Red Sea, and the deliverance of the children of Israel from their cruel enemies.

10. *And He rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yes, He did fly upon the wings of the wind.* So swift is prayer to reach the heart of God—and so swift is God to come to the help of His people!

11, 12. *He made darkness His secret place; His pavilion round about Him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. At the brightness that was before Him, His thick clouds passed, hail stones and coals of fire.* For all the dread artillery of Heaven shall be used for the defense of the faithful. God will hold nothing in reserve when His people are in danger.

13. *The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave His voice; hail stones and coals of fire.* What made God speak in those terrible tones? It was the faint and feeble cry of His poor servant down below. Can you and I make thunder? Yes, we can. If we can thunder at the gates of Heaven by prayer, God will thunder in the heavens in His Omnipotence! He will quickly respond to His children's cries. The first Christians who were employed in the Roman armies were called the thundering legion, because, it was said, once upon a time when they prayed, God sent a thunderstorm to destroy their enemies and, truly, a living Church of God that is full of prayer, may be called a thundering legion!

14. *Yes, He sent out His arrows, and scattered them; and He shot out lightning, and discomfited them.* What a wonderful picture this is—as if

the Eternal had taken down His bow and aimed His shafts of lightning against the foes of His people!

15. *Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at Your rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of Your nostrils.* At the Red Sea, Moses sang, "You did blow with Your wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters." But here, David does not represent God as sending forth a great wind, but as if, in His eagerness to help His servant, His very nostrils gave forth such a mighty blast as made the sea to divide, so that "the channels of the waters were seen." It is one of the most vivid pieces of poetry that ever fell from the pen of Inspired or uninspired man!

16, 17. *He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them who hated me: for they were too strong for me.* When a child of God is in such a condition that he cannot help himself and he cries to his Heavenly Father, then the Lord always helps him. Our proverb says, "God helps those that help themselves." That is true, but there is something better than that. God helps those who *cannot* help themselves. That proves the greatness of His mercy, which endures forever. David said of his foes, "They were too strong for me," but they were not too strong for the Lord to overthrow!

18. *They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay.* "I leaned on Him. I rested on Him. I relied on Him and so I was made peaceful, calm, quiet, confident in Him—'The Lord was my stay.'"

19. *He brought me forth also into a large place; He delivered me, because He delighted in me.* What do you say to that, Believer? That God delights in you—that He finds something in you, which He has put there by His Grace, which is the object of His benevolence? Is it not your likeness to His dear Son, whom He loves so much, that wherever He sees His image, there His love flows forth?

20. *The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands has He recompensed me.* For when God gives a man holiness, He will give him happiness! Holiness and happiness usually go together and if, for a while, they seem to be divided, they shall soon be united again.

21-24. *For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all His judgments were before me, and I did not put away His statutes from me. I was also upright before Him, and I kept myself from my iniquity. Therefore has the LORD recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in His eyesight.* The godly never see any merit in their own works, they never have any trust in them for salvation, yet they cannot help observing, with pleasure, that when God enables them to walk uprightly, He sooner or later delivers them. If you come into any trouble because you fear God and serve Him, you will come out of it again. Yes, and come out of it like the three holy children came out of the furnace—with not so much as the smell of fire remaining upon you.

25, 26. *With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful; with an upright man You will show Yourself upright; with the pure You will show Yourself pure; and with the obstinate You will show Yourself obstinate.* If a man walks in a obstinate way, and opposes God, he will soon find that God treats him in a similar fashion. Sinners shall surely smart for their sin. Rebels shall yet sing another tune, however loudly they may boast today and scoff at God and His people.

27. *For You will save the afflicted people.* There is comfort there for any of you who are His people, and who are under His afflicting hand.

27. *But will bring down high looks.* Pride enflames the indignation of Jehovah—it is to the humble that He has regard.

28. *For You will light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.* Plead that promise if you are in the dark at this moment. If you are God's child, He will bring you out into the light before long.

29. *For by You I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall.* God's warriors have to fight in various ways and in all they must show themselves like men, and ascribe all their triumphs to their Lord.

30. *As for God, His way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: He is a buckler to all those that trust in Him.* No armor of proof or shield of brass so well secures the warrior as the Covenant God of Israel protects His warring people. He is Himself the buckler of trustful ones.

31. *For who is God save the LORD? Or who is a rock save our God?* Where can lasting hopes be fixed? Where can the soul find rest? Where is stability to be found? Where is strength to be discovered? Surely, in the Lord Jehovah alone can we find rest and refuge!

32- 36. *It is God that girds me with strength, and makes my way perfect. He makes my feet like hinds' feet, and sets me upon my high places. He teaches my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by my arms. You have also given me the shield of Your salvation: and Your right hand has held me up, and Your gentleness has made me great.* I think you will see that David has given us, in this Psalm, the reasons why he began by saying, "I will love You, O Lord, my strength."

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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

OUR LORD'S SUBSTITUTION
NO. 2790

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 3, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 23, 1878.

"Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree."
1 Peter 2:24.

PETER had almost incidentally mentioned his Master's name and, having done so, he felt that he must enlarge upon that theme, for the name of Christ was very dear to him. He seems to again hear that thrice-repeated question ringing in his ears, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?" and he can still answer, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." So, having mentioned his Master's name, he feels that he must say something about Him. Oh, that we, also, may have such love for Christ that a touch of His hand, or a glance of His eyes may suffice to detain us! May we never be weary of hearing about Him! May His name exercise a sacred fascination upon us! May it cheer us in life and in death and be the theme of our song throughout eternity!

There is, perhaps, a special reason why Peter wrote, in this place, concerning the vicariousness of Christ's death. He had just been alluding to another aspect of that death. In the 21st verse, he had said, "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps." "Ah," thought Peter, "they may, from my mentioning His death by way of example, draw the inference that Christ only died as our Exemplar." They may say—as, alas, so many in modern times have done—"that the death of Christ was merely the completion of His life and that He is simply the Savior of men by setting before them a higher ideal of what men should be than they would otherwise have been." The Holy Spirit forewarned Peter of this danger and taught him how to avert it, in the best possible way, by adding this most significant sentence, "Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree." It is quite true that Christ is our Exemplar, but no man can ever follow Christ's example until he has first believed in Him as his Substitute and Savior. Christ did not come merely to be an example—when we are dead in trespasses and sins, of what use can His example be to us? It is *life* that dead men need and Christ came to bring us life! In our natural state, we are already condemned because we have not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. Of what use would an example of perfect innocence be to those who are already condemned? None whatever. But Jesus comes to bring us pardon bought with His own precious blood, that then, through gratitude to

Him, we might begin a new life—and then His example might be of service to us. It behooves us, first and foremost, to view Christ as the Sin-Bearer, for, if we do not receive Him in that capacity, we have missed eternal life altogether and all our professed imitation of Christ will be but mere empty formality—which will fall far short of the righteous requirements of God.

We are going, therefore, to meditate upon the great central doctrine of our Lord's Substitution. I shall have nothing new to say upon it, for I find that "the old, old story" has an endless charm for Believers and I wish to tell it again in such a way that if it should have been, up to now, unknown to any hearer, he may give heed to it and, this very hour, find peace and pardon through believing in Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior!

First, I shall speak upon the *blessed fact* mentioned in our text—"Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree." And then, secondly, I shall call your attention to *some points of practical instruction* which may be found in this blessed fact.

I. First, then, let us think about THE BLESSED FACT ITSELF.

That fact is *that Christ Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree*. This fact is the sum and substance, the pith and marrow of the whole Gospel, so, lay hold of it, feed upon it and live by it. God, of old, in Infinite Justice, determined that sin must be punished, but He also determined to save His people, whom He had given to His Son by the Everlasting Covenant. How could both these results come to pass? Divine Wisdom devised the plan of substitution and Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became Man, that He might be able to be the Substitute for sinners. It was fitting that He should take that position, for He had, by His Covenant with the Father, assumed the place of Head of the race of mankind—the second Adam, the Lord from Heaven. The people, whom He had chosen as His own, were all represented in Him and, therefore, He was fully qualified to stand in their place and to serve and suffer in their place.

And He did so, first, because the sins of God's people were laid upon Him. What says Isaiah? "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." If you carefully read through that 53rd Chapter of Isaiah, you will notice that, several times, in so many distinct words, the sin of Christ's people is said to have been transferred to Him and borne by Him. I remember, once, hearing a certain Divine assert that sin could not be transferred—but it was, for Holy Scripture again and again declares that it was. "Blessed is the man," says David, "unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity." The man has committed iniquity, but it is not imputed to him because it has been imputed to Christ Jesus, his Substitute, who stood in that sinner's place and took upon Himself that sinner's sin. In vision, I can see the Christ of God coming forth from the Father, bearing upon His shoulders the enormous load of His people's guilt. It well near crushes Him with its awful weight, but He presses on. He is Himself perfectly innocent, but sins not His own are reckoned to Him, for "He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bore the sin of many."

In due time, in consequence of this imputation, our blessed Master bore our sins in another sense, namely, by answering for them at the bar of God. As Joseph Hart sings—

"Came at length the dreadful night—
Vengeance with its iron rod
Stood, and with collected might
Bruised the harmless Lamb of God"

—because He was the Sin-Bearer. Christ then appeared with His people's sin upon Him—so, when Divine Justice came to punish sin and found it upon Christ, it arrested Him and bruised Him so sorely that He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground. Justice took Him off, like a malefactor, to the Hall of Judgment and there was no one to declare His innocence or to plead for His release. He was brutally scourged and given over to the Roman soldiers, that they might treat Him as they would—for nothing was thought of Him, even as He had made Himself of no reputation. In the hall of the Praetorian guards, all manner of insults were heaped upon Him.

Then they took Him out to the hill of doom—they nailed Him to the transverse wood, they lifted Him up on high, they fixed His Cross in the earth and there they let Him die, hanging by His hands and feet. Thus was He, "Himself," bearing, "in His own body on the tree," the sins of all His people and, all the while, His soul was being tortured with sufferings that cannot be described in human language! We must be perfectly pure, as He was, before we can even begin to understand how sin must have affected Him. We must be perfectly happy, as He was, before we can comprehend how He suffered when He was enduring the wrath of God for our sakes and was forced to cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" That was because He was bearing the consequences of our sin. He took the sin upon Him and, therefore, He also took the sorrow which resulted from the sin. He took the place of the guilty, so He must suffer the penalty which they had incurred. And the text tells us, as a matter of fact, that He, Himself, bore our sins in His own body on the tree.

Before we pass on, let us draw the right inference from this blessed fact—namely, that if Christ bore our sins, we need not bear them—no, we do not bear them. If, as a believer in Jesus, I know that He bore my sin, it cannot be on my back and also on His! It cannot be that He took the sin upon Himself, yet left it upon me. A thing cannot be in two places at one time, so, if He bore my sin, I am clear! Again is verified the text I quoted to you just now—"Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity." How can He impute it to him when He has already imputed it to Christ and caused Christ to suffer in that man's place? So there, again, I say, is the very core of salvation, the heart of the Gospel—Christ suffering in the place of all who believe in Him!

Note carefully the words of the text. It says not only that Christ bore our sins, but, from the full, unqualified expression that is used, it is implied that He bore them all—"Who Himself bore our sins." That is to say, whatever sins a Believer has ever committed, or ever *will* commit, Christ bore them on the Cross! Sins original and sins natural. Sins actual and practical. Sins of thought, word and deed. Heinous sin—blasphemies,

uncleanness. Those that are thought to be the minor sins—evil imaginations, hasty words. I will not go on with the list, for time would fail me to get to the end of it! But when you have mentioned all the sins you can think of, I can still say that the text covers them all—"Who Himself bore our sins"—not *some* of them, not the *greater* ones, not the lesser ones to the exclusion of the greater, but *all* our sins—in His own body on the tree"—

"Covered is our unrighteousness,
From condemnation we are free."

And the text, from its unguardedness, teaches us that *Christ bore all our sins completely*—"Who Himself bore our sins." They were all laid upon Him and He did effectually carry them away and make an end of them. He bore them "to the tree," says the margin, and crucified them there. He carried them upon His shoulders, up to the Cross and there, once and for all, annihilated them, so that they have ceased to be. O my Soul, rejoice as you look upon the Sin-Bearer who made a full, complete and absolutely acceptable Atonement, finished transgression, made an end of sins, made reconciliation for iniquity and brought in everlasting righteousness, as it was foretold that the Messiah would do! In this, we do rejoice—yes, and will rejoice!

The text also implies, from its being free from any kind of limitation, that *Christ alone bore them*—"Who Himself bore our sins." There was no Peter, or James, or John to help Him in His hour of deepest need. Nor did an angel tread that winepress side by side with Him. Alone and singlehanded, our great Champion entered the arena and won the victory for us! Let this be one of the chief articles in our creed henceforth and forevermore. I say to the man who calls himself a priest, "No, Sir, I do not need any absolution from you, even though you may be a lineal descendant of the Apostles—through Judas Iscariot—for I am perfectly satisfied with the forgiveness which I have obtained by faith in Christ Jesus! You say that you can offer for me the unbloody sacrifice of the "mass" in order to help in the putting away of my sin, but I need nothing of the kind, for Christ, Himself, bore our sins in His own body on the tree." On that tree, He Himself said of His atoning Sacrifice, "It is finished." "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." Let these words roll out like a thunder peal and let all men know that there is no need of any addition to that Sacrifice—either of penance, or "purgatory," or human merit, or priestly power—nor can there be any repetition of it! Love's redeeming work was done by Christ, alone, and in Him we rest and in Him, alone!

The sweetness, however, of this passage lies in the fact that *Christ bore our sins*. Come, Brothers and Sisters, can we all say that—"Christ bore our sins"? I am not now talking of the general aspect of the work of Christ, for it had a special aspect to Believers and the full blessings of the Atonement only comes to them. "Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it." Can we say, then, "Who Himself bore our sins"? Let me

put it in the singular, and pass it round to each one here—can *you* say, my Friend, "Who Himself bore *my* sins in His own body on the tree"? My sins, so many and so heavy, and once so terrible to me—He bore them, bore them all and I am clear and free from every charge because He bore them! This is being saved. I trust Christ and know, in consequence, that He bore my sins—then I am saved! How many of you are thus saved? May the heart-searching Spirit of God go from soul to soul and constrain you to give a true answer! And if you cannot reply in the way we wish, give the other answer and say, "I do not know that Christ bore my sins."

When you get home, write that down, and look at it—"I am not trusting in Christ. I have no part nor lot in Him. My sin is pressing upon me, but I have no saving interest in Christ." I think that if you were to write that down legibly with pen and ink—and then sit down a little while and think it over—it might be much more useful to you than any word of mine. "No, Sir," you say, "I would not like to write that." But, surely, you may write what is true! A man ought not to be afraid to know the truth about his spiritual state, nor yet to write it for his own eyes to see. I do not ask you to print it in the newspaper or in a book, but just to put it down for your own information—"I am without Christ. I am an unbeliever. I am still in my sins. If I die as I am, I shall be lost." Oh, may God grant that you may see your true condition and feel it and not rest until you can say, "Now I have believed, and I know that Christ, Himself, bore my sins in His own body on the tree." If you are trusting Him, you know that He did so. Your faith is the evidence of your election and the proof of your redemption—and if you do but simply and completely trust Him, He has saved you and you may rejoice in the fact that, in the sight of God, you are fully and freely forgiven!

II. Now, secondly, I am to call your attention to SOME POINTS OF PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION which may be found in the blessed fact mentioned in our text. I always like to be as practical as possible in my preaching and I think there are, in this great Truth of our Lord's Substitution, some practical lessons which we shall do well to learn.

The first is this. *See the self-sacrifice of Christ and imitate it.* Jesus Christ bore our sins in His own body on the tree. He was not forced to do it. He might still have remained in Heaven, sharing in all His Father's Glory, forever, but, out of love and pity for us, He descended from His Divine eminence, veiled His Godhead in our humanity and came to earth among the sons of men that He might bear His people's sins up to the tree and away from the tree. Can anybody measure the self-denial of the Savior in acting thus? Is it possible for us to estimate the stoop of love and the amazing suffering which He endured for us? Then, let us learn from Him what self-sacrifice means. I do not believe in our service for Christ always being pleasant. If we are truly His servants, there will sometimes be a galling of the shoulders by the yoke of our servitude and we shall delight to be thus galled for His sake. Has any Christian ever given what he ought to give until he reaches the pinching point when he has to deny himself in order that he may give to God's cause? Has any Christian ever done for his Savior what he ought to do if he has not come

to the point of real self-denial in it? To go to the Sunday school class when it is a pleasing duty, is all very well, but, in the service of our Master, we ought to keep on at such work even if the brain should be weary and if, in such trying weather as we often have, it should seem to be almost impossible to get through it.

I have sometimes heard it said, "Oh, but the Lord cannot expect us to do that!" There are two ways of looking at that expression. I do not expect much from some people, but from those for whom Christ died, from those whose sins He bore, we ought to expect anything and everything of which they are capable if they act up to the measure of their sacred obligations! Many servants of our Lord Jesus Christ have been content to be poor, or have been satisfied to abide in a very lowly station in life, or have been willing to go to distant lands and suffer great privations and hardships. And the secret of their willingness to deny themselves has been that each of them could truly say, "Christ denied Himself for my sake. He bore my sin on Calvary's Cross and if His blessed and perfect shoulders could bear the load of my sin, shall I not bear the far lighter load of His service? Shall I not take His yoke upon me and learn of Him, as He has bid me do?"

Are you worried by the little troubles of the family? Are you getting tired of trying to bear a testimony for Christ in the workshop? Are you becoming weary, my Brother, or my Sister? Then remember what Paul wrote to the Hebrews, "Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds." Think how He bore your sins and from this moment feel, "I will count self-denial to be a luxury if I may but exhibit to Him my love and let Him see that I am not altogether oblivious of that which He endured for me." Come, Beloved, can you not be stirred up to some nobler form of love than you have ever before known? Is there not something more that you could do, or something more that you could suffer by way of proving your love to Him who, Himself, bore your sins in His own body on the tree?

In the next place, see *what abasement there was in Jesus Christ bearing our sins*. Up, up, up, our soaring thoughts may fly, but we can never reach the height of His magnificence in the eternal world with the Father! Yet down, down, down He comes, till He is a poor Man—no, more—a despised Man, a suffering Man, a condemned Man, a crucified Man, a dead Man lying in a borrowed tomb! That is a wondrous stoop, but the greatest condescension of all is indicated by that expression in our text "Who Himself bore our sins." Well, then, what say we concerning this abasement of our Lord? Why, surely, that we ought to be ready to be despised and reproached for Christ's name's sake! I think we get off wonderfully easy, in these days, compared with what some Christians have had to bear for Christ's sake and the Gospel's. Yet, in days gone by, some of us have known what it was to have all manner of evil spoken against us falsely and to be reviled again and again for Christ's sake. It is a good thing when a Christian minister feels that he has given up his character and everything else to Christ, so that, if men choose to slander and

abuse him, he will bear it all so long as he may thereby but honor Christ and keep his conscience clean.

If you are a Christian, you must expect to be dragged through all the muddy pools that your persecutors can find. If you do even a little wrong, they will magnify it a thousand times—and if you do no wrong at all, the most blameless life will not enable you to escape from the envenomed tongue of slander! If that is your lot, just bear it. Be willing to be Christ's servant, to be, as the Apostle Paul was, Christ's branded slave, bearing in your body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Say, to your Lord, as Thomas Haweis wrote—

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

I know that some of you young people get dreadfully frightened at the ugly epithets which have been applied to you. Perhaps you say that you do not like to be ridiculed because you are a Christian. Why, you ought to be *proud* of such treatment! Just adopt the very nickname that they give you and let it be to you what the stars and garters are to the nobility of England—bear it as the insignia of a Knight Companion of the Cross of Christ. The Lord grant you Grace, in this matter, to account the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt!

Those two things are, I think, clearly enough set forth in the text—our Savior's self-sacrifice and self-abasement. And it is equally clear that those who would be His followers should imitate Him, as far as they can, in both these respects.

Notice, next, *our Savior's willingness*, as it is set forth in the text. "Who Himself bore our sins." There was, in His self-sacrifice and self-abasement, the utmost spontaneity, freeness, voluntariness. Nobody pressed Him to it. He Himself did it and He did it of Himself, unprompted, unsolicited. No sinners followed at His heels, crying, "Blessed Savior, bear our sins for us!" No necessity, except the wondrous love of His own great heart, constrained Him to be a Sin-Bearer. He could truly say, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God." He told His disciples that He had a baptism to be baptized with and that He was straitened until it was accomplished. He loved us so much that He could not be content without dying for us. Now, mark, this is the way in which we ought to serve God—freely, cheerfully, gladly. I dislike, above all things, that kind of holiness into which a man has to be flogged, for it could only be a mockery of holiness! I loathe that generosity which only flows through much pumping and that work for Christ which results from such a remark as this, "You must do it. Somebody will think ill of you if you don't." Bear your fruit to Christ *freely*—do not need to have it forced, like hothouse grapes. Grow on the wall and bear your fruit freely. The best juice that comes from the grape is that which leaps from it on the first pressing—and the best piety in the world, the best virtue, the best service is that which a man freely yields to Christ and His cause.

We say that one volunteer is worth five pressed men in the defense of one's country and I am sure that he is. The mercenary is but a poor tool compared with the noble citizen who grasps his sword to defend his hearth and home. And, in the service of Christ, troops of slaves may be urged forward, but they never do anything for Him. It was said of the Persians that whenever they went to battle, you could hear the sticks of the captains who were beating the soldiers to make them fight—and they won no victories. Look, on the other hand, at the brave Spartan—he was glad at the very thought of fighting, he lived in it. He was a born lion and he rushed to the fray, delighted to be in the fiercest conflict! He was the man to win battles and so is it with the Christian to whom the service of God is his holiday—his holy day. To serve the Lord Christ in any way that is possible to him, is his highest ambition. He does not wish to be excused. He desires to be invited. As the eagles gather to the place where the carcass is, so do men of this stamp gather to the spot where the service of God can best be carried on! Leap to the front, Christians! Leap to the front and let no one hold you back, for, if Christ willingly suffered for us, we ought willingly and gladly to serve Him!

I ask you, next, to notice *the reality of our Lord's Substitution.* "Who Himself"—what? *Proposed* to bear our sins? Oh, no! That rendering will not do! We must try again. "Who Himself *promised* to bear our sins"? No, no! That is not correct. "Who Himself *began* to bear our sins and then became tired of the task"? No! Yet I have read, in somebody's book, something very much like that. "Who Himself *talked* about bearing our sins"? "Who Himself had a good word to say in commendation of *somebody else* who would bear our sins"? No! None of these are correct readings, for our Lord's Substitution is something actual and real! He bore our sins and bore them, not according to fiction or imagination, but, "in His own body"—in His own hands, His own feet, His own side—"Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree." The bearing of our sins was as real as our sins were! Well, then, let us take care that we render to the Lord Jesus whatever actual service we can in return for His actual Sacrifice for us!

Did you ever hear a thrilling sermon or a very stirring speech about serving the Lord and, as you listened to it, did you keep on saying to yourself, "Yes, I will do that! I will excel others in earnestness! I will make great sacrifices for the cause of God! I will be very prayerful! I will be one of the most devoted Christians who ever lived"? So you talked and patted yourself on the back and said, "Well done!" But you never did anything, yet you gave yourself the credit for doing it.

I have heard of a man who owed a great deal of money and when a bill became due, he got it renewed—and then he came away and said, "There, that is all right now." And when the bill became due again, he did the same, yet he never paid sixpence of the debt—but he always walked away and seemed as pleased as if it had been paid! We have far too many professing Christians of that kind—they are great at moving and seconding resolutions and making fine speeches—but nothing ever comes of them!

Now, in our Lord's case, there was actual, solid service and suffering for us! So do not try to put Him off, Brother, Sister, with good intentions and with the repetition of those intentions again and again! Come, now, for the love we bear His name—let us really get at actual service for Him. If it is only the teaching of one poor little boy to read his Bible, it will be far better than talking about what we mean to do, even if we utter it with commanding eloquence which might move the nations!

To drop two-pence into the offering box will be better than writing a fine essay on generosity and never giving anything! To breathe one real fervent prayer to God will be better than a long parade of your own excellencies, or a doleful talk about the sad declension of the Church and I know not what besides! There is nothing that can take the place of real service for Christ! We have a great deal of talk from some people who do very little work.

I sometimes wish that those who write me long epistles about various plans and schemes and who draw out elaborate details of what could be done if everybody gave so much, would only give their share and not make any plans at all! We can all make plans when we need them, but a more important thing is to take our share and to do our part in the actual work. If we all do that, some of us will be following our Lord better than we are now doing.

My last observation is this—*Notice the strong personality of our Lord's Substitution*—"Who *Himself* bore our sins *in His own body* on the tree." He did not employ anybody else to accomplish the great work of our redemption, but He did it Himself, in His own proper Person. You and I do not believe in sponsors, but, assuredly, one of the worst forms of sponsorship is that of a man getting somebody else to do his work for Christ. I sometimes admire the way in which certain persons, who have no special gifts, will try to get others to do what they cannot do. A friend said to me, "I have often wished to preach the Gospel, but I am slow of speech and I have come to years at which I cannot expect to ever become fluent. So I want to find somebody who has a ready tongue and who can speak well for my Master. I wish you could tell me of such a man." I said that I thought I knew several, but what would be the good of them? "Because," he said, "I will sponsor one—I will find the means for his support so long as he will go about and preach Jesus Christ."

That seemed to me to be a right thing, especially when the gentleman said, "I do speak for Christ as much as I can." Many Christian people say, "We are doing a great deal at our church. We have an excellent Sunday school. We have an admirable Tract Society. We have a capital Young Men's Institute." Wait a moment, Friend, and let us sit down and figure it all out. What class do you take in the Sunday school? "Oh, ahem! Ahem! I don't take any." I thought so, but what part do you take in the tract-distribution? Oh, there are 50 or 60 distributors, Sir!" Yes, but what part do *you* take in it? None at all, I can see. "Well, our church does a great deal for home missions." But what do *you* do for home missions? I see that some of you smile at this personal question. I wonder whether that is because you would not like to be pushed into a corner in that way! But

I want to push you into that corner! I want to get you to answer—without any personal questioning from me—by taking stock of yourself! An owl is a fine bird to look at, but he is a very small bird when he is plucked—he is nearly all feathers—and I think that a great many Christian professors are very much like owls. They are fine birds to look at, but it is mostly feathers—is it mostly feathers with you?

Let me remind you of our text—"Who *Himself* bore our sins in His own body on the tree." There is a poor Christian woman lying bedridden. She very seldom has a visitor—do you know her? "Yes, I know her, and I got a city missionary to call upon her." But the text says, "Who *Himself* bore our sins." Poor Mary is in great need. "Yes, I know, Sir, and I asked somebody to give me something to give to her." Listen—"Who *Himself* bore our sins in His own body on the tree." There is your sister, who is unconverted. "Yes, Sir, I know it, and I-I-I have asked Mrs. So-and-So to speak to her." "Who *Himself* bore our sins." Can you not get to that point and do something yourself? "But I might do it badly." Have you ever tried to do it at all? I believe that personal service for Christ, even when it is far from perfect, is generally much more efficient than that sort of substituted service which so many prefer. Oh, if we could but get all those who are members of our churches to *personally* serve the Lord Jesus Christ, what a powerful church we would have! Would not the whole South of London soon feel the power of this church of more than 5,000 members if you all went to this holy war—each man, each woman—by himself or herself? But it is not so. Many of you just talk about it, or propose to do something, or try to get other people to do something.

"Well, but really, Sir," one says, "what could I do?" My dear Friend, I do not know exactly what you could do, but I know that you could do *something*. "Oh, but I have no abilities! I could not do anything!" Now, suppose I were to call to see you and, meeting you in your parlor, I were to say, "Now, my dear Friend, you are no good to us. You have no abilities—you cannot do anything." I am afraid that you would be offended with me—do you not think that you would? Now, it is not true, is it? You can do *something*—there never yet was a Christian who had not some niche to occupy—at least one talent to lay out in his Master's service! You young people who have lately joined the church—little more than boys and girls—begin personally to serve Christ while you are yet young, or else I am afraid that we shall not be able to get you into harness in later life. And even those who are encumbered with large families and great businesses, or with old age and infirmities, yet say, nevertheless, "We must not sit still. We must not be idle, we must do something for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We must serve Him who, Himself, bore our sins in His own body on the tree."

In the spirit of this text, go forth and, even before you go to bed, do something to prove your love to Jesus—and unto His name be glory forever and ever! Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 PETER 2.

Verses 1-3. *Therefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby: if, indeed, you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.* If you have once had that sweet taste in your mouths, you will wish to have it always and you may do so if you continue to drink the unadulterated milk of the Word of God and do not sour that good milk through tempests of malice, envy and evil speaking.

4. *To whom coming.* We should always be coming to Christ. We have come to Him, we are coming to Him and we will keep on coming to Him—"To whom coming."

4. *As unto a living stone.* Sinking down, settling, resting on that Stone—always pressing closely upon Christ. "To whom coming, as unto a living stone."

4, 5. *Disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, you also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.* All of you who are in Christ Jesus are the living stones in this spiritual temple! And you are also priests who offer up spiritual sacrifices. You need no material temple, for you are yourselves the temple. You need no other priest save the Great High Priest who has gone into the heavenly, for you are, yourselves, priests unto the Most High God.

6-8. *Therefore also is it contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious: and he that believes on Him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe, He is precious: but unto them which are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient whereunto also they were appointed.* God grant that we may not be found among that unholy company who, rejecting Christ as a foundation, stumble over Him and, in consequence, find themselves broken to pieces!

9. *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.* Oh, the dignity which Christ has put upon the meanest Believer! What a high office and, consequently, what a solemn responsibility is ours!

10. *Which in times past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.* Look back to what you were before your conversion. Whenever you are tempted to be proud of your present standing, remember the horrible pit and the miry clay out of which Sovereign Grace, alone, has plucked you! When you are on the throne, recollect the dungeon from which the Grace of God lifted you up. When you are in full possession of your spiritual faculties and are rejoicing in the Lord, do not forget the time when you lay sick, even unto death, until the Great Physician passed that way and healed you.

11-17. *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul; having your conversa-*

tion honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men; as free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honor all men. Honor even the poorest of men. Remember that they are men. Even though they are sunken in vice or crime, honor the manhood that is in them, however much you may detest their crimes. "Honor all men."

17-20. *Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when you are buffeted for your faults, you shall take it patiently but if, when you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.* This is a correction of what we often hear a slandered person say. "So-and-So has been spreading an evil report against me and I am depicted in a bad way. I would not have minded it if it had been true, but I cannot bear the slander, as it is false." My dear Friend, you ought not to mind it if it is not true! But, "when you do well, and suffer for it," there is then an acceptableness with God if you take it patiently.

21-23. *For even hereunto were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again: when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judges righteously, who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes you were healed. For you were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.* The Lord make this true of all of us, for Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—290, 77, 278.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, 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 HIGH DAY IN HEAVEN
NO. 2791

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 10, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 27, 1878.

"Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."
Luke 15:10.

EARTH has engrossed our thoughts too long. It is time that we should lift our eyes and look upward to Heaven. Do you say that you cannot see as far as that? Look again and ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes, for the Lord Jesus has set the gate wide open that you may at least get a glimpse of what is going on in the Glory Land. He has plainly declared to you many of the things which He has seen and heard of the Father—and if you will only give good heed to His words, you shall be enabled, by the eye of faith, to see what to mortal eyes is invisible!

Gaze thus upon the scene depicted in our text. They have an eternal Sabbath in Heaven, but the Sabbath of which our text speaks is, evidently, a specially high day. They have all holy days there, but now it is a holiday as well as a holy day, for there is some special cause for unusual joy! What is it all about? Our Lord tells us that "there is joy"—very special "joy in the presence of the angels of God"—and He tells us what is the cause of it. Let us draw near and see for ourselves this great sight and seek to learn its lessons. The heavenly harpers are evoking from their golden harps even sweeter music than usual! They are lifting up their voices as high as even their exalted notes can possibly rise. We will listen to them, but we will also remember the reason for their jubilation. We are told, by our Lord, the special "joy in the presence of the angels of God" is "over one sinner who repents."

Now, you workers for the Master, you sweepers in the dust looking for the lost pieces of money! You candle-holders who have been shedding your feeble rays as far as you can—and who have become somewhat weary—now come and refresh yourselves by looking upon some of the results of your service! And you, who in imitation of the great, good, Chief Shepherd, have gone after the lost sheep and are scratched by many a briar and tired after your many desperate leaps over hill and dale—forget your weariness for a while—and begin to share in the joy of Christ's servants as you see how, before the Throne of God on high, they are making merry over the souls that are being saved! I do not think that anything can be more comforting to you who are serving the Lord than to see what comes of your service. You, who have been going forth weeping, bearing

precious seed—wipe your eyes and look above—and begin to anticipate the time when you shall come again with rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you, for, up yonder they are shouting, "Harvest home!" with great delight!

And while I thus invite the working saint, I would equally invite the seeking sinner to note the cause of this special joy of Heaven. It is about persons like yourselves! O you wandering sheep, the joy is over wandering sheep that have been found by the Divine Shepherd! O prodigal sons, the merriment is over sons who were dead, but who are alive again—wanderers who were lost, but now are found! It should, surely, encourage you to hasten home while yet the joy-bells are ringing and the dance is going on! Get home as quickly as you can, for, as they are rejoicing over one Brother or Sister like yourself, everything will be in readiness for welcoming you and the Father will only need to say, "Let us keep up the feast, for here is another of My children that I had lost, but who now is found." It is evidently a propitious season—a time in which bright hopes ought to be kindled within you and the birds within your soul should begin to sing in sweet anticipation of the bliss awaiting you! Arise, then, and go to your Father—He is rejoicing over those who have come back to Him—and He will equally rejoice over you!

I. In considering this passage, I shall ask you, first, to NOTE THE TERMS IN WHICH OUR LORD JESUS DESCRIBES THIS HEAVENLY JOY—"There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

And notice, first, in these terms, that *this joy is over one sinner*. What the joy is over hundreds, thousands and millions of sinners, you can scarcely imagine, but Jesus tells us that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner." That one may be a poor servant girl, or a working man whose name will never be known to fame—and there is only one—but the angels are not so sparing of the praises of God that they will wait till there is a score of penitents! They see them gathering Home one by one and they are glad of every opportunity of expressing their special delight at the increasing number of the redeemed. So, as they come to Jesus, one by one, the blessed spirits before the Throne of God begin to sing with special thanksgiving for every sinner saved. Have you taught for a long time in your Sunday school class and have you had only one girl saved? Do not be satisfied with that one, but, at the same time, do not forget to thank the Lord for that one. If you are not grateful to God for letting you win one soul for Him, you are not likely to be allowed to win another. Remember that the conversion of one sinner is, in Heaven, reckoned to be such a marvel that it makes special joy there in the presence of the angels of God!

Surely, then, the salvation of even one soul ought to make your spirit exult and rejoice with exceeding joy! If you have lived to bring one sinner to Christ, you have not lived in vain. Has not God already given to you in that one, my dear Brother, my dear Sister, much more than such an unworthy creature as you might ever have expected to gain? I say again, cry for more blessing, be greedy to win hundreds of souls for the Savior, but,

still, do not neglect to praise God for the one whom He has already saved.

I like to dwell upon the thought that the person who caused this melody in Heaven was "one sinner." I do not know what sort of a sinner that one was, but I should not wonder if the conversion of special sinners makes special joy up there. Was that "one sinner" a publican, a hard-hearted Jewish tax-gatherer? Was that one sinner a harlot, lost even to society as well as to her God? We do not know, but we do know that as they would rejoice in Heaven over one king, or one prince, or one senator, or one philosopher who repented—so they would over one publican or one harlot! The angels and the redeemed in Glory know that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." They know that the precious blood of Christ was shed to cleanse sinners from every stain of sin. They know that the sweetest singers throughout eternity will be those who once were sinners, so they rejoice over any and every sinner who is saved! Out of a certain company of a hundred, there were 99 people who had not gone astray—according to their notions—and the spirits in Heaven did not rejoice over them. No, you mere moralists, you people who are so excellent in your own esteem who reckon that you will gain admission to Heaven by your own good deeds, you will never make the angels sing until you repent! But the poor lost sinner, however deeply he has plunged into crime, when he becomes a monument of the saving and renewing Grace of God, sets all the golden harps ringing with the melodious music of praise and thanksgiving unto the Most High!

Notice, next, that the rejoicing is *"over one sinner who repents."* To repent is to be sorry for sin—to undergo a complete change of mind, heart and life—to turn away from self to Christ. In a word, to be converted, that is, turned completely around. Yet many people, nowadays, think very little of repentance. Some ministers whom I know scarcely even mention it in their preaching, so that their hearers may well imagine that it is out of date. They seem to believe in a kind of faith that ignores repentance. Well, they differ very much in their estimate from that of the angels and the spirits of just men made perfect, for they rejoice "over one sinner who repents." The poor sinner has not yet the faith that moves mountains, or the heroism that takes lions by their beards and slays them. The poor sinner has not yet preached a sermon, or even sung a hymn to the praise of God—he has simply sat down in some obscure corner and wept over his sin! He has returned to his God and said, "Father, I have sinned." But that was sufficient to make the angels sing!

I want you to remember this, you who are just beginning to come to Christ—you who have only a little Grace—the very faintest evidence of the work of God's Spirit in your soul. You are Believers, or else you would not be penitents, for there is no true repentance but that which is accompanied by faith! But the most prominent thing is not so much your faith as your holy mourning and moaning over sin, your sincere desire after holiness—this is the proof of that change of mind which is the essence of true repentance—and this is such a work of Grace that there is joy over you in the presence of the angels of God!

I want you also to notice, with regard to the terms used by our Lord, that He says, *"There is joy in the presence of the angels of God."* Is there not always joy there? Certainly! Is there ever any sorrow up yonder in the courts of the Most High? Do cherubim and seraphim ever pine and cry, and sigh in agony? Never! Then, what can this joy be which makes Heaven even more joyous than it usually is? I do not know whether you or I can conceive what it must be—what I may call the ordinary, everyday joy of Heaven is perfect, yet there is something over and above that in this rejoicing over penitents. It is a bliss above bliss! A joy that rises out of joy like some huge Atlantic billow that towers above all the rest of the waves. They have a special, extra, doubly distilled joy in Heaven, sometimes, and that comes to them whenever one sinner repents! I think I can explain it a little by an expression of Rutherford's, in which he says, "God is my witness that my own Heaven would be seven heavens if I could but see you saved. If I could but see souls brought to Christ, my own bliss would be sevenfold bliss." Yes, and so it is with the spirits before the Throne of God! They are always happy, but, sometimes the joy that is always full begins to overflow and down from the celestial hills there rushes a sacred torrent that carries all before it! And this unusual delight of those who are in the presence of God is caused by one sinner repenting and returning to the Lord!

I have only one more remark to make under this first head, and it is this—our Lord does not say that the angels rejoice over one sinner who repents, but that "there is joy *in the presence of the angels of God* over one sinner who repents." Who, then, has the joy? The angels, of course, first. They must be included because the previous parable says that when the Shepherd comes home, "He calls together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost." The redeemed from among men and the holy angels are the friends and neighbors of Christ—and they all rejoice over every sinner who repents. But, first of all, this joy is the joy of God, Himself. The angels and the redeemed stand in His Presence—they are His courtiers—but He Himself is the center, and Glory, and Lord of All—it is God Himself who rejoices "over one sinner who repents." God the Father rejoices, for has He not found His child whom He had lost, the child whom He loved, before the foundation of the world, with all the love of His infinite heart?

God the Son rejoices, for has He not found the sheep which the Father gave Him—the sheep which He was pledged to bring safely home—the sheep for which He paid the purchase price in His own heart's blood—the sheep which, though it had wandered far away from Him, He had brought home? God the Spirit also rejoices, for did He not see, in the soul's repentance, the fruit of His working, the result of His enlightenment, the consequence of His convicting and the commencement of the whole work of sanctification? Yes, dear Brothers and Sisters—Father, Son and Spirit—the one God of the spiritual Israel—rejoices greatly "over one sinner who repents." I can hardly convey to you the delight that I have in this thought! God is always full of joy. He is rightly called "the happy God," yet even He describes Himself as being, in some mysterious

manner, more happy at one season than at another! I am, of course, speaking after the manner of men, but, then, we are only men and we can only speak after our own manner as the prophet Zephaniah does when he says, " He will rejoice over you with joy. He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing." So that repentance of one sinner gives joy to the Eternal, Himself! Who would not, then, repent of sin and so give joy to God and, at the same time, find the highest joy for himself?

Thus I have noticed the terms in which our Lord Jesus describes this heavenly joy.

II. Now, secondly, I want you, very briefly, to CONSIDER THE REASONS WHY THERE IS THIS JOY IN HEAVEN.

First, God rejoices over every sinner who repents, *because He then sees one of His creatures delivered from the horrible power of sin.* God is full of benevolence toward men. He wills not the death of the sinner and He is delighted when the creature, whom He has made, becomes happy because he has become holy. He is glad when those, whom He has fashioned, enjoy the delights which He intended for them.

God rejoices, too, when a sinner repents, *because He then sees, not only one of His creatures, but a new creature in Christ Jesus.* He sees His own handiwork in that heart. We all like to see our own work when it is well done. Nobody wants to see bad work, but every worker rejoices in good work. And God rejoices in the good work of regeneration, the good work of the renewal of the heart, restoration from death and rescue from Hell.

Especially does God delight in every sinner who repents, *because He then sees His own child restored to Him.* He who has the heart of a true father knows what joy he has when he sees his boy, who has gone astray, coming back again—when he returns from the distant land to which he went in an ill humor, and comes home weeping and mourning, but loving and gentle and anxious to be better. Thus God rejoices over His returning children. There is no earthly father who can love as God loves—and if all the love of all the fathers in the world were made into one, it would not equal the love which God has for even one of His children! So He rejoices with peculiar joy when He sees any of His children repenting and returning to Him.

Moreover, God *always rejoices in everything that is holy and good* and, therefore, He rejoices in a sinner's repentance. It is a right and holy thing that a sinner should repent of doing wrong. It is the beginning of something higher, nobler and better when a soul comes to the turning point, confesses its lost condition and seeks to be set right. And, therefore, because the Lord is good and righteous, He will teach transgressors His ways and when He sees them walking in that way, He will rejoice and be glad concerning them!

III. I will not remind you of all the reasons for the great Father's joy over returning sinners because you can all think them out for yourselves. But I will, instead, say a little about THE JOY OF THE ANGELS OVER REPENTING SINNERS. Why is it that they, who are the friends, neighbors and servants of Christ, are so glad when sinners repent? They are not themselves sinners—they are not even men! They have no part in the

great redemption of Christ. "For verily He took not up angels, but He took up the seed of Abraham." Why, then, do the angels rejoice over repenting sinners?

Well it is, first, *because they are so fully in sympathy with God*. Whatever pleases God, pleases them. The growth of holiness delights the Most High and, therefore, it delights His loyal courtiers. The coming back of Jehovah's wandering children gladdens Him and it, therefore, gladdens every servant in the family. You can see, in the parable, that the servant who went out to speak to the elder brother had his measure of joy over the prodigal's return. He speaks in happy and grateful tones—and the spirits before the Throne of God cannot help being glad when God is glad. Will loyal subjects be sighing and crying when their king has a day of special rejoicing and is peculiarly honored? It cannot be! And the angels would not be what they are—the true and faithful servitors of God—if they were not glad when God is glad!

But besides that, *they also have great sympathy with men*. It would be worth your while to study the subject of the friendship of angels to men—their kindly feeling, the joy with which they have often brought God's messages to men, the delight with which they have interposed, at critical times, to accomplish the miraculous designs upon which God has sent them on behalf of men. They are, indeed, most gracious spirits! We must not worship them—we are forbidden to do that—for we must worship God alone. But we may feel an intense amity, friendship and respect towards those bright and blessed spirits. What we owe to them, we shall never know, I suppose, till eternity. And then we shall set it all down to the Glory of their Master and ours! Still, he who thinks well of God may think well of God's holy angels on the principle of, "Love Me, love My servants." Does He not give them charge over us, to keep us in all our ways? Do they not bear us up in their hands, lest we should dash our foot against a stone? "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" They are not actually akin to us, but still, they are very near neighbors to us and they are very kind and helpful neighbors! So, when they see a soul saved, they are right glad of it.

Further, they know better than you and I do, *what a soul is saved from when a sinner repents*. They have looked over the battlements of Heaven into the dread abyss—they recollect the day when there was war in Heaven and the mighty Son of God overthrew Satan and his rebel followers and cast them down to Hell. The holy angels know that it was God's electing love that enabled them to stand fast in that evil day. They know, too, that God passed by the fallen angels and never gave them a hope of recovery, or promised them a Mediator. Yet they do not envy men because God, in the Sovereignty of His Grace, has provided for them a Savior. They rejoice to know that repenting men shall never be cast into the Lake of Fire, the awful place prepared for the devil and his angels. They have none of the modern infidel notions, for they have seen that there is a worm that dies not and a fire that cannot be quenched, so they lift up their songs right gladly whenever a sinner is saved from going down into the Pit!

Besides this, *the angels know what repenting sinners gain*, for they have long frequented the golden streets and walked by the river of the Water of Life. They know the bliss of beholding Christ face to face—have they not done so ever since He returned to Heaven to sit upon His Father's Throne? When a man is very happy because he is very holy, he wants other people to be happy, too, and he feels all the happier the more there are to share in his joy. Our proverb "The more, the merrier," just expresses what the angels think, so they rejoice, with the utmost gladness, over those who repent because they know that, for them, there is laid up in Heaven the triple crown of life, glory and righteousness, that fades not away.

One thought I cannot help interjecting just here. *I am sure that these holy angels all believe in the Doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints*. If they did not, they would be very foolish in rejoicing over repenting sinners. The old proverb bids us not to count our chickens before they are hatched—and if I were an Arminian, I would recommend the angels to not rejoice over a sinner who repents, for he might fall from Grace and perish—and then they would have to ring the bells of Heaven backwards, or to toll them, and to recall their songs, and say, "We rejoiced too soon." But it is not so, for they know that repentance has in it the germ of perfection! Sincere repentance is the commencement of perfect sanctification and God will make it grow to full fruition! This grain of mustard seed will become a great tree and yonder birds of Paradise shall sit in the branches and sing to God's praise forever! So they begin to sing even now because they know what true repentance guarantees concerning the future of everyone who truly repents and believes in Christ Jesus!

Thus I have tried to give, in as brief a space as I could, the reasons for the joy of God and the joy of God's servants, the angels, over repenting sinners. There are just two lessons I want each one of us to learn and then I have done.

The first is a lesson of self-examination. Are you and I fit for Heaven? Have we the nature which would fit us to dwell in the presence of the angels of God? You say, "Well, you have set us a hard task." No, I have not. Or if so, I will help you through it. The angels rejoice "over one sinner who repents." Do you rejoice over repenting sinners? Having yourself repented, do you feel intense sympathy for other sinners? Do you dread lest they should be lost? Do you pray that they may be saved? Do you seek, by your personal testimony and entreaty, to bring them to Christ? Can you truthfully say that it would be Heaven on earth to you to see your children converted—your servants converted—your neighbors converted? Alas, there are many professors who do not care the turn of a halfpenny whether souls are lost or saved! Their one desire is to be saved themselves, but, as to doing anything to spread the Gospel of Jesus—denying themselves that the poor and ignorant may know of Christ—that is not in their line at all!

But, Sir, if you have no concern about another man's soul, it is time that you should have grave concern about your own! If no joy comes to you when another is saved, you have need to be saved yourself! And if the thought of the future world and the ruin of immortal souls never

makes you bow your head even to the dust, you need to be born-again, for they who are born in the likeness of Christ weep over sinners, pray for sinners and seek the salvation of sinners! By this test, I beseech you to try yourselves. There is not one among us who may not well chide himself for some measure of hardness of heart and indifference about this matter. I often feel as if I could flog myself and bite my tongue, to think that I preach so often with dry eyes and with a heart that is not half as earnest as it ought to be. Yet I have heard colder sermons than I generally preach, so I suppose that my Brothers must be partakers in my fault, or else their manner much belies them. And I think I know some members of the church who must make a similar confession to mine. Oh, that we were all alive to the real value of an immortal soul! Did we but believe that it is born for eternal bliss, or doomed to eternal despair, I think that we would go about as with a sword in our bones, mourning because of the multitude of mankind rushing madly upon Jehovah's buckler, dashing themselves against the bosses of His shield and seeming determined to commit spiritual suicide! God save them! Let us pray that prayer from our inmost souls. If we do not, how can we hope to ever enter that Heaven where they rejoice over repenting sinners?

The other lesson is for any of you who are seeking Christ Jesus the Lord. I gave it to you at the commencement of the sermon. I want to give it to you again that you may be sure to remember it. How gladly, how heartily, how immediately ought you to hasten to seek peace with God when you know how joyously you will be welcomed! If it will make Heaven all the gladder to see you come, why do you not come? I have read, sometimes, in the newspaper, an advertisement to this effect—"A. B." or somebody else whose initials are given, "is earnestly entreated to come back to his loving father and mother. All is forgiven. Everything is made right. Do not delay! Come back to us at once." If I were to read such an advertisement as that, and it referred to me, I do not think I could have the heart to stand out against it. I would be thinking of my father, "What? Does the old man want me as much as that?" I would be thinking of my brother, "Does he want to see me?" I would think even of the old servant of the family, "Does old Mary want to see me? She who nursed me when I was a child, does she want me back? Well, with such an invitation, I will go at once." Dear Heart, do you want to come back to God? That is a sign that the Lord wants you back! You will be glad to get back to Him, but He will be gladder to receive you than you will be to be received! And all the angels want you—they are watching and waiting for you. And those on earth who love our Lord, are, many of them, very anxious about you. The whole Church of God in Heaven and on earth, and the goodly fellowship of the angels, and God Himself, will all be glad to receive you! Come and welcome! Come and welcome! I wish I had a trumpet-tongue that I might sound the invitation out still more loudly! Remember that verse with which we began the service—

"From the Cross uplifted high
Where the Savior deigns to die,
What melodious sounds I hear,
Bursting on my ravished ear!
'Love's redeeming work is done;

Come and welcome, Sinner, come.'"

You have but to trust Him and you have come to Him—to rely upon Him—to depend upon Him—to lean upon Him—to cast yourself upon Him, to believe in Christ Jesus, who died, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God—for, as soon as you do so, you are brought back to the great Father's house. May the Divine Spirit bring you there now, for His love's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 15.

Verse 1. *Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners to hear Him.* However sunken they might be, they knew their best Friend! They recognized their Benefactor, so they gathered around Him. They knew who it was that smiled upon them and who would lift them up, so they came clustering around Him, like bees fly to the flowers. "Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners to hear Him."

2. *And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This Man receives sinners, and eats with them.* Where bees come, wasps often come, too. This murmuring of the Pharisees and scribes was after their nature—they were so proud, so wrapped up in themselves, they thought so contemptuously of everybody else that they dared even to despise Him whose shoelaces they were not worthy to unloose. "This Man," they said, "receives sinners, and eats with them."

3. *And He spoke this parable unto them, saying.* This is really a picture in three panels—a parable with three variations.

4-7. *What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the 99 in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner who repents, more than over 99 just persons which need no repentance.* There, no doubt, the Savior looked at the Pharisees, who, though they did need repentance, yet thought they did not. Little or no joy did they ever bring to Him—His heart never leaped with delight over them. Good as they thought themselves to be, they did not yield Him as much joy as these poor publicans and sinners would when He had found them—and He was bent on doing that. Now, Beloved, how much is a man better than a sheep? And if a shepherd will leave all his ease and comfort to hunt after one stray sheep, how ought you and I, after the example of the Son of Man, to be ready for any service, or any self-denial by which we, too, in our poor measure, may seek and save the lost? Now we have the second panel of the picture

8-10. *Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she loses one piece, does not light a candle, and sweep the house, and search diligently till she finds it And when she has found it, she calls her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of*

the angels of God over one sinner who repents. Did the woman rejoice at finding her piece of silver, that she had lost, and shall not God much more rejoice over an inestimably precious human soul which had been lost, but which, through Grace, is found again? Ah, yes, there is joy in Heaven! There is joy in all heavenly hearts! There is joy in all who are the friends of Christ when lost ones are found! There was another quiet stroke at the Pharisees and scribes who were proved not to be the friends of the soul-seeking Savior because they did not rejoice with Him over those whom He had found. If they had been at all like the angels in Heaven, as they thought they were, they would have been glad that the Lord Jesus Christ had come to seek and to find the lost. Then came the third most touching panel of the picture—perhaps the best beloved of all the parables—one which, like a key, fits the locks of the human heart and many a time has opened the heart.

11-13. *And He said, A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.* It is clear that his heart had gone away from his father before he went away. He would not have wished to take from his father his portion of goods, or to be independent of his father, if he had not felt a spirit of alienation and, therefore, what his father did, developed the latent evil, just as, oftentimes, the loving mercy of God brings to the surface the concealed sin which is in man all the while and then he sins the more openly. It is a grievous thing that even Divine Love should lead us to sin—not of itself, but because of our evil nature—just as the sun shines, not that it may make the weeds grow, or that it may help to lift into the air noxious odors! With goodwill, itself, as its only motive, ill may come even of the pure sunlight.

14, 15. *And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land and he began to be in need. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.* A very degrading employment for him as a Jew—perhaps, however, the best that the citizen of that country could do for him, for there was a famine in the land. And when men are all pinched with hunger, it is not much that one can do for another. And what can one poor sinner do for another? Even though he is called a priest and puts on fine apparel, yet what can he do for his fellow sinner?

16, 17. *And he would gladly have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat. But no man gave any unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!* "I, his son, perish with hunger, when there is not only enough in my father's house for his children, but for his hirelings, too! Yes, and some to spare after that." "Bread enough and to spare." This was the thought which drew the prodigal home—and it ought to draw sinners to Christ. There is, in the Gospel, "bread enough and to spare." You know how some would, if they could, contract the provisions of Grace and make it out that there is bread enough, but they say that if there is anything to spare, it will be a waste.

Why, it is that "spare" bread that is God's bait to catch poor souls with when they are cast down, "for," they say, "if it is to spare, then, even if my father is angry with me, he will not deny me the spare bread for which there is no use, so I may as well go and ask for a portion of it."

18-20. *I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son: make me as one of your hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.* Oh, the speed of Divine Love! There were delays with the son, but there were no delays with the father. At the first glance, the father's heart is made up and he runs to meet his returning child. And what a welcome he gives him! He "kissed him much," is the right rendering. Truly, this was prodigal love for the prodigal son!

21, 22. *And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in your sight, and am no more worthy to be called your son. But the father*—Stopping him short and forever obliterating the rest of the prayer, so that he never had time to utter it, seeing that it was too legal to be permitted by his father's love. "But the father"—

22-25. *Said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring here the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry; for this, my son, was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field.* At work, like the good son that he was.

25. *And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing.* Which he did not often hear, for he was of a gloomy spirit, and there had not been cause for much rejoicing lately.

26. *And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant.* "What are you all up to in making such a noise? What new thing has happened to our orderly household to make it thus full of merrymaking and noisy gladness?"

27, 28. *And he said unto him, Your brother is come and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound. And he was angry.* It did not seem to him right that one who had acted so badly should be thus honored. "He was angry"—

28. *And would not go in.* He did not believe in revivals, so he would not attend them. He did not believe in many being converted, especially if they had been great sinners. He would have nothing to do with them.

28. *Therefore came his father out and entreated him.* Oh, the goodness of the father, not only in receiving the returning prodigal, but in entreating this indignant and erring son, for he was greatly erring in this matter and was not showing the true spirit of a son.

29, 30. *And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years have I served you, neither transgressed I at any time your commandment: and yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this your son was come, which has devoured your living with harlots, you have killed for him the fatted calf.* "I am a consistent Christian. I have maintained the excellence of my moral character. I

have tried to be orthodox and attentive to all religious duties. You know that it is so, yet I seldom have any joy in my religion. 'You never gave me a kid.' I go trembling and mourning all my days. I get very little delight out of my religion, yet here is one just converted, and all this fuss is made over him and he is rejoicing, too. You feast him with the best fatted calf. He is as glad as glad can be, and everybody is glad about him but nobody seems to take much notice of me. I go on my steady quiet course and I have never caused you such grief as this your son has done."

31. *And he said unto him*—So beautifully—

31. *Son, you are always with me and all that I have is yours.* And that is what the Lord seems to say to the Believer when he gets into that naughty spirit of the elder brother and does not like to hear of sinners of the deepest dye being brought to Christ—and who disapproves of the jubilation and excitement at revival times. The Lord says to him, "Suppose you have not had such enjoyments? You may have them if you like, for you are always with Me. There is joy enough in that fact and all that I have is yours. You are joint-heir with Me. I have given you everything—what more do you want?"

32. *And it was meet*—"It was fitting, it was proper."

32. *That we should make merry, and be glad: for this, your brother.* "For he is your brother. Notwithstanding your richer experience and your deeper Christian knowledge, and your high standing in the church, this poor prodigal, who is just saved, is your brother! So it is meet that we should make merry and be glad, for this, your brother"—

32. *Was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—508, 473, 509.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, 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 PSALMIST'S QUESTION AND ANSWER
NO. 2792

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 17, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 8TH, 1878.

"If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared."
Psalm 130:3, 4.

NOTE, dear Friends, that the Psalm begins with this remarkable expression, "Out of the depths I have cried unto You, O Lord," and I call your special attention to that utterance of the Psalmist because there are many who are afraid to pray when they are in the depths of soul-despair. It is comparatively easy to think you are praying when you have a fine notion of your own excellence. At such a time you can stand up in the Temple with the boasting Pharisee and pour out, as glibly as possible, expressions which you call prayer, but which God will never accept. But the very best prayer in all the world is that which comes from a broken heart and a contrite spirit—when, away in the corner there, beside the conscience-stricken publican, we smite upon our breast and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Do not, I beg you, think that your prayer will not succeed because you are in the depths. There is no place for praying like that! If ever a man is more sure to succeed with God at one time than at another, it is when he is in his greatest straits.

You know those men who are wisely generous, when they are about to distribute their alms, like to give to the most needy cases. The plea with them is the greatness of need, the urgency of distress—and it is just so with God and yourselves. It is not your *goodness* that will ensure an answer to your prayer—it is the greatness of your need. Even if you have sunk very low in your own esteem, till not a ray of hope seems left to you and you are shut up in the blackest darkness of despair, that is the very time for you to pray, even as the Psalmist said, "Out of the depths I have cried unto You, O Lord." No prayers are more true, more real and, consequently, more acceptable—and no prayers are so likely to be quickly answered as those that come up from the very depths of soul-distress.

I begin my discourse with this observation because I want to cheer some of you who, at present, hardly dare to pray. Yet you are the very people who may pray—you who think that the Lord will never hear you are the people whom He is certain to hear and answer! When you are cleaned right out, when even the last rusty counterfeit farthing has been emptied out of your pocket and you stand before your God as a

wretched, starving and bankrupt beggar, your abject poverty and dire need will commend you to His mercy and love! Now—if never before—now that you have come to your worst, dart your prayer up to Heaven and the Lord, who heard Jonah when he was in the whale's belly, and Manasseh when he was in captivity in Babylon, will hear you and send you a speedy answer of peace to your supplication!

Note, also, how intensely the Psalmist pleads. In the second verse of the Psalm, he says, "Lord, hear my voice: let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications." So, when you pray out of the depths, mind that you plead with all your might. Cold prayers ask God to refuse our requests, but the red-hot petition of a soul on fire with agony after Divine Grace is certain to be heard. If you have hitherto knocked in vain at Mercy's door, knock again—only knock more loudly than before—and if one blow of the hammer of prayer has not sufficed to make that portal open, knock, and knock, and knock again, determined that if you perish, you will perish praying and pleading! But you shall not perish if you will but ask, and seek, and knock with that importunity which will take no denial. He who has this holy resolve strongly worked within him by the blessed Spirit of God shall soon come into the morning light of gracious acceptance—and his heart shall be glad because the Lord has granted his petition.

This brings us to the threefold position which the Psalmist occupied when he prayed this prayer. It was, first, *one of confession*—"If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" It was also one of *humble confidence*—"But there is forgiveness with You." And it was one in which he saw *the consequences* of God's mighty pardon—"There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared."

I. First, then, in our text, we have A CONFESSION—a confession which it will be well for everyone to make—"If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?"

The Psalmist may have felt that *if a human witness had been appointed to mark his sin, he might have been able to stand,* but he says, "If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, who shall stand?" "If my fellow man should watch me honestly and speak of me candidly, it may be that he would not be able to see a flaw in my life." There are some men who could say as much as that. They have been enabled, by the Grace of God, to behave themselves in all integrity and uprightness, so that no one could justly bring any accusation against them. If the policeman were set to watch, or a spy were put into their house, or if even wife or child were the watcher, there are some who might be able to say, "I have borne myself uprightly both in the house and abroad among my fellow men and I could pass such a test as that." But the Psalmist said, "If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who shall stand?" He knew that the Lord sees what no one else can see and He sees behind the action into the motive of it, the secret design hidden in the heart.

If any one of us will just think how we have been watched everywhere—at our board and in our bed, in our home and in the public

street—if we will remember how the Omniscient eyes of God have seen everything and how He has recorded everything that we have thought and said, as well as what we have done—such a person must feel the force of the Psalmist's question, "O Lord, who shall stand?" When I have occasionally met with brethren who have talked about their own perfection, I must confess that I have felt a sort of shudder go through me. The very last thing in this world that I would dare to claim would be my own perfection—and I believe that all of you will say that when you have lived nearest to God—it is then that you have mourned most your distance from Him. When your prayer has been most prevalent, it is then that you have seen most of its imperfection! And when your faith has been most vigorous, it is just then that you have had to lament your unbelief!

I firmly believe that it is only the gross spiritual darkness of ignorance that makes any man think himself perfect. If he had more light, he would see how abundant are the spots upon him. You have sometimes had a white pocket handkerchief and you have admired its whiteness. But when the snow has fallen and you have laid your handkerchief upon the newly-fallen snow, it has looked quite yellow instead of white—and so is it with the holiest life when it is placed by the side of the life of Christ, or looked at in the light of the perfect Law of God—then we see how stained and defiled it really is. So, Lord, we might stand up before our fellow men, and plead, "Not guilty," when they belie and slander us, as they do, but, before Your holy Presence, "if You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?"

The Psalmist not only mentions the Divine Witness of his sin, but he also speaks of *a special form of guilt*. He does not say, "If You should mark open and overt transgression—the breaking out of bounds and going astray into the paths of evil." But he says, "If You should mark iniquities." Pull that word to pieces and it becomes "inequities"—whatever is not right in the sight of God. If He were to mark those inequities, who could stand before Him? Not one of us could do so! God observes how, after obeying the First Commandment, we forget the Second. Or, if we are mindful of the first table of the Law, which concerns our relationship to God, we neglect to observe the second table, which relates to our duty to our neighbor. Sometimes, perhaps, we spend much time in private devotion, yet do not attend to our family duties. At another time, family duties are attended to, but private devotions are forgotten. Sometimes there is a well-balanced relationship towards wife and children, but not towards our parents—or towards our own household, but not towards the world. It may be that we are kind to our friends and act according to the rule of equity with regard to them, yet we may be ungenerous towards those who are not our friends—and so be guilty of inequity there. Our character ought to be harmonious throughout and no life can be right in the sight of God unless it is holy. Let me alter that word a little and spell it in a different way, yet retain the same meaning—that is, *whole*—not part of it devoted to righteousness and part to unrighteousness, but all of it of one character, so that it is whole and holy! If that is what God re-

quires, who among us can stand before Him? If You, Lord, should mark inequities, who among us could stand in Your sight? Not one! We must all fall down before You and confess our guiltiness.

Notice, next, how the Psalmist enquires, *"Who shall stand?"* If there were any way of getting into Heaven by a back door, or of hiding our sins from God's eyes, we might have some ground of hope, but, Brothers and Sisters, there will come a day when we shall stand before God like prisoners at the bar. In that grand assembly, which shall be summoned by the sound of a trumpet around the Judgment Seat of God at the last assize, there is no one who will then be able to find a place of shelter, for the rocks will fall on us and not yield to our entreaties, nor will the mountains fulfill our wish and hide us from Him who will then be seated upon the Throne of God. No, we must then be before Him and when He begins to judge, then shall the wicked flee from before His face like chaff before the wind! And unless you and I have some better righteousness than our own, when God begins to mark iniquities and to punish them, we shall no more be able to stand than will the rest of mankind, but we, too, shall be driven before the blast of Justice into the fire which never can be quenched!

Think of this, my Brothers and Sisters—could any one of you now, apart from Christ, stand up before the living God? If you had, at this moment, to enter the dock and plead for your life before the Most High, without any Mediator to intercede for you, could you do it? No! You know that you could not. There is nobody here who would dare to appear before God except through Jesus Christ! We should all shudder at the very thought of such fatal presumption! Even those who are clothed in the righteousness of Christ are not always quite clear about appearing before God—how much less, then, must they be who have no robe of righteousness at all, but are only clad in the rags of their own iniquities? How shall they stand in that last dread day?

The Psalmist asks, "*Who* shall stand?" as if he felt that he could not himself do so and, moreover, that he did not know anybody in the whole range of his acquaintance who could thus stand. David, who probably wrote this Psalm, had known many good men in his time and he was accustomed to associate with the excellent of the earth. Yet he says, "O Lord, who shall stand?" And I may repeat his question now, since God has marked our iniquities, "Who among us can stand in His sight upon the footing of our own good works?" Echo answers, "Who?" Did you think that you could, my Friend, before you came in here? You say, "I attend a church regularly. I have been baptized, confirmed and have taken the sacrament. I can stand." Oh, do not attempt to stand on such a rotten plank as that! You need something far more substantial than that to support you! Or did you say, good Friend, "Well, I have always been a Dissenter. I have taken my seat, almost from a child, in the Meeting House and I have lived so that others esteem me and reckon me to be a man of God. And I think I can stand in my own consistency of character"? Ah, my Brother! You know not what the requirements of God really

are if you can talk like that, for there are none of us who shall be able to stand when He comes to judge and try us unless we stand upon Christ's merits! When God puts us into His scales, one by one, we shall all be found wanting! When He puts us into the furnace, one by one, He will find us nothing but a mass of dross! I mean, of course, unless we are saved by Grace and are trusting in the perfect obedience and atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, God's only-begotten Son.

Let us, therefore, all repeat this confession of the Psalmist and acknowledge that we are all guilty before God, for it is clear that no mercy can come to us until we are willing to put ourselves in the position where mercy can rightly deal with us. Mercy is for the guilty, forgiveness is for the unrighteous—so, if we will not class ourselves among the guilty and the unrighteous, mercy and forgiveness can never come to us!

II. Now, secondly, we come to THE PSALMIST'S CONFIDENCE. Although he felt that none could stand before God by themselves, yet he said, "But there is forgiveness with You." How did he know that? And how do we know it?

Well, we know that there is forgiveness with God, *because we have been informed by Revelation concerning the Character of God*—and we find one prominent feature in the Character of God is that "He delights in mercy." It gives Him the greatest possible pleasure when He can righteously forgive sin. He needs not to be entreated, as though He were slow to pardon, for it is one of His special joys to cast iniquity into the depths of the sea! God's Character, as it is revealed to us in the Scriptures, convinces us that there is forgiveness with Him!

Moreover, this impression, conveyed to us by the general tenor of the Scriptures, *is deepened by the direct teaching of the Gospel*. Why did Jesus come into the world to be a Savior if God does not delight to save the lost? Why did He offer an Atonement if it were not that sin might be put away by that Atonement? Why was the fountain filled with blood if it were not God's intent to wash away the stains of His people's guilt? Oh, yes, that accursed and yet blessed Cross, or, rather, that bleeding Savior dying upon it ought to give us such an assurance of God's forgiveness that we might never doubt it! There is forgiveness with God! Each wound of Christ proclaims it with an emphasis which makes it an absolute certainty!

Further, Beloved, we are assured that God will forgive sin *because we have so many definite promises to that effect*. I shall not stop to quote many of them, for I hope you know them for yourselves. Here are three—"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." "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." "He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." This blessed Book is as full of promises and proclamations of mercy as an egg is full of meat! It

abounds in messages of love and Grace! It tells us that God wills not the death of the sinner, that He delights not in judgment, for that is His left-handed work, but that His compassion freely moves towards the blackest and vilest of sinners when they repent and return to Him. He is never so much at home, so completely fulfilling the purposes of His Being as when He presses the wanderer to His bosom and cries, "How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, Israel? How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim? My heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together." This is the Doctrine that is clearly taught in the Word of God and, therefore, we share the Psalmist's confidence that there is forgiveness with Him!

In the Scriptures we are told that God's forgiveness is full. He does not half forgive, as men often do. "I can forgive," says somebody, "but I cannot forget." But God—wonderful as it seems to us—forgets as well as forgives! This is His own declaration—"I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Man's forgiveness is often only verbal. The venom of anger lingers in his heart while the profession of forgiveness is upon his lips. But God's forgiveness is full and ample. When He says that He forgives, He means it in the fullest sense of the word. He will treat you, repenting Sinner, as though you had never transgressed against Him! He will make you a new creature in Christ Jesus and you shall stand before Him, throughout eternity, as if even a *thought* of sin had never defiled your mind!

It is full forgiveness that God bestows and it is as free as it is full. You are not to buy it with your tears or your good deeds, for it is freely given to you by God. He is more willing to forgive you than you are to be forgiven—and it is more easy for Him to blot out your sin than it was for you to commit that sin! If there were no provision for the removal of your sin, what would you do? But there is abundant provision, made by God, for your forgiveness! His great mercy has been at work from before the foundation of the world so as to have everything in readiness for the complete forgiveness of all who repent of sin and trust in Jesus!

That forgiveness is also immediate. It is yours as soon as you repent and believe. Oh, how my soul leaped with joy when I first understood that God had forgiven me all my sin! That great act was instantaneous and it may be so with you, also! Your coming to God may take time, but God's forgiveness of your sin is bestowed in a moment! The instant that a sinner believes in Christ, his sin is all gone, just as much gone as it will be if he lives 50 years and is a diligent servant of God all the time. Yes, I venture to say that the dying thief, when he had given one penitent glance at Christ, was as truly delivered from sin as those blessed spirits which had been for centuries before the Throne of God on high! Only think, my Friend, what it would be for you to receive forgiveness in a moment! You may have come in here as black as Hell itself through sin—yet go out without a stain upon you! "It cannot be done," says someone. Yes it can, but only by God! For with Him all things are possible and He

has already done it for many whom I know—and He will do it for all those who come to Him in penitence and put their trust in His dear Son!

And this forgiveness, once received, is irreversible. It is not God's way to pardon a man and then, afterwards, to condemn him! That is the fashion of a certain set of theologians who believe in people being once forgiven and yet ultimately lost. I find no such teaching as that in the Scriptures! If the Lord says to anyone, "I absolve you," it is done and, in that moment, every sin is forever put away! I even go the length of Kent's hymn—

"Here's pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black their cast!
And O my Soul, with wonder view
For sins to come, here's pardon, too!"

There is no playing fast and loose with you, Beloved. If you believe in Christ, you are justified with a justification that will stand the test of time, the strain of death and the trial of eternity! "He that believes on Him is not condemned," and he shall not be ashamed or confounded, world without end. What do you say to this full, free, immediate and irreversible pardon?

And this pardon is for every sinner, of every kind, who repents and believes in Jesus. Many people seem to think that when we preach about the pardon of sin, we mean the pardon of not having "taken the sacrament," as they express it, or not attending regularly a place of worship, or some such matters—but we mean the pardon of the greatest sins that anyone can commit—the pardon of thieving, the pardon of lying, the pardon of swearing, the pardon of infidelity, the pardon of fornication, the pardon of adultery, the pardon of murder! We do not preach a sham forgiveness for sham sinners. Christ Jesus is not a physician who came into the world merely to cure the finger ache. No, but it is the deadly disease of sin that Christ has come to cure! He has not come all the way from Heaven to earth and died in order that He might simply wash a tiny spot of blackness from a fair lady's hand! He has come to make a Blackamoor white, to make the foulest and most abominable wretch that curses the earth, whiter than the snow! I will go as far as ever I can and say that if there is anybody who has committed every mentionable and every unmentionable sin—if he has even lived in secret vice and transgression till he would not dare to sit in the seat he occupies if others did but know one-tenth of what he has done—I am sent to tell even him that Jesus receives just such sinners as he is as soon as they repent and believe in Him! Well may we sing—

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

So we have come thus far with our subject. First, there is the confession that none of us can stand before God without a Mediator and, next, there is the confidence that, with God, there is forgiveness!

III. Every thoughtful person will be glad to follow on to the third point, which is, THE CONSEQUENCE OF FORGIVENESS.

I do not know whether you have noticed, but I have, that together with the return of Popery to this country—and it is coming back fast—there is scarcely a street in London in which you may not smell it at one end or the other. There has come back with it a kind of Roman fog which has obscured the vision of the general public. The editor of one precious newspaper—the newspaper editors, as you know, are all very profound theologians and you may always accept any theology that you find in the newspaper when it agrees with the teaching of the Bible—one of these clever men is alarmed because people are taught to sing—

"Till to Jesus' work you cling
By a simple faith,
Doing is a deadly thing,
Doing ends in death."

"This is dreadful," says the critic. All those gentlemen who bring out newspapers are so moral that they are afraid for the morality of Christian people, so they give us a great deal of warning and exhortation against such teaching as that hymn contains! The time was when almost every pulpit in England rang with the grand Doctrine of Justification by Faith and then the whole current of religious thought was strongly set against anything like salvation by the works of men! But, alas, it is not so now, for, with this Popery which has returned to our land, there has come back the common notion that, after all, salvation must be by works and there must be some merit in what man is doing. And that, if we go in for preaching the free pardon of sin, we shall demoralize this wonderfully pious country! And if we preach Lutheranism and Calvinism, we shall run the risk of making London a most wicked city!

It would be a dreadful thing, certainly, to make London worse than it is! But to my mind, that is a thing almost impossible of achievement. Still, that is the fear which is held before us, that we might pollute the precious intelligence and purity of this wonderful 19th Century by preaching the full justification of all who believe in Jesus. It will stand a good deal of polluting and then not be much worse than it is at present—but that is the fear with which our newspaper editors are trying to alarm us. Now it so happens that this was the constant talk of the Papists against Protestantism—their cry was, "If you preach Justification by Faith, men will never do good works. If you preach that pardon of sin is freely given, you will never get the people to be even decently honest." But this theory has been exploded by fact. Remember what Dr. Chalmers said—that, in his first pastorate, he preached morality till he had scarcely a moral person in his parish! He preached righteousness and goodness till he could hardly find a single decent honest man anywhere about him! But, as soon as he began to preach salvation by the Grace of God, there came a total change over the characters of those who were round about him and, therefore, that man of profound erudition and of a masterly mind, sat like a child at the feet of Jesus to bear His testimony that it is the Gospel of the Grace of God, and not the preaching of the works of the Law, that creates holiness and produces good works!

You may go to the work-mongers to hear about good works, but you must come back to the Believers in Christ to find them. Their changed lives prove that the Gospel does produce the best possible results. The more we trample down human merit, the more do we exalt the merit of Christ! The more we show the absolute uselessness of good works to merit salvation, the more do we promote the highest type of morality and the more we lead men to live unto God from motives of gratitude for what He has done for them. This is a matter of fact.

What did the Romanism and the work-mongering of Laud produce? The Cavaliers, with their dainty perfumed curls! But what did the Justification by Faith, preached by Owen, and Howe, and Charnock, produce? Our Puritan forefathers, who, with all the sternness against which some speak, were the godliest race of Englishmen who have ever lived in this land! God send us back the like of them! You usually find that side which boasts its practicalness to be impractical and, on the other hand, the side which cries out against human works as a ground of trust, to be the very side which abounds in holiness unto the Glory of God! Well now, the text says, "There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared." Thus, you see, the Doctrine of Free Forgiveness actually produces in man's mind a fear of God! You might have thought the Psalmist would have said, "There is no forgiveness with You, that You may be feared," but it is not so.

The opposite of our text is very manifest. When there is no forgiveness, or when a man thinks there is none, what is the consequence? He is driven to despair and despair often leads to desperate living. Our old proverb says, "You may as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb," and that is the spirit that actuates the despairing sinner. He says, "I cannot be forgiven. I must be damned—so I may as well enjoy life while I have it. There is no hope of Heaven for me, so why should I not make the most I can of earth? If I cannot obtain salvation from God, I will see what I can get out of the devil." Is not that kind of talk quite natural? If there is no hope of forgiveness, then there is no proper fear of God.

Many are abiding in a state of carelessness *because they really do not know whether there is any pardon to be had.* When a man is in doubt as to whether he can be forgiven, he says, "I am afraid it would be a very long process and I do not know whether I would get it even then. Perhaps there is no pardon to be had, so I might become a religious man and yet miss the forgiveness of sins." That is the thought of many and, therefore, they become torpid and lethargic, careless and indifferent. But when the Holy Spirit teaches a man that there is forgiveness to be had, he would leap out of his very body rather than miss it! Now you will see him gird up his loins and run with endurance till he reaches the goal! Now the man will play the man! He says, "What? Is there forgiveness for such a sinner as I am? Is a new start in life possible for one who has been so sad a failure? Is the picking up of the harlot off the street and the thief from the prison and the debauchee out of the gutter possible?" This hope gives the man something that is like a new mainspring to a watch. You

have put within him that which will help him to subdue his sin and become a better man throughout the rest of his life. Is it not so? Only assure the man of the pardon of his sin and that assurance supplies new vigor to his soul!

How encouraging, too, is the belief that there is pardon to be had! But, more, how sanctifying is the actual reception of it! Imagine the experience of some dear friend who has just believed in Jesus and to whom the Spirit of God bears witness that he is forgiven. What sort of a man will he be? I will try and picture him to you. Already I see his eyes glistening with a light I never saw there before. The man looks positively handsome! You would hardly recognize him if you knew him before this great change happened to him. He had a burden on his mind that made him always look worn out. That has gone and now he looks supremely blest! But I also see tears in his eyes—why? He was not much given to weeping in his old days. He is grieving to think that he should ever have offended so kind a God, for nothing makes us so sorry for sin as the sense of being completely forgiven. He knows he is pardoned, he is sure of it! He knows that God loves him and now he loathes himself that he should ever have sunk so low. Yet, if you will take one of his tears and put it under a microscope, or analyze its component parts, you will find that there is no bitterness in it. Joy is mingled with his sorrow as he stands at the foot of the Cross and bathes his Lord's feet with his penitential, yet rainbow tears. Now see him go home. He has some Christian friends there, I hope, and if so, he will not be long with them before they begin to notice the change in him! And it is not long before he wants to tell them the blessed secret! Mother wants to know what has happened to her boy and his arms are thrown around her neck as he says, "Mother, I have found the Lord." She is very delighted and perhaps very surprised, for it was not his usual way to talk about religion! Sometimes he used to sneer and jeer at it. Will he go to bed without prayer? No, he needs nobody to tell him to pray—he has been praying all the way home and while he has been sitting there. These are the first real prayers he has ever presented, but it has now become as natural for him to pray as it is for a living man to breathe!

Watch that man, tomorrow, when he goes to his work. Perhaps he does not introduce the subject of religion among his workmates, but he keeps himself to himself as much as he can. By-and-by, they begin using filthy language around his bench and, at last, he cannot endure it, so he lets fall just a little word or two of protest—and then they have found him out. For the next few days, they will cluster round him, jesting and jeering. "He is a hypocrite, of course." That is their notion of fair play—everybody who does not think as they think must be a hypocrite! "He has some selfish motive for turning Methodist." They know very well that they would not do anything good unless there was something to be got by it, so they measure the other man's corn by their own bushel and they impute to him some unworthy motive. And now he, who was always, "Hail fellow well met," gets abundance of banter and abuse, if not worse. He

gets away, sometimes, where he can pray by himself, and he likes to find a quiet corner where he can read his Bible. He used to read nothing but the low trashy novels of the day, if he read anything at all, but the Word of the Lord has now become sweet and precious to him. He has a little two-penny Testament in his pocket and he gets a few minutes, whenever he can, that he may become better acquainted with his Master's Word. He is missed very much over at "The Black Bull," or, "The White Horse," and he is likely to be missed there, for he has found a better tap to draw from and to drink at—and he no longer goes to the entertainments where his former companions revel in rioting and chambering and wantonness. They ask, "Where is old Jack gone? What has become of him?" It has happened to him, as to many more—"Old things are passed away; all things are become new."

There is another man in that workshop who swears occasionally and drinks a great deal—and he says that he does not believe in this Doctrine of Grace—he thinks its tendency is immoral. Ah, his own talk is not very sweet, but he is very strong upon that point of morality! Give him a pint of beer and see how he will argue! Give him another pint and then see how he will denounce this Calvinistic doctrine of immediate pardon through faith in Jesus! He says that if everybody believed in that way, he does not know what would happen, but he appears very horrified at the prospect, especially after he has had a third pint of beer! I notice that some of you laugh at my description. Well, the thing I am alluding to, the miserable hypocrisy of the world, *ought* to be laughed at—unless we *cry* over it—which would be better. They call us cants, but the biggest cants are on the other side. I tell you that there is no cant in all the world so despicable as the mean hypocritical man who picks out every honest Christian and says that he is a hypocrite! Such people know better, yet they must bespatter us with mud in order that their own filthiness may not be observed. I may well speak upon this matter, for I am one of the principal sufferers from this kind of treatment and I contend that we do not deserve this at the hands of the world. We know, too, that it is enmity against our Master and against His Truth that provokes such attacks.

Yet, sometimes a converted man has a different experience from that which I have been describing. There is a dear Brother—not present now, or else I might not tell the story—an earnest and useful member of this Church. Many years ago I recollect his writing to tell me of his conversion. He was then a butler in a noble family and I rejoiced with him over his conversion. Some months later, he came and brought me two guineas as an offering to God. And, as he laid them on my vestry table, he said, "This is how I came by them. I am employed as butler to Lady So-and-So. When I became a Christian, I cleaned my plate so much better than I had ever done before, that her Ladyship took notice of what I did and, on one occasion, when she had company, she brought a number of distinguished individuals into the butler's pantry to see how beautiful her plate looked. "One of them said to me, 'You do this work thoroughly well, young man! Here are a couple of guineas for you.' So I said to him, 'It is

very kind of your Lordship, but I shall take that money, next Sunday, to Mr. Spurgeon.' He made some jesting remark and then asked, 'Why are you going to do that?' I replied, 'It is because I love the Lord Jesus Christ that I have become a better servant to her Ladyship than I used to be. I hope I am not careless now about any of my duties and I want my Savior to have the credit of all I do.'"

So, dear Friends, you see that you can glorify Jesus Christ in cleaning plate, or digging in a garden, or selling potatoes, or anything else that is right, so long as you do it unto Him and to His praise—doing the best you can because you feel that a Christian ought never to do anything badly. Even the most common thing that he turns out should be done by him as a servant of Christ to the very best of his ability. If you act so, I shall not care what profession or occupation you choose, so long as it is a lawful one, nor in what line of life you may be called to move, so long as this is your firm and fixed resolve, "I will not seek the glory of self. I will not seek my own honor. I will seek the glory of God alone."

My Friends, come and put your trust in Jesus! Take His blood and righteousness to be your only hope and then you may, by your blameless, honest, upright, sober, kindly Christian lives, put to silence the accusations of foolish men, or, at least take away from them any ground of accusation. Walk carefully, prayerfully, humbly before God and men, putting your trust, not in yourselves, but in Christ, alone, and you shall then find, in your experience, the best exposition of the text, "There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared," for you will prove, by your own fear of God, which is continually before your own eyes, that His free, rich, Sovereign Grace, manifested in your pardon, did not produce in you, indulgence in sin, but gave you the sweet liberty of walking in holiness and in the fear of the Lord. God bless you all, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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

FIVE DIVINE DECLARATIONS
NO. 2793

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 24, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 15, 1878.

"Surely, shall one say, in the LORD I have righteousness and strength: even to Him shall men come; and all that are incensed against Him shall be ashamed. In the LORD all the seed of Israel shall be justified, and shall glory."
Isaiah 45:24, 26.

IF YOU carefully read the chapter from which our text is taken, you must notice the high style which God here adopts. He speaks like a king—no, more—He speaks like a God, as He is entitled to do, for He is God. David says, in the 29th Psalm, "The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty." We can hear that powerful, majestic voice in this Chapter! The Lord here speaks about men coming to Him, confessing to Him and obeying Him without inserting any "if" as to their own will in the matter, or raising any question as to whether He can accomplish what He promises. Listen attentively to these words in the verse before our text, for they are very strong and forcible—"I have sworn by Myself, the word is gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." The Lord lays unusual emphasis upon the irrevocable oath which He has sworn and says that He will never recall the word which has gone out of His mouth. He speaks with that same power which said, "Let there be light: and there was light." In a word, He speaks Divinely and, therefore, He can fulfill what He has declared.

"But," someone says, "men are free agents." Who denied it? "But men will not bow their knee before Him unless they are willing to do so." Who said they would? Yet, He who has the power to control the freedom of the human will—He who rules, not only over inanimate objects and over creatures whose wills are gladly subordinated to His, but even over souls that are naturally rebellious—still has a way of turning them according to His own mind! He speaks in the majesty of His Sovereignty and swears that every knee shall bow before Him—and that all shall acknowledge Him to be the only supreme Lord and Governor!

It is true that there are two ways in which men shall be made to bow the knee before God. Some of them will bow unwillingly when they shall feel the weight of His iron rod. Others shall bow joyfully before Him when they shall feel the power of His Grace. I am going to read my text in that sweet and merciful manner, and I think the context justifies us in so

reading it. I want you to see how God's power over mankind is exerted in a way of Grace, although it is also true that His power is put forth in a way of Judgment towards those who reject His mercy. I read, with delight, the expressions of my text as the decrees, determinations, promises and declarations of the God of Grace, who affirms that men shall say, "In the Lord have we righteousness and strength. Even to Him shall men come and all that are incensed against Him shall be ashamed. In the Lord all the seed of Israel shall be justified and shall glory." There is no doubt about this great Truth of God—Christ did not die in vain—the Gospel has not been sent into the world for nothing! There shall be a people "saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation." There shall be a multitude that no man can number who shall bow before the Savior. There shall be an adequate reward for the travail of His soul which shall satisfy even the infinite heart of the great Son of God Himself!

I. There are five Divine declarations in the text. The first is this, that THERE SHALL BE A PEOPLE WHO SHALL ACKNOWLEDGE THE TRUTH CONCERNING GOD. Our version says, "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord I have righteousness and strength," but there are other readings which appear to be more accurate. "Men shall say, In the Lord is righteousness and strength," would be quite as correct a rendering, or even more so. It means that there shall be a people who shall confess that in God there is righteousness and strength.

First, *they shall see these to be His attributes*. Everybody ought to be able to plainly see the evidences of God's strength. Many shudder in terror before the thunder of His power, yet they will not, or they cannot, see God's righteousness. They begin accusing Him, from one point or another, of being unjust in His dealings with the sons of men. So it always has been and so it will be as long as the ungodly are on the earth. But there shall still be a people who shall be able, because their eyes have been touched with Heaven's eye salve, to see that God's strength is always associated with righteousness. They shall perceive what human nature full often refuses to perceive—that God is as good as He is great and as just as He is strong! Even the terrible things, they shall see to be "terrible things in righteousness." They shall cease to question anything done by the Most High and they shall submit unreservedly to His Sovereign sway. This is one of the miracles of God's Grace, but it is a miracle that shall never cease so long as God sits upon the Throne ruling over all.

More than this, our text means that there shall be a people who will see that all *their righteousness and strength must be found in God*. Each of them shall say, "In the Lord I have righteousness and strength." Other men may fancy that they can find righteousness in their own doings, but the Lord's people know that the work of righteousness has been carried out to the full only by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and they are content to accept God's righteousness by faith in Christ Jesus—and so to become righteous before God as Abraham was, for he, "believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness." There shall never cease from off the face of the earth a people who shall feel that all their righteousness is found in "the Lord Our Righteousness," who justifies the ungodly, and

they shall also find their strength in Him. They shall be conscious of their own weakness. They shall perceive that they have no strength to run in the ways of holiness by themselves, but they shall look to the Holy Spirit for help and shall trust in the Lord to uphold them and preserve them in the ways of integrity even to the end. I am addressing many a Believer who can say, "In the Lord I have righteousness and strength." You have neither righteousness nor strength apart from Him and you know it—and it is your delight to confess that you do not expect to find either righteousness or strength anywhere but in Him! Thus, you show that you are resting on Him, alone, and you are helping to fulfill the promise of the text that there shall always be a people who shall know and feel that their righteousness and strength are found only in the Lord.

Besides that, they shall not only know and feel it, but *they shall be prepared openly to declare it*, for the text says, "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord I have righteousness and strength." Some, who truly know the Lord, are very timid in confessing Him—they keep back much that they know concerning Him. But I thank God that there shall always be a people brave enough to "stand up for Jesus" whatever it may cost them! There were many such people when, to confess that righteousness and strength were in the Lord, alone, involved burning at the stake of the one who made such a confession. He who held the Lutheran doctrine of Justification by Faith was condemned to die. He was hunted as though he had been a wolf or a mad dog. His existence was thought to be obnoxious to the human race and, therefore, he was put to death in the most painful form. Yet persecution could not stop the confession of faith in Jesus, for, as fast as one was slain, another stepped forward to take his place! Through all the centuries that have passed since the death of Christ, the grand Truth of God that strength and righteousness are not to be found in men, and come not through the priest, or by human works, rites and ceremonies has never lacked men and women to come forward to state it plainly and boldly in the teeth of all mankind—nor shall it ever want for such witnesses while sun and moon endure!

Some may be cowards and turn their backs in the day of battle, but God has reserved unto Himself a people who will be brave for Him even to the end! And should Rationalism and Ritualism, in these evil days, devour the strength of the Church of God, yet has He reserved unto Himself hundreds of thousands whose knees have never bowed before these modern Baals and which will never so bow—for these men first confess their faith to God, alone, upon their knees in prayer, and afterwards boldly declare to the world, each one for himself, "Surely, in the Lord I have righteousness and strength."

I wonder how many of us really know this great Truth of God in our inmost souls, for this is one of the weightiest matters you ever heard about in all your lives. If you think that you have any righteousness of your own, you are sadly mistaken. If you fancy that you have strength of your own which will carry you to Heaven, you are living in grievous error. You shall faint and die, "as a snail which melts," if you trust in yourselves! There is no foundation upon which we can build so as to secure

the blessings of eternal salvation but Jesus Christ, the Crucified—and the only way to build upon that foundation is by simple trust in Him. If you are resting alone upon Him for righteousness, strength and everything that you need, it is well with you—but if you are not, may the Lord in mercy bring you to do so this very hour!

Every now and then, dear Friends, it is advisable for us to review our past lives—to look back and honestly, as in the sight of God, to make a summary of what they have been. Many a Christian has done this when he has been slandered. He has then looked over his past career to see whether there was any ground for the calumny cast upon him. And he has been truly happy if he has been able to sum all up by saying to the Lord, "I have kept Your precepts and Your testimonies." We frequently make these reviews of our lives in times of sickness. Then we are all alone and quiet—and being incapable of attending to our worldly business—we begin to turn our gaze within, to see how we stand before God. Possibly, we cannot raise ourselves up in our bed, to look out of the window, or, as we lie awake in the watches of the night, we mentally recall our whole career from our childhood even to that hour. And it is truly wise on our part to do so—it is then exceedingly beneficial to mark the evil and repent of it, or to note the good and thank God for it.

Many godly people set apart special seasons for making these examinations. It would be well if we all reviewed each day before we fell asleep. Some folk, if they knew themselves better, would not brag as loudly as they now do. A keener eye might, perhaps, make their tongue less talkative. Some persons like to go through this process with peculiar rigor on their birthdays, or upon the anniversary of their conversion, or at the close of some notable period of time. Whenever it is done, it is well. And happy, thrice happy, is the man who closes up his account of himself in the words of our text—"In the Lord I have righteousness and strength."

When we come to die is another time for making this review. Looking back from the shelving bank of the great river, our eyes gaze along the whole track which we have traversed. We see that goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of our life, but we also see that we have not always kept to the King's Highway, but have often gone astray like a lost sheep. We are blessed, indeed, if, notwithstanding all that, we can still feel that the set and current of our being has been towards that which is right, so that we can join with the Psalmist in saying, "I have kept Your precepts and Your testimonies: for all my ways are before You."

I urge you young people who are beginning your Christian life to begin on a sound foundation, searching the Scriptures to know what is the will of God, and yielding yourselves up entirely to the sway of God the Holy Spirit, that you may not have a broken life, running for a while in the wrong direction, so that you have to go back and start afresh. There are some men whom I know who seem to pick up every novelty that they come across, but they soon drop it and go off after something else. These are the people who need new prophets to arise every week. I said to one individual of that kind, when I met him in the street—and he was a preacher, too—"Well, what are you now!" He said to me, "Why, you asked

me that question the last time you saw me." I said, "I know I did, but what are you now!" He was something very different from what he had been when I met him six months earlier! And a year later, when I saw him again, I saluted him in the same way. I said, "Dear Friend, what are you now?" He was very angry with me and said that it was a shame that I should ask him that question. But I replied, "Well, never mind—what are you now?" And when he told me, I found that he had again changed his denomination! What he is or where he is now, I do not know—probably something quite different from what he had been before.

You might as soon measure the moon for a suit of clothes as measure some men's doctrine. They seem to be perpetually waxing or waning. They box the compass. They shift like the wind. That is a poor life, when it comes to the close, in which the man has been "everything by starts, and nothing long." My dear young Friends, give yourselves up to the teaching and guidance of the Spirit of God and resolve that if you do err, it shall be unintentionally, for you wish to be right—you desire to know and to do nothing save what the Lord taught you and the Lord bade you do.

II. The second declaration of the text is that men will not only acknowledge the Truth concerning God, but that THEY WILL ACT UPON IT—"Even to Him shall men come."

I must remark again how the Lord speaks here like a God—"Even to Him *shall* men come." Someone asks, perhaps, "Suppose they will not come, what then?" Yes, but they *will* come, for He makes them willing in the day of His power. "But suppose," says the objector, "that, having heard the Gospel, they reject it." Then they shall hear it again, and yet again and, at last, they shall yield to its entreaty, for they shall come! When God says, "Men shall come," You may depend upon it that His, "shall come," will carry the day! Christ said, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me" and "shall come" will win the victory! Not by violating the freedom of men's will, nor by treating them otherwise than as free agents, yet does God prevail over them so that they do come and submit themselves unto Him!

Notice the wording of this gracious declaration. "Even to Him shall men come," The glory of it lies in the fact that *they rest in nothing but Himself*. The bulk of men stop short of coming to God in Christ Jesus—and content themselves with reading the Bible, or saying prayers, or attending places of worship. But my text says that there is a people who shall get beyond all that—"Even *to Him* shall men come." If you would be saved, you must get to God in Christ. Short of that, you are lost. Many go to priests and think that all is well with them. And many go to rites and ceremonies, and suppose that all is well with them, yet it is not. I tell you, prodigal son, it will never be well with you till you come to your Father! You must get your head on His bosom, make your confession to Him and receive His kiss of forgiveness, or else you will never have peace in your soul. Christ said to the men of His day, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me. But you will not come to Me, that you might have

life." There was the fatal flaw—they read their Bibles, but they would not come to Christ, though even the Old Testament Scriptures pointed them to Him! And many a man, when we bid Him come to Christ, says, "I will pray about it." Pray, by all means, but praying will not save you—you must come to Christ, as our text says, "Even to Him shall men come."

But how do they come to Him? They come, first, by repentance. They come weeping because of their sins. They also come by faith—they come trusting in Jesus and disowning all other confidences. They come just as they are—naked, filthy—"poor, wretched, blind"—acknowledging that they are undeserving, ill-deserving, Hell-deserving sinners. But they come to Him—to God in Christ Jesus—and they look up to Him and they cry, "Jesus, save me! Father, I have sinned! Have mercy upon me, for Christ's sake!" Neither will they rest until they do come there. I hope I am addressing many in whom this prophecy has been fulfilled—"They shall come to Him." When it is fulfilled in any of you, admire the Grace that drew you, otherwise you would never have come! Sing, from your very hearts, those sweet verses by Dr. Watts—

"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?
'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."

What confidence it gives me, when I am preaching, to feel—I do not know who it may be, but I am sure that some soul will come to Christ and will come to Christ just now—for, if it is the true Gospel which is preached, with a pure motive and in simple terms, there is no question about the success of it! The Lord has said, "My Word shall not return to Me void." It will not go back to Him without having accomplished His Divine purpose of love and mercy! Jesus is drawing you, so yield to Him, Beloved! Pray from your hearts the prayer, "Draw us; we will run after You" and so, in your case, my text shall be blessedly true, "Even to Him shall men come."

III. The third Divine declaration might be read in another light, but I prefer to keep to the strain of mercy. It says that THOSE WHO DO COME SHALL BE ASHAMED OF THEIR FORMER OPPOSITION—"All that are incensed against Him shall be ashamed."

There is never a soul that comes to Christ that does not soon begin to be ashamed—with a blessed and holy shame—of having been angry with God. Is it not a very shameful thing and enough to make us blush scarlet and crimson, that we should ever have been "incensed" against God? It is most ridiculous, as well as terribly wicked, that such puny creatures as we are should ever think of being angry with God! I recollect hearing a little child say to his big father, "I am mad with you." "Yes," I thought, "and if you had been my boy and had talked to me like that, I would have tried to take some of the madness out of you." He was in such a fury that he could scarcely stand! And there is many a man who, compared with

God, is far smaller than that little child was in comparison with his father, yet who, nevertheless, talks to God as if he were His equal and is not ashamed to acknowledge that he is angry with God.

There are some who are *angry with God's Providence*. They have said that they will never forgive Him for some action of His which has offended them—as if they could forgive HIM! They have impudently stood up before Him as though they would—

"Snatch from His hand the balance and the rod,
Rejudge His judgments, be the God of God."

They have dared to summon the Eternal to their bar! They have been "incensed against Him." Ah, but when they come to Him and when they find righteousness and strength in Him, how ashamed they are of all their former anger! They hardly like to be reminded that they ever thought or said such hard things—and they are heartily ashamed of themselves.

Some are incensed against God because of His Law and its penalty. Have you not heard them say, "It is too severe, too stringent! Men cannot be expected to keep such a perfect Law as that"? Some of them almost foam at the mouth, like madmen, when they talk of the punishment of sin. When God says, that "the soul that sins, it shall die." And when His dear Son speaks of a worm that dies not and a fire that never shall be quenched, I scarcely dare repeat the blasphemies that even professed ministers of the Gospel have dared to utter against the righteous and holy God—and the terrible doom which surely awaits the ungodly! But when those who have been angry at the plain declarations of God concerning the punishment of sin are brought to Him, they are utterly ashamed of themselves! When they really come to know Him—when they find righteousness and strength in Him—they would gladly eat their own words if they could and they will bare their backs to His rod and feel that if He were even to destroy them, He would be fully justified! Many and many a Christian has had a broken heart when he has been forgiven as he has mourned that he could ever have been so rebellious against his God.

I have heard this personality of holy grief stigmatized as being morbid, self-conscious, and even selfish, but I take leave to say that those gentlemen who thus speak are strangers to spiritual facts and know nothing about them. Their opinion is not worth the breath they spend in uttering it, for, if they did know the Truth about this matter, they would understand that there is nothing selfish in a man's praying to be rendered unselfish—and that is a main part of our prayer! And there is nothing selfish in an individual confessing before God that he has been selfish—and that is a large part of our confession. How shall a man do good to another until he has been made good himself? Is it not the very height of benevolence to my fellow creatures that I should begin by wishing to be made fit to be of service to them? And how can that be until I first have been personally cleansed and have personally known the value of true religion in my own soul? I charge you, dear Friends, that instead of that "broad-hearted philanthropy" of which we hear so much—which consists in talking fine nonsense about the good other people ought to do—you had bet-

ter begin by getting your own hearts right with God so that you may be taught to love God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength—and to love your neighbors as yourselves—for then and not till then are you in a right condition to learn what is true philanthropy! Be sorry first, that afterwards you may not be sad. Repent first, so that you may get close to God, that afterwards you may go and close in with your fellow men and live and die to serve them for Jesus' sake!

There are others who are incensed against God because of the great plan of salvation. Some are even *incensed against the Savior Himself*. The preaching of the Deity of Christ makes some men gnash their teeth! They cannot endure that blessed fact. But, oh, when He saves them by His Grace, there is no quarrel, then, with the Divine Savior! Emmanuel, God With Us, is very precious to the Believer. Away goes all Socinianism—the soul loathes it and cannot even bear to think that it could have fallen so low as to think or say anything derogatory to the dignity of the ever-blessed Son of God! Some are incensed against the blood of Christ—they are so delicate that they do not even like to *hear* about it. They can sin without compunction, but the Divine way of cleansing from sin offends them! Some men positively rave at the Atonement. Substitution, the vicarious expiatory suffering of Christ in the sinner's stead, they cannot endure! But when the Lord breaks their hearts with the hammer of His Word and when He makes them see their sin as it is in His sight, I guarantee you that the precious blood of Jesus becomes to them the dearest thing in earth or Heaven! And they rejoice in it, for it gives them access to God and peace and pardon! Some of those who have most reviled the Gospel have, when they have been converted, been the most faithful preachers of it!

That grand Truth of God of Justification by Faith—that a sinner is saved not by works of righteousness which he has done, but according to the free Grace of God, through Jesus Christ—oh, how fiercely some hate it! They do not call themselves Papists, but Protestants, and though this is the central truth of Protestantism—the very core of Lutheranism—yet do they object to it and revile it! They do not act so when the blessed Spirit of God brings them to the Father by way of Jesus Christ and His atoning Sacrifice. "Then are they glad because they are quiet," for they are brought to the Fair Havens of Gospel security and joy!

O Beloved, if you are incensed against God about anything, it is foolish and wicked on your part to be in such a condition! I pray God, of His great Grace, to speedily bring you out of it and when He does, He will make you to be ashamed of yourselves! What a melting thing the love of Christ is! Stout-hearted sinners are sometimes not even moved by the thunderbolts of God, but when they see the wounds of Jesus, that sight brings them to their knees! When they find that He loved them even while they were rejecting Him. That He died for them when they were dead in trespasses and sins. That He had their names engraved upon the palms of His hands and upon His heart even when they were blaspheming Him, and that in "free Grace and dying love," there is a shelter pro-

vided even for *them*—then do they bite their lips and cover their eyes and turn unto the Lord with deep humiliation of spirit.

I heard someone say, once, that God might forgive his sin, but that he would never forgive himself—and I think that is the feeling of all who have been enraged against God, but who have been brought as penitents to His feet. Now that they love Him, they are grievously ashamed of their past conduct and they will never open their mouths in boasting any more. As I look round this place, I notice some who once were very strongly opposed to our dear Lord and Master. Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, I know who they are who now love Him most and desire to serve Him best—it is you who were formerly exceedingly angry with Him. See that persecuting Saul of Tarsus when the Lord lays His pierced hand upon him—what a loving, gracious, pleading Paul, the Grace of God makes of him! Oh, that the Lord Jesus would lay hold of somebody this very moment! I am greedy for the souls of some of you who might become my Master's best servants. Even if you are saying, "We want Him not! We hate His religion and the cant that, we believe, always goes with it," you are the very ones whom I pray Him to lead captive, in silken chains of blessed bondage, as trophies of the Irresistible Grace with which His almighty Love wins the hearts of His greatest enemies and transforms them into His faithful friends and willing servants forever and ever!

IV. The fourth Divine declaration is that THE LORD'S PEOPLE SHALL ALL BE JUSTIFIED. "In the Lord all the seed of Israel shall be justified."

What is meant by our being justified? It means that we are made and constituted just before God. "But," someone asks, "can that be done? Can an unjust person be made just in the sight of God?" Yes, it is done, as our text says, "in the Lord."

The Prophet here means to teach us that the *Lord Jesus Christ stands in the sinner's place and puts the sinner in His place*. This was done, in God's purpose, from all eternity, as John Kent sings—

"Then, in the glass of His decrees,
Christ and His bride appeared as one!
Her sin, by imputation, His,
While she in spotless splendor shone."

And it is actually done, in time, as each of the chosen ones is, by Grace, led to believe in Jesus. Then is the righteousness of Christ received by faith and it becomes ours—and we stand before God justified through Christ's righteousness. Perhaps you ask, "Can I, who have been sinful all my life, become righteous in God's sight?" Yes, Beloved, if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you shall, for His sake, be accounted righteous. That long list of your sins which now so greatly troubles you, shall be cancelled. There shall be written at the bottom of it, "Forgiven," and you shall be as clear of sin, in God's sight, as if you had never sinned! And, inasmuch as you cannot enter Heaven without merit, the merit of Christ shall be set down to your account and you shall stand "accepted in the Beloved," perfect in Christ Jesus! There shall come to you, also, a change of heart and a change of life, so that you shall become a just man or woman or child. But, still, that great declaration will be true, "The just shall live by faith," so the justification which you are to have before God

will never be your own justification, except by imputation—and it will always be because you have taken the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness and have wrapped it around you—that you will be accepted of God.

I hope, I believe, no more—I feel certain that I am addressing some of the poor of the people—some who have no confidence in themselves, no righteousness of their own, no power for prayer or anything that is good apart from the Holy Spirit. Well, then, come to the Lord Jesus, who is the David of our dispensation, and dwell beneath His shadow! Trust yourselves with Him. Repose in His promises. Rest in His Atonement. Rely upon His intercession. Rejoice in His eternal love. Look for His coming. It is a grand thing to feel a bit of rock under your feet, and if you are on the Rock of Ages, you are safe for time and eternity. A dear Brother reminded us in prayer, before this service, that we may tremble on the Rock, but the Rock never trembled under us. Another reminded me of a remark I made some time ago, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in Jehovah." "Well," I said, "that is going to Heaven in a third-class carriage—the better way is to go to Heaven first class, so—'I will trust, and not be afraid,'" letting no fear come in at all, but depending entirely upon what God has declared in His Word and feeling that it must be fulfilled, for nothing can prevent God's carrying out His purpose! Nothing can hinder Him from keeping His promise. So, dear Friends, with good Dr. Watts, let us, each one, say to the Lord—

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Your kind arms I fall;
Be You my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus, and my All."

Every soul that believes in Jesus belongs to the true seed of Israel, so in Him shall every such soul be justified! What a grand thing it is to be justified! A justified man need not fear to live, or to die, for, "there is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." No, more—such a man may, without fear, go right up to the bar of God, Himself, in that last tremendous day, for what says the Apostle? "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." Do you all know what justification means? Have you all received it? You recollect what Martin Luther did when he was going up those stairs—the Santa Scala—in Rome? I have stood, two or three times, at the foot of that staircase and seen the poor devotees going up and down, on their knees, saying a prayer on each step and so trying to win Heaven by merit. As Luther was doing this, there suddenly flashed into his mind this text, "The just shall live by faith." Up he sprang! There was no more going up and down the Santa Scala for him! He had found another and a better way of salvation and this is the way which we preach to you—and which our Master has bid us preach to every creature in all the world—"He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." "He that believes on Him is not condemned." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned."

V. I close with the last three words of the text—"In the Lord all the seed of Israel shall be justified, *and shall glory*." Those who find righteousness and strength in the Lord, THOSE WHO COME TO CHRIST AND ARE JUSTIFIED IN HIM, SHALL GLORY.

What does the text mean when it says that they shall glory? Sometimes, when I have been preaching in Wales or among Methodists—when I have set before them good, rich, Gospel Truth, perhaps two or three have shouted, at the same time, "Glory!" And though it has not increased the solemnity of the service, it has added a good deal of vivacity to it. And, really, when we see what Divine Grace has done for us, we often feel inclined to cry out, "Glory! Glory be to God!"

Have not many of you *felt the glory in your soul*, even if you have not uttered it with your mouth? All your sin gone, Jesus Christ as your Savior, your soul forever secure in His hands—and all that granted to you by Divine Grace, simply through believing—surely, you must have felt the glory within your soul? The devil has said to you, "That is too good to be true," but you have believed it, notwithstanding what he said, and you have felt as if you needed to be enlarged to be able to hold so much joy and blessedness! Do you ever sit down alone and think over what the Lord has done for you? If you do and you have the full assurance of faith, I am sure you will glory in the Lord, and you will say like those delivered from captivity, "Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing…The Lord has done great things for us; whereof we are glad."

But the Lord's true people will not keep that glory all to themselves. *They shall so glory that they shall speak about it to others*. I should not wonder if when they tell what the Lord has done for them, some should think that they are intrusive. I wish we were more so. Some of them shall so glory in God that they shall, sometimes, imprudently cast their pearls before swine—but they had better even do that than keep their pearls concealed and never let them show the brightness which God has given them. "They shall glory." That is to say, they shall *speak of the Lord's love* with flashing eye and smiling countenance. They shall speak of it as of a priceless treasure, as of something worth more than all worlds. They shall wonder that other people do not think as much of it as they do. They shall often feel sad at heart because the worth of Christ is not more widely known among men, but, as for themselves, "they shall glory." And they shall so glory that nobody shall be able to stop their glorying, for, when they are ridiculed, they shall only glory in that, also! And when others sneer at and try to depreciate their Lord, they shall only the more firmly believe and rejoice in Him who is All in All to them! I am sure, dear Friends, that if Christ is really yours, you must glory in Him and boast about Him—and sometimes make other people wonder why you talk so much about Him!

Those who truly know Christ will glory in Him alone. They will glory neither in their church, nor in their creed, nor in their good works, nor in the earnestness with which they serve the Lord—but only in Him, according as it is written, "He that glories, let him glory in the Lord." Oh,

yes, we will glory in the Lord when we lie sick and all things are melting away from us. We will say to those around us, "Now do we find Jesus near! Now do we find Him dear! We must bid 'good-bye' to the dearest friends, but He sticks closer than a brother to us." We will glory in the Lord with our last breath! We will be propped up in our bed, as many a saint has been, to tell those around us yet once more what a precious Christ—what a blessed Christ we have—and what a glorious salvation we have found through His precious blood!

And will we not glory in Him alone when we enter those pearly gates above? What will our disembodied spirits say to our comrades who have gone on before? What shall we have to tell them but the story of the great love and the amazing mercy, and the abundant power and Grace of God in Christ Jesus? I think that if we are in Heaven for ages before our bodies rise from the grave, we shall have nothing to talk of or think of but Him! And when this poor dust of ours shall, at His coming, rise again and we shall be able, with spirit, soul and body, to speak, again—what shall we speak of except His Glory? Oh, we will glory in Him! We will glory in Him! Well may each saint say with the gracious Countess of Huntingdon—

"Then loudest of the crowd I'll sing,
While Heaven's resounding mansions ring
With shouts of Sovereign Grace."

May every soul now *here*, be *there* to do it, for Jesus sake! Amen.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, 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 REFRESHING CANTICLE
NO. 2794

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 31, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, IN THE WINTER OF 1860.

"We will remember Your love more than wine."
Solomon's Song 1:4.

THE Hebrew word for, "love," here is in the plural—"We will remember Your loves." Think not, however, that the love of Jesus is divided, but know that it has different channels of manifestation. All the affections that Christ has, He bestows upon His Church and these are so varied that they may well be called, "loves," rather than, "love." The Septuagint translation is, "We will remember Your breasts." Bossuet, and many of the Romanist expositors who have brought much sanctity of thought and fervent appreciation of heart to bear upon this superlative Song, dilate very sweetly upon the word, "breasts," as it appears in the Latin Vulgate. I am disposed to be content with our own Version, with the alteration of one letter—"We will remember Your *loves* more than wine." By this expression we must understand, of course, all the love of Jesus, from the beginning even to the end, or, rather, to that eternity which has no end. We will remember those acts of love of which we have heard with our ears and our fathers have declared unto us. It has been told us by Inspired Prophets, and God has revealed it to us in His Word, by His Spirit, that Jesus Christ loved us from before the foundation of the world. We believe that His love is no passion of modern date—no mere spasm of pity. It is ancient as His Glory which He had with the Father before the world was—it is one of the things of eternity. This Divine Love is not a spring that welled up only a few days ago, but it is an everlasting fountain which has never ceased to flow!

We will remember, O Jesus, that love of Yours which was displayed in the council chamber of eternity, when You did, on our behalf, interpose as the Daysman and Mediator—when You did strike hands with Your Father and become our Surety and take us as Your betrothed! We will remember that love which moved You to undertake a work so burdensome to accomplish, an enterprise which none but Yourself could ever have achieved! We will remember the love which suggested the Sacrifice of Yourself. The love which, until the fullness of time, mused over that Sacrifice and longed for the hour of which, in the volume of the Book it was written of You, "Lo, I come." We will remember Your love, O Jesus, as it was manifested to us in Your holy life, from the manger of Bethlehem to

the garden of Gethsemane! We will track You from the cradle to the grave, for every word and every deed of Yours was love. You, wherever You did walk, did scatter loving kindnesses with both Your hands. As it is said of Your Father, "God is Love," so, surely, You are Love, O Jesus! The fullness of the Godhead dwells in You! The essence of love, nothing else but love, is Your Incarnate Person.

And especially, O Jesus, will we remember Your love to us upon the Cross! We will view You as You come from the garden of Your agony and from the hall of Your flagellation. We will gaze upon You with Your hands and Your feet nailed to the accursed tree. We will watch You when You could, if You had willed it, have saved Yourself, but when You did, nevertheless, give up Your strength and bow Yourself downward to the grave that You might lift us up to Heaven. We will remember Your love which You did manifest through Your poor, bleeding hands and feet and side. We will remember this love of Yours till it invigorates and cheers us "more than wine"—the love of which we have heard, which You have exercised since Your death—the love of Your Resurrection, the love which prompts You to continually intercede before Your Father's Throne, that burning lamp of Love which will never let You hold Your peace until Your chosen ones are all safely housed, Zion is glorified and the spiritual Jerusalem is settled on her everlasting foundations of light and love in Heaven! We will remember all Your love, from its beginning in the eternal past to the eternity that is to come—no, we will try to project our thoughts and imagination—and so to remember that as long as eternity shall continue, even forever and forevermore, so long shall Your love exist in all its Glory, undiminished in its luster or its force! "We will remember Your love more than wine.

Nor is this all the love we have to remember. Though we ought to recollect what we have heard and what we have been taught, I think the spouse means more than this. "We will remember Your loves"—not only what we have been told, but what we have *felt*. Come, dear Hearers, let each one of you speak for yourselves, or, rather, you think of this for yourselves and let me speak of it for you. I will remember Your love, O Jesus—Your love to me when I was a stranger, wandering far from God. The love which restrained me from committing deadly sin and withheld my hands from self-destruction! I will remember the love which tracked me in my course—

"When Satan's blind slave, I sported with death."

I will remember the love which held back the axe when Justice said, "Cut it down; why cumbers it the ground?" I will remember the love that took me into the wilderness and stripped me, there, of all my self-righteousness—and made me feel my weight of guilt and the burden of my iniquity. Specially will I remember the love which said to me, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." I cannot forget that matchless love which, in a moment, washed my sins away and made my spotted soul white as the driven snow! Can you forget, my Brothers and Sisters, that happiest of days when Jesus first whispered to you, "I am yours and you are Mine"? I can never forget the transporting hour when He spoke thus

to me! It is as fresh in my memory right now as if it had only happened this afternoon! I could sing of it if it were right to stop a sermon for a sonnet—I could sing of that love, passing all measure, which took my soul and washed it in the precious blood of Jesus and then clothed it in the spotless robe of His righteousness! O Love Divine, You excel all other loves, that You could deal with such a rebellious, traitorous worm and make that worm an heir of Heaven!

But we have more love than this to remember—all the love that we have felt since then. I will remember the valley of Baca and the Hill Mizar. Nor shall my soul forget those chambers of fellowship where You have unveiled Yourself to me. If Moses had his cleft in the rock where he could see the back parts of his God, we also have had our clefts in the rock where we have seen the full splendors of the Godhead in the Person of Christ! Did David remember the tracks of the wild goat where he was hunted on the mountains—the cave of Adullam, the land of Jordan and of the Hermonites? We, too, can remember spots equally dear to these in blessedness. "The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness I have drawn you." Christian, can you not recollect the sweet exchanges there have been between yourself and your Lord when you have left your griefs at His feet and left with a song? Can you not remember some happy seasons when you went to Him empty, and came away full? Is your heart heavy just now? It has not always been so. There have been times when, like David, you could dance before the Lord! Times of holy merriment when, like Miriam, you could strike your timbrel and say to those around you, "Sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously." There have been times when Jesus and you have not been strangers to one another, for He has linked His arms in yours and walked along with you! And there have been other times when your head has been upon His bosom and you could feel His heart beating with warm love to you.

Thus, then, in the summary of Christ's loves, which I will now humbly endeavor to pass in review, it will be necessary for me to mention not only the love we have heard about, but the love we have felt and enjoyed. Do not suppose, dear Brothers and Sisters, that I am able to refresh your memories upon this sacred subject. It is the Holy Spirit's work to assist you in that matter! But I do trust that the resolution contained in our text will be formed in the heart of everyone of you—"We will remember Your loves more than wine"—and that you will have the Grace to carry out that resolution.

I. Here then, Beloved, we have A RESOLUTION POSITIVELY EXPRESSED—"We *will* remember Your love."

Why does the spouse speak so positively? Because she is Inspired—she is not like Simon Peter when he said, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I." She is speaking the Truth of God, for she will not forget the love of her Lord. Why is that? For one very good reason—because she cannot. If the Church could forget Christ's love to her, she would do so. She is such a forgetful wife that all her Husband's affections would be lost upon her, were it possible. But that cannot be—there is something

about the love of Christ that makes it adhere to those upon whom it is bestowed—we cannot forget it. It enters into the heart like wine that seasons the cask, and the scent thereof abides. It pervades the soul. It permeates every faculty. It brings the secret thoughts into obedience to Christ. It flows through every vein of hope and fear, passion and desire. So the spouse could truthfully say to her Lord, "We will remember Your love." The virtue was not in her own constancy, but in the tenacity of His affection—therefore she could not help remembering it!

What is there, in the love of Christ, that will compel us to remember it? The things that we recollect best are of certain kinds.

Some that we remember best have been *sublime things*. When we have stood, for the first time, where we could see a lofty mountain whose snowy summit pierced the thick ebon clouds, we have said, "We shall never forget this sight." When Humboldt, the great traveler, had his first view of the vast prairies of North America, he declared that he could never forget the sensations of that moment. I can imagine how Dr. Livingstone, when he first came in sight of the magnificent falls which he discovered, might well say, "To my dying day, I shall hear the rushing of that tremendous stream of water." I can myself remember an unusually violent thunderstorm, when the lightning flew across the heavens, flash after flash, without a moment's pause, as though a thousand suns were dashing through the sky. I recollect the consternation of men and women when a neighboring house was struck by the lightning and burnt with a terrific blaze which could scarcely be seen by reason of the brightness of the lightning. My recollection of that terrible scene will never depart from me! The sublimity of what we have seen often causes us to remember it. So is it with the love of Christ. How it towers to Heaven! And mark how brightness succeeds brightness, how flash follows after flash of unspeakable love and full of glory! There is no pause, no interval of darkness or blackness, no chasm of forgetfulness. Its sublimity compels us to remember its manifestation.

Again, we are pretty sure to remember *unusual things*. If we were asked whether we remembered that the sun had risen, we might say, "It is not a matter of memory at all. I feel certain that it did, though I did not see it." But if we are asked if we ever saw an eclipse, "Oh, yes!" we reply, "we recollect that! We remember watching it and how disappointed we were because it was not as dark as we expected it to be." Many people do not notice the stars much, but who forgets a comet? Everybody recollects that phenomenon of Nature because it is unusual. When we see something strange, uncommon, out of the ordinary, the memory at once fixes upon it and holds it fast. So is it with the love of Christ. It is such an extraordinary thing, such a marvelous thing that the like was never known! Ransack history and you cannot find its parallel. There is but one love that is like it—that is the love of the Father to His only-begotten Son. Besides this, there is nothing to which we can compare the love of Christ to His people. That constellation of the Cross is the most marvelous that is to be seen in the spiritual sky! The eyes, once spellbound by its charms,

must retain its undying admiration because it is the greatest wonder of wonders and miracle of miracles which the universe ever saw!

Sometimes, too, things which are not important in themselves are fixed on the memory because of *certain circumstances* which happen in association with them. The country people often say, if you ask them whether they recollect such-and-such a year, "Ah, Master! It was the year of the hard frost, wasn't it?" Another time they will say, "Why, yes! That was the year when the blight fell upon our gardens and all our potatoes were of no use—and we were nearly starved that winter." Circumstances help to make us remember facts. If something particular in politics should happen on our birthday, or our wedding day, or on some other notable occasion, we would say, "Oh, yes! I remember that—it happened the day I was married, or the day So-and-So was buried." Now, we can never forget the love of Christ because the circumstances were so peculiar when, for the first time, we knew anything at all about it! We were plunged in sin and ruin! We were adrift on the great sea of sin! We had no hope, we were ready to sink and no shore was near—but Jesus came and saved us! We can never forget those circumstances—with some of us, they were truly awful, beyond all description. Therefore we cannot forget the time when Jesus' love first dawned upon our minds.

I think, my dear Friends, I might give you 20 reasons why it would be impossible for the children of God to forget the love of Christ to them, but above and beyond every other reason is this one, *Christ will not let His people forget His love*. If, at any time, He finds them forgetful, He will come to them and refresh their memories. If all the love they have ever enjoyed should be forgotten by them, He will give them some fresh manifestations of love. "Have you forgotten My Cross?" He asks, "then I will cause you to remember it afresh, for at My Table I will manifest Myself to you as I have not done of late. Do you forget what I did for you in the council chamber of eternity? Then I will remind you of it, for you still need a Counselor and I will come to your relief just when you are at your wits' end—and I will give you wisdom. Have you forgotten that I called you to Myself when you were a stranger? I will bring you back from your wanderings and then you will remember Me again." Mothers do not let their children forget them if they can help it. If the boy has gone to Australia and he does not write home, his mother writes to him, "Has my John forgotten his mother?" Then there comes back a sweet epistle which lets the mother know that the gentle hint she gave him was not lost. So is it with Christ—He often says to one of His forgetful children, "What? Is your heart cold to Him who loved you so much that He could not live in Heaven without you, but must come to earth, go out into the wilderness, up to the Cross and down to the grave in order to find you?" You can be sure that He will have our hearts! Prone to wander, He knows that they are, and we feel it ourselves, but He will have them. Oh, that He would drive the nail of the Cross right through your heart, that it might be forever fastened there! Painful might the process be—some sharp affliction might tear your flesh—yet, if that would bring you near

your Lord and keep you near Him, you might thank Him even for the affliction and love Him all the more because of it!

II. Now let us advance another step and look at THE COMPARATIVE RESOLUTION—"We will remember Your love *more than wine*."

Why is "wine" mentioned here? I take it to be used here as a figure. The fruit of the vine represents the chief of earthly luxuries. "I will remember Your love more than the choicest or most exhilarating comforts which this world can give me." We have many things which we might compare to wine, in the good and in the bad sense, too—good, because they cheer, comfort and invigorate—bad, because when we rely upon them, they intoxicate, they overthrow and cast down to the ground. We very readily remember the good things of earth for a season. When creature comforts abound with us and we have happy and merry days, we remember them. And when nights of darkness come upon us, we remember the days of our brightness and we talk of them. It is so with the widow bereaved of her husband—she remembers the days of her happiness, when the partner of her joys was with her. She recollects his affectionate words and his sweet deeds of love. In the case of the mother bereaved of her child, she recalls the love that child had to her and the solace it was to her when her little one slept on her bosom. Have you become poor? Then the "wine" that you remember is the wealth you once possessed—you remember how you had no need to tramp over weary miles and to shiver in the wintry cold. Now that your pain has come, you remember your former joy and it makes your present pain all the more painful. This, "wine," may be to a minister, the joy of being successful—and there may come to him days when his chapel will be half-empty and then he will look back, with regret, upon the joys he once possessed. The spouse says, "We will remember Your love more than all earthly comforts." She cannot help doing so. If she could, she would remember the *world* rather than Heaven! She would have a remembrance of creature comforts and she would be forgetful of her Lord.

The fact is, the impression which the love of Christ makes on the true Believer is far *greater and deeper* than the impression which is made by anything earthly. Mere mortal joys write their record on the sand and their memory is soon erased, but Christ's love is like an inscription cut deeply into marble—the remembrance of it is deeply engraved in our hearts. The joy of the creature is something like a lithograph cut lightly on the stone—when the stone is cleaned, the picture is gone. But the love of Christ is like the steel engraving—it is deeply cut and cannot be easily erased. Earthly joys tread with light feet and leave but a faint impression—but the love of Christ treads into the very core of our soul at every footstep and, therefore it is that we remember it better than we remember any earthly pleasure!

Earthly comforts, too, like wine, leave but a *mingled impression*. In the cup of joy there is a dash of sorrow. There is nothing we have here below which is not somewhat tainted with grief. Solomon has warned us against the sparkling wine—"Look not upon the wine when it is red, when it gives his color in the cup, when it moves itself aright. At the last

it bites like a serpent, and stings like an adder." Even friendship, the very cream of joy, trembles on the confines of disappointment, as it is written, "Cursed be the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm." But in Christ's love there is nothing for you to ever regret. When you have enjoyed it to the fullest, you cannot say that there has been any bitterness in it. When you have come forth from the secret chamber of communion with your Lord, you have realized the purity of His love—there has been nothing to qualify your enjoyment of it. When you have been to a party of your friends, you have said, "I have been very happy, *but*—I could not enjoy myself there six days in a week." But when you have been with Christ, you have felt that you could enjoy yourself in that way to all eternity! You could not have too much of such fellowship, for there was nothing in it to mar your happiness. True, there is the remembrance of your sin, but that is so sweetly covered by your Lord's forgiveness and graciousness that His love is, indeed, better than wine! It has had all the good effects of wine, but none of its ill results.

Equally true is it that the remembrance of earth's comforts, of which wine is the type, must be but *transient*. If the sinner could live many days and have much wealth, would he remember it when he entered the unseen world? Ah, he might remember it, but it would be with awful sighs and sobs! You know how Abraham spoke, across the great gulf, to the rich man in Hell, "Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted and you are tormented." But we can say of the love of Christ, that it is better than wine, for we shall rejoice to remember it in eternity—

"There, on a green and flowery mount,
Our weary souls shall sit
And with transporting joys recount."

What shall we recount? Dr. Watts says—

"The labors of our feet,"

but I do not think so. I believe we shall recount the labors of Him who lived and died for us! That is what we shall talk of in Heaven—I am sure that this is the theme of all the music and songs of Paradise—

"Jesus, the Lord, their harps employ,
Jesus, my Love, they sing!
Jesus, the life of all our joy
Sounds sweet from every string."

Do you not see, then, why this comparison is made in our text? We remember Christ's love more than the best earthly comforts because they make but a feeble impression, a mingled impression, a marred impression and their impression, at best, is but transient. But the love of Christ is remembered as something that is better than wine. I have to hurry over these different points, but if you enjoy hearing about this subject as much as I delight in preaching upon it, you would not mind listening to me all night long! And I should not mind preaching right through the night. Surely, this is a theme that sets one's tongue at a happy liberty. "My tongue is the pen of a ready writer" if I can but feel the love of Christ shed abroad in my heart!

III. Now, thirdly, I am to speak of THE PRACTICAL EFFECTS OF REMEMBERING CHRIST'S LOVE.

If we remember the love of Christ to us, the first practical effect will be that *we shall love Him*. Can I remember Your love to me, O my sweet Lord, and not love You in return? Surely, Dr. Watts was right when he wrote—

"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,
With all Your quickening powers!
Come, shed abroad a Savior's love,
And that shall kindle ours."

True is it, O Jesus, that there is no light of love in our hearts except the light of Your love! It is the holy fire from Your altar that must kindle the incense in the censer of our hearts. There is no living water to be drawn out of these dry wells! You, O Jesus, must supply them from the bubbling spring in Your own heart! When my heart is conscious of Your love, it loves You in return.

Another practical effect of remembering Christ's love will be *love to the brethren*. When we remember Christ's love as we ought, we shall not meet one of Christ's brethren without falling in love with him directly. Christ has some very poor brethren and some very unhandsome ones. David sent to enquire whether there were any left of the house of Saul to whom he might show kindness for Jonathan's sake. Ziba told him that Jonathan had a son named Mephibosheth who was lame in his feet. What did David do when he heard this? Did he say, "I will have nothing to do with him—I do not want a lame fellow stumbling about my palace"? Oh, no—he might be lame in his feet, but he was Jonathan's son—so David sent for him and said to him, "You shall eat bread at my table continually." Did you ever know one of Christ's beloved who was lame in his feet? There is a little lameness, somewhere or other, about all of them—and if we only love those saints who are very holy, it will seem as if we only loved them for their own sakes. But if we love Christ's deformed and crippled children, that looks like loving them for His sake! And, I think, if you could remember what a clumsy child you were, yourself, you would not look with such disdain upon any of God's other children!

Ministers have much to bear in connection with some of their people. One man's judgment is so keen that you are always afraid of saying something amiss in his presence. Another man's temper is so hot that you cannot meddle with him for fear you should provoke a quarrel. Another man is so worldly that although he has the Grace of God in his heart, it seems to be only like a spark in damp tinder. Christ has many very unseemly children—yet if we can but see that they are Christ's—if they have only a little likeness to Him, we love them directly for His sake and are willing to do what we can for them out of love to Him! The remembrance of the love of Christ to us will, I repeat, always kindle in us a love towards all the brethren!

The next effect will be, *holy practice*. When we remember the love of Christ to us, we shall hate sin. Feeling that He has bought us with His precious blood, we shall abhor the very name of iniquity. When Satan tempts us, we shall, each one, say, "Get you gone, for I will have nothing

to do with you—I remember Christ's love to me." Have you ever heard the story of the Indian woman who, when she was enticed by some great chief who wished to lead her astray, made to him this noble answer, "I know no one in the world to be beautiful or attractive but my husband"? So will the Believer say, when he is tempted, "I know of nothing that is good but Christ. I know of no one who is so fair as He is. So be gone, black Satan—my heart is given wholly to Christ and I will have nothing to do with you."

Another effect of remembering the love of Christ will be *repose of heart in time of trouble*. When we have, for a while, lost the light of God's Countenance. When we are like the Apostle in that great storm at sea and are in a place where two seas meet and our vessel is already broken by the violence of the waves. When darkness increases our fears, or daylight reveals fresh dangers, then is it especially sweet to remember the love of our Lord! In such a time as that, the tried Believer can say, "He did love me once and His love never changes. Though I cannot now see the light of His Countenance, I know that He is still the same as He always was. I remember the garden of delights where He revealed His love to me and the banqueting house where He gave me such choice fare—and I feel persuaded that He has not forgotten His poor spouse, but that He will come to her, again, and once more lift her out of the mire, set her feet upon a rock, put a new song into her mouth and establish her goings."

A constant remembrance of Christ's love to us will make us always cheerful, dutiful, holy! Dear Lord, grant us this gift, for if You will enable us to remember Your love more than wine, You will give us all good things in one! Let Your good Spirit but keep us up to this good resolution and we shall be both holy and happy, honoring You and rejoicing in You!

IV. Lastly, I would put before you A FEW PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS AS TO PRESERVING A DEEPER AND MORE SINCERE REMEMBRANCE OF CHRIST'S LOVE.

The old Puritan divines frequently compared their hearers to the Egyptian dog that ran to the Nile and drank and then ran away. They came up to the meeting house and heard the minister, took a little sip of the Gospel, which sufficed them, and then they were off! One preacher said that he wished they were like the fishes—not come and lap at the stream, as the dog did, but swim in it and live in it! There are too many, in this age, who are content with hearing a little of Christ's love—a sip by the way is all that they seem to need. But it would be far better if you could come up to Rutherford's ideal—"I would have my soul sunk over its masthead in a sea of love to Christ. I would be sunk 50 fathoms deep in the mighty shoreless ocean of His love so that there might be nothing left of me, and that I might be swallowed up in love to Christ—and in Christ's love to me."

I expect, dear Brothers and Sisters, that your complaint is that you cannot remember good things as you would. I know very well how you feel. You hear a sermon and become, for a while, absorbed in holy meditation—but you have to return to your shop early tomorrow morning and you only left it as late as twelve o'clock on Saturday night. There are six

days for the world and only one for Heaven! It is no wonder that you find the sermon so difficult to remember. You remind me of a person going out into a garden on a dark night, carrying a lighted candle. If the wind should blow, there is such a careful shielding of the light with the hand, lest it should be blown out. In like manner, it is but a feeble light that you bear away from the public ministry and there are ten thousand winds blowing around you, and trying to put it out! You must, indeed, be careful to keep it alight all the week in your memory. Let me give you a little practical advice as to how you may keep constantly in your mind a remembrance of Jesus Christ's love.

One of the first things I would recommend to you is *frequent meditation*. See if you cannot more often get a quarter of an hour all alone, that you may sit down and turn over and over again the love of Christ to you. Remember that souls grow more by meditation than by anything else. The cattle go round the fields and eat the grass—that is like hearing the Word. But, afterwards, they lie down in a quiet corner and chew the cud—that is like meditating upon what we have heard. Get a quarter of an hour, if you can, to masticate and digest the Word of God. "A quarter of an hour!" says someone, "why, I could not get five minutes!" I would not be hard with you, dear Brother, but I think you could. Days can sometimes be pulled out either at one end or at the other. If you cannot lengthen the day at the night end, cannot you pull it out at the morning end? Is there not a possibility of a little saving of time at some hour during the day? You will do none the less work for allowing time for meditation and prayer. Our old proverb says, "Prayer and provender hinder no man's journey," and I believe that prayer and meditation hinder no man's work! Try to get a little time to think about your soul. What? So much time to be occupied with this dusty, sinful world, and so little time to be devoted to that which relates to Heaven? So much time to be employed concerning meat, drink and clothes, and so little time to be given to thoughts of our precious Savior and all His loveliness? Get a little time alone, Beloved, for that will help to keep you right. You would not forget your Master's love nearly as much as you do if you would secure more time for meditation upon it.

Another means of remembering Christ's love is this. *Take care that you are not content with what you knew of Christ's love yesterday*. You need to know a little more about it today and you ought to know still more about it tomorrow. Some Christians do not commune with their Lord nearly as often as they ought. I wonder how they manage to live on in such a fashion. They get a little manna once a month and they try to live on that until another month comes round. They meet with their Savior, perhaps, at the Communion Table—and not always then—and they are content to live from day to day without having fellowship with Him. Be not you one of that order of Christians! Seek for daily—no, more than that—*constant* communion with the Lord Jesus Christ! You are to pray for daily bread—then, surely, He who bade you do that must mean that you should seek to be fed daily with Himself, who is the Bread of Heaven! I do not like to hear people talk about what they knew of Jesus five or six

years ago unless they can also tell something of what they know of Him now! What would you think of a wife who said, "My husband spoke kindly to me some years ago and I saw him five years ago, but I have not seen him since"? You would say, "How can the woman live, if she is a loving wife, without seeing her husband? Is he in the same house with her and yet has he not spoken to her all that while?"

The Lord Jesus is always near to you and do you mean to say that you can live without fellowship with Him? Yes, you can, for some of you do! But I pray you not to live so any longer, for it is a poor, starving way of dragging on a miserable existence! You have just enough religion to make you wretched! You have not enough to make you happy—get a great deal more of it! Drink deeply at the heavenly spring of fellowship. If you learn a little more about Christ every day, you will not be likely to forget what you already know of Him.

Then, again, as another way of keeping in your heart what you do know—*take care, when you have a sense of Christ's love, that you let it go down deeply*. If there were a nail so placed that it would slacken its hold a little every day for six days—if I had the opportunity of driving it in the first day—I would try to drive it in right up to the head and to clinch it. So, if you have not much time for fellowship and communion with Christ—if you have only a short season for meditation, try to drive the nail well home. Do not be content with merely *thinking* about Christ—seek to *see* Him before your eyes as manifestly crucified. See Him as He groans in the Garden and do not be content unless you can groan with Him. See Him as He hangs upon the Cross and do not rest satisfied until you can feel that you are crucified with Him. Realize your fellowship with Him as He rises from the tomb, for this will help very much to keep you right.

I have heard the story of a man who was passing by a house where a poor idiot lad, with a piece of sandpaper, was scouring away at a brass plate. The man asked what he was doing and he replied, "I am trying to scour the name out." "Ah," said the other, "You may scour away as long as you like, but you will never be able to do that." And so, I think I see the devil scouring away at some of you, trying to get the name of Jesus out of your heart. Scour away, Satan, if you like, but you will never get it out, for it is too deeply cut! If Christ's name is engraved upon your heart, Satan may try to get it out, but he will never succeed in doing so! It shall never be obliterated, but shall shine all the more brightly for his attempts to remove it!

Let me add one more direction. When any of you meet together, it is always a good thing to *make Christ the theme of your conversation*. Oh, what a deal of idle gossip there is, even on Sundays! Many people do not go out on Sunday afternoon, so they must talk about something. They do not like to talk about their trade— they fancy that would be too secular. They do not like to talk about strictly sacred things—they think that might appear hypocritical. So they begin, "Have you ever heard So-and-So preach?" "Yes, I did once." "Did you like him?" So, from one, they go on to others—and ministers and their sermons become the bones that they pick on Sunday afternoons! They feel that they must have some

theme for their conversation not quite sacred, nor wholly secular. I would advise you to talk more about the Lord Jesus Christ than you have been—you will be less likely to forget His love if you are often talking of Him. Let the music of His name ring in your ears all the day long—and if you would have it ring in your ears, it must ring from your tongue! Whenever you have the opportunity, tell out the marvelous story of His great love to you and so will your own memory be refreshed and others, listening to your testimony, will also get a large and, it may be, an everlasting blessing!

May God now grant to you, my dear Hearers, that you may retain a sense of Christ's love to you if you have ever enjoyed it! If you never have, may God now give it to you! If you have never come to Christ, come to Him now! Remember that Jesus loves sinners. Those who are now farthest from Him, when they once return to Him, shall know that He loves them. If you, "take with you words," and come to Him, groaning and sighing, He will not cast you out. He stands now with open arms and freely invites you! Come to Him, I beseech you. As His ambassador, I entreat you to come. If you do so, He will fold you to His bosom. All that the heirs of Heaven can have, you shall have! All that the glorified saints are now enjoying shall yet be your privilege, also! You shall one day walk with Christ in white, and see His face, and be with Him in Paradise and be blessed throughout eternity! May God grant us His Grace, now, that our text may become the cheerful sonnet of our experience—"We will remember Your love more than wine."

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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

THE DOUBLE DRAWING NEAR
NO. 2795

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 22, 1878.

"Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you."
James 4:8.

As soon as man had disobeyed God, he ran away from Him. Our first parents hid themselves among the trees of the Garden when they heard the voice of the Lord God calling them. They did not come to Him at once, confess the wrong which they had committed and ask for mercy. The natural effect of their sin was to harden their hearts and not to lead them penitently to the great Father—and it led them impertinently to run away from Him. So, when the Lord came walking in the Garden, in the cool of the day, Adam did not seek Him, to plead for mercy from Him, but the first words had to come from God—"the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where are you?" It was God's voice speaking in mercy to His wandering child.

Our blessed Savior has set forth the result of sin in His parable of the lost sheep which has strayed from the fold and which, if left to itself, continues to go further and yet further away. We have, all of us, gone astray, as Dr. Watts says—

"Each wandering in a different way,
But all the downward road."

Our Lord Jesus has set forth this same Truth in that other parable in which He describes the prodigal son as gathering all together and taking his journey into a far country, away from his father. He could not live as he wished in his father's house. He could not, there, waste his substance with riotous living. His father's eyes would have been a check upon him at home, so, the only way for him to obtain that foolish and ruinous liberty for which he sought was to get as far off as he could from his father. Alas, this is the condition of every unregenerate sinner—he has gone away from God and he tries continually to get further and further away from God. Why do men neglect to keep holy the Sabbath, unless it is that they do not want to think of God? Why do they put religious books on one side? Why do they leave their Bibles unread but because God's name, God's Person, God's Law, God's Gospel—all about God—has become distasteful to them? Like the fool of whom David tells us, they say in their hearts, "No God!" They do not want Him and if there could be an official announcement made that there is no God, they would welcome it! God is not in all their thoughts, or if He is there at all, it is as an ene-

my, or as One for whom they have no care, One whom they are not willing to have to reign over them. O heart of man, you have, indeed, gone astray from your God when the distance at which you are from Him is loved by you and you even wish, in your unkindness and your folly, to make that distance greater! If you wish to return, you are already halfway back, but, alas, you do not wish to return! That thought comes not to you and, if you could, you would take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the earth in the hope that there you could be hidden from the eyes and the Presence of God!

Knowing this to be true, I am glad to be able to give the message of my text to those who are far off from God because the only cure for such sinful wandering is for the sinner to come back to God. While the prodigal was in the far country, he could not be set right. The first step towards getting back into his right position was his resolve, "I will arise and go to my father." If he could have filled his belly with husks or anything else—if he could have had his rags exchanged for robes—if he could have been made a nobleman in that far-off land, it would have been a mischief rather than a benefit to him, for the radical cure, in his case, must lie in his saying, "Father, I have sinned," and in receiving his father's kiss of forgiveness and all the tokens of restoration to his father's favor. It must be the same with any of you who are far off from God—if you would be right with Him, you must come back to Him.

Poor creatures, how can you be right till you love your Creator? Poor sheep, how can you be right till you are back under the care of the Good Shepherd? O poor immortal, how can you hope for an eternity of blessedness till the Immortal God is reconciled to you and you are reconciled to Him? A creature remaining at enmity against God must expect to dwell forever with the devils in Hell! Where can it dwell but where other rebels are confined in chains? You must come back to your God, Man, if you would have eternal bliss, for if you could have one of the harps of Heaven, it would yield no music to you till you had yielded yourself into submission to the God of Heaven! If you would have the street of gold, it would not enrich you until you had the God of Heaven to be your Friend! So I say again that the only remedy for sin—the only radical efficient cure for the great evil of iniquity—is for the sinner to come back to God! I want to impress this one point upon you and I pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will work effectually upon some who are here and draw them back to God while, in His name, I deliver this gracious message to them, "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you."

First, I shall ask you to *consider this message with hope*. When we have done that, we shall, secondly, *learn how to put it into practice.* And then, thirdly, we shall *think of how many ways it will help us if we do draw near to God.*

I. First, then, let us CONSIDER THIS MESSAGE WITH HOPE—"Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you."

We may consider it with hope, because, first, *here is a sincere call to us to come back to God*. When we preach from such a text as this, "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you," somebody is sure to say, "But is not that the wrong order? Is it not a fact that God draws near to

us and *then* we draw near to Him?" Yes, that is the right order and our text is in the right order, too, because there is understood here something which is manifest to every careful reader and which shows that the Grace of God is implied at the back of it all. The text itself is a call from God and no sinner ever comes back to the Lord until the Lord calls him back. But in this text He does call him—by the mouth of the Apostle, He says, "Draw near to God" and He bids us repeat this message in His name. To those who are the furthest off and who have wandered the greatest distance from Him, God says, "Draw near to Me." If you had offended some friend and wished to make up, you would feel that it was an easy matter if your friend, himself, invited you to come—if he took the initiative and asked you to come to him. Then, I think, you would feel great gratitude to him and say, "He has taken the first step towards our reconciliation. Now I will willingly and cheerfully take the second." It is thus that the Lord sends you this message to induce you to return to Him, "Draw near to God."

"But may I come to Him?" someone asks. May you do what He bids you do? Of course you may! The text is not merely an invitation, it is a *command*! Obey it, I beseech you! You must have liberty to obey when God commands. You need not entertain any fear that you will be an intruder when, in the exercise of His gracious Sovereignty, He says to you, "Come, come, come!" Surely, among those here who are still unconverted, there must be some who will say to Him, "O Lord, You have said to us, Seek you My face, and our heart says to you, 'Your face, Lord, will we seek."

I have next to remind you that in addition to a sincere call from God, *there is also an open road to Him*. God says to you, "Draw near to Me," but He would not bid you come to Him if there were no road by which you could come. Once there was a great gulf fixed between you and God. Your sin had dug a fathomless gulf which you could never have bridged—but Jesus bridged the awful chasm by throwing His Cross across it and now there is a plain and easy way by which the sinner may come back to God. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and has committed unto us the word of reconciliation."

When the Babe was born at Bethlehem, a multitude of the heavenly host praised God and said, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." And when that Babe, after a life of perfect obedience to God's Law, offered up Himself on Calvary's Cross, He said, "It is finished"—and then every mountain was laid low and every valley was filled up that there might be a magnificent causeway over which fallen and far-off sinners might draw near to God! The making of that way cost the Savior His life, but He did make it. His heart bled out its life that He might make plain that way of expiation by which, alone, a sinner can come near to God. The road is made and there is now nothing in the way—no Divine anger, no righteous wrath, no avenging Law—to prevent your coming, O you who desire to return to your God! Christ has made the way and cleared it and "no lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed

shall walk there." So, draw near, for the road is open! Draw near, "without money, and without price," for the road is free to all who believe in Jesus! Christ has completed it. He has not merely made it half way, but He has finished it all the way and He, Himself, has said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Oh, then, with what force does the command come, "Draw near to God," when there is an open road by which you may come to Him!

Consider the invitation of the text with great hopefulness, next, *because there is an encouraging promise appended to it*. You fear that if you were to try to get to God, you could not—and that if you did reach Him, He is so pure and holy that He must spurn you because of your impurity—and drive you from His Presence. But read the whole of the text—"Draw near to God, *and He will draw near to you*." There is nothing in it about casting out, or spurning, or rejecting! The promise is emphatic, "He will draw near to you." I have already referred to the parable of the prodigal son. I will refer to it again by reminding you that, "when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." It is, after all, but little of the way that the sinner has to go in returning to his God. The greater part—no, I might say, all the way—God comes to the sinner who desires to return to Him! Only turn your face God-ward and your God is at once with you!

"Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." That is the Inspired declaration! Do you believe it? Oh, I think if you do, you will at once draw near to Him! Satan will perhaps whisper, "He does not mean *you*." But, indeed, He means any soul that comes to Him, for His promise is, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." And the "*him* that comes" means any sinner, all the world over, who trusts in Jesus! Yes, you shall be received graciously and loved freely if you will but come back to your God through Jesus Christ His dear Son. "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." Our text ought to be like a hand to beckon you and to draw you back to your God—and you ought to run to Him as swiftly as the doves fly to their windows! You have seen the pigeons hastening home to their dove-cotes as if anxious to reach their nests—may the gracious Spirit thus move you to flee away to your resting place in the loving heart of your Lord!

There is one more thing that I want to say before I leave this first point in which I am urging you to a hopeful consideration of the text, and that is, draw near to God, O dear trembling ones, *because He will help you to come to Him*. Before our Lord Jesus Christ went up on high, He promised that the Holy Spirit would be given to His Church. And He had not long sat upon His Throne before the Spirit descended—and that Spirit has never gone away, but He is still here to help our infirmities, to guide us in prayer, to convince us of sin, to reveal Christ to us, to create faith in us and to strengthen that faith while it is yet weak! If you cannot come to God by yourself, here is One for you to lean upon, who will help you to come! If you feel as if you could not move a foot, here is a sweet prayer for you to present to God, "Draw me, we will run after You," and He will draw you! I hope He is drawing some of you now. Do you feel as if you wish you could come to Him? I think that wish is a proof of His gentle

drawing. Are you saying to yourself, "I will think this matter over. I will be careless no longer"? He is, as it were, putting out His finger to guide you, to help you, as a nurse does to a little child whose tottering footsteps can scarcely avoid a fall! Only be you willing to be helped and He will help you! Yield yourself up to Him and He will bless you. Be like the mariners who spread the ship's sails, after which they can do no more—but when the sails are spread, the wind fills them and the vessel is driven onward to its desired haven. Be you like the needle of the mariner's compass and the Spirit of God will be like the magnet to attract you. Be you willing to be cleansed from all defilement and He will say to you, "Be you clean," and so you shall be, for, where the will has yielded itself to Him, the citadel of the town of Mansoul is won and Prince Immanuel takes the entire possession and control of it!

Listen to me, for a moment or two, while I put together these things of which I have been speaking. God says, "Draw near." There is His call—will you disobey it? It is implied, in that call, that He has made a way for you to come to Him—will you not avail yourself of it? He has added to His call an encouraging promise that you shall be welcomed if you come to Him—will you suffer that promise to be made known to you, and yet not obtain the blessing that is promised? Then, beside all this, there is the Holy Spirit waiting to be gracious—will you resist the Spirit, as so many have done who have perished in their sin? I can do no more than tell you these things with affectionate earnestness, but, dear Hearers who are far off from God, the day will come when, however poorly I have told you these things, if you despise or neglect them, you will have to answer, not to me, but to Him who sent me! Therefore, consider, I pray you, what answer you will give to Him—to the question whether you will come to Him or not—while He says to you, "Draw near to Me, and I will draw near to you."

II. The second part of our subject is very practical. It is this—LET US LEARN HOW TO DRAW NEAR TO GOD.

"How can a man draw near to God?" someone asks. Well, we must begin thus. Draw near to Him *by thinking of Him*. God is not fixed in any one place so that we need to go on a pilgrimage in order to reach Him. "God is a Spirit," and the way to draw near to a spirit is, first of all, to think of Him in our own spirit. I shall begin to have hope of any man's salvation when he begins to seriously think about God and about his own relationship to God. Will you do so, dear Hearer? Take time to think about your Creator, your Preserver, your Provider, your Guardian, your Friend, your Judge, your Savior. To help you to think of Him, read His Word, for Scripture will both give you the best subject for thought and assist you to understand and know more of God.

Seek, also, *to hear the Gospel.* If you know anyone who speaks to your heart about God, Christ and the Gospel, give him the opportunity of speaking to you as often as it is possible. Also try to talk with some of God's friends—with men who pray to Him, who have communion with Him—and get as far away as you can from those who deny Him and blaspheme Him. In this way, I believe that it will not be long before He will begin to show Himself to you. You will be astonished to find how He

is everywhere present around you—in every flower, in every blade of grass, in every drop of dew you will see signs of His Presence. If you are willing to find Him, you will see traces of His skill and of His wisdom there. If you look at the workings of His Providence, expecting to find Him, you will not look long before you do find Him, for, as we have often been reminded, He who watches Providence will never be without a Providence to watch. And when you begin to say, "Wherever I go, I feel that God surrounds me. He is within me and I am in Him."—As such thoughts as those possess you, I shall begin to have bright hopes concerning you!

Draw near to God, next, *by trusting Him*. Some of you will not be able to do that immediately—you will have to think a little about Him first. And when you have thought about Him and, especially when you have received what this Book tells you about Him, then draw near to Him by trusting Him! If you trust God, He will not deceive you. If you believe in Him that He will pardon your sin, He will pardon it. His rule still is, "According to your faith, be it done unto you." Whatever you can believe concerning God, that is in accordance with what He has revealed in His Word and that is for His Glory, you shall find that He will do. He has been pleased to give His dear Son to be the Redeemer of men and He tells us that all those who trust in Him have everlasting life. Now draw near to Him by saying, "If these things are true, I will trust myself upon them. As God has revealed them, they are true and I will just cast myself upon Him. Jesus Christ has shed His precious blood to put away sin and He promises to forgive all who confess their sin and trust Him. I will confess my sin and trust Him to forgive me." One is getting very near to God when he does that, so I bid you, in that sense, draw near to God by trusting Him. And if you do, He will draw near to you by forgiving you. He will accept your trust and He will welcome you. He will be as good to you as your faith, and better still.

Next, draw near to God *by repentance*. You have done wrong. Do not stay away from Him and so do more wrong. Do not try to hide your sin, or to make up a righteousness of your own, but go to God and tell Him that you have done wrong and plead for His forgiveness for Christ's sake. Tell Him that you have a tendency to do wrong and ask Him to change your heart. Tell Him that you seem to be wrong altogether and beg Him to make you "a new creature in Christ Jesus." Draw near to Him in a penitential spirit! It is your sense of sin that keeps you back from Him, but, rightly considered, that sense of sin should drive you to Him rather than restrain you from going to Him! What would a man do, if he has offended another, but try to make matters right between them? To my mind it is a beautiful thing to clear up difficulties and to settle disagreements—but it is the sweetest thing of all to get right with God—to tell Him that you have been all wrong, to plead the merit of His dear Son's obedience and Sacrifice, and to ask Him to set you right both as to the past and as to the future, too! Draw near to God in that way, by repentance.

Then draw near to Him *in prayer*. Did I hear you say, "I do pray"? Yes, but do you *really* pray? That is the question! You may have said certain words, morning and night, for many years, yet you may never once have

prayed. Do you know that prayer is the soul speaking to God? It is not the act of repeating something that you have learned, or heard, or read. The mere utterance of any particular form of words is nothing. You might as well set up one of the prayer windmills, at which so many have smiled, as expect to pray by the mere repetition of good words! No, no—speak to God! Any true speech, straight from the heart, is accepted by God. Mr. Rowland Hill stayed one night at an inn and he told the landlord that he must have family prayer there. "But, Sir," said the man, "we never had such a thing in our lives." "Then," said Mr. Hill, "order out my horses, for I will not stay in any house where I cannot get the people together to pray." "We shall all come in, Sir," said the landlord, hardly realizing the preacher's purpose. Then the Bible was read and Mr. Hill said, "Now, Sir, you pray. Every master should pray in his own house." "But I cannot pray," he said, "I wish I could." "Tell the Lord that," said Mr. Hill, and the man said, "Lord, I cannot pray. I wish I could." Then Mr. Hill said, "You have begun to pray already, so I will go on for you. Only tell the Lord, from your heart, anything that is true about yourself and you have begun praying."

I pray you, dear Friends, to draw near to God in prayer! Make it your habit to ask of Him what you really need and He will draw near to you and you will get what you have asked of Him. You will be surprised to find what gracious answers you will receive to your supplications, for I have noticed that if the Lord delays His answers to the prayers of His saints when they grow strong, He generally hears them very quickly, indeed, when they first begin to pray. I have often known the answer come while they have yet been speaking. Try it, dear Friend! In your own case draw near to God in prayer and see what answers He will give you! How I wish that those who doubt the existence of God had ever tried to speak to Him! If they once came into familiar acquaintance with Him from day to day, doubts of His existence would be no more possible to them than doubts of their own existence, for they would say, "We have spoken to Him and He has heard us, and given us the desire of our heart." Draw near to God in prayer, and He will draw near to you.

Then, dear Friend, try to draw near to God every day *by laying all your affairs before Him and yielding up all your plans to His will.* Begin the day by asking Him to be with You and to glorify Himself in you. Ask Him to stay near you and to let you feel His Presence and you will have truly blessed times if you draw near to God in that way.

Sometimes, you will most appropriately draw near to God by praise—with sweet songs in your mouth and thankfulness in your heart. You will feel it to be indeed a—

"Happy day, happy day,"

when you are thus brought near to God. You will do well to keep on at that praise till there will come a day—(you need not mind how soon it comes) when the Lord will say to you, in another sense, "Draw near to Me"—and you will go up to your chamber and gather up your feet in bed and He will draw near to you with such a glorious vision of His Presence that before you are ever aware, you will find yourself at His right hand—your poor mortal body left behind to wait a little while for the resurrec-

tion—but you, yourself, very near to Him in Heaven! Then, before long, there will sound out that blast of the archangel's trumpet that shall wake even your body from its slumber among the dust into which it had moldered—and it shall rise again and then there shall come One whom you have known in this life, and known still better in Heaven, who will say to you and to all the redeemed, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Then your body, soul and spirit shall draw near to Him as He draws near to you and so shall you be "forever with the Lord!" That is what will come of your drawing near to God—it will end in your *being with Him* where He is, that you may behold His Glory forever and forevermore! And therefore do I feel a deep stirring within my soul that every far-off sinner should hear this gracious invitation and obey it at once—"Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you."

III. Now I shall conclude by just a few words upon THE PRACTICAL EFFECT WHICH THIS DRAWING NEAR TO GOD WILL HAVE UPON OUR LIVES.

Well, now, if we draw near to God, it will have an effect upon our common, everyday life. How? Why, first, if you will follow the run of the chapter, you will see that drawing near to God *will help us to resist the devil*. The injunction, and promise, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you," are immediately followed by the words of our text, "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." The devil is not quite everywhere, but it is difficult to tell where he is not to be found. He, and the powers of darkness under his control, tempt us in all sorts of ways and all manner of places. And if any one of us would be so armed as to be able to resist the great adversary of souls, the very best thing we can do is to draw near to God! The sheep is never so safe as when it is close to the shepherd. And the prodigal son is never so safe and happy as when he is sitting at his father's table and feasting on the good things provided by his father's love. Draw near to God and you will be able to resist the tempter and drive him away from you!

In the next place, drawing near to God *will help you to become pure*. Read the whole verse from which our text is taken—"Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded." You do wish to be chaste, do you not? You wish to be sober. You wish to be honest. You wish to be pure in speech and pure in action, do you not? Well, nothing purifies us like getting near to God in Christ! There is cleansing by water as well as by blood—the blood that washes away the *guilt* of sin is accompanied by a cleansing flood that takes away the *power* of sin—so that hands are cleansed and hearts are purified when we draw near to God.

Further, drawing near to God will help us to sorrow for sin, for the next verse to our text says, "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep." "Oh," says some thoughtless person, "I do not want to be helped to sorrow for sin." And yet—and yet—and yet, if you did but know it, one of the sweetest things in all the world is godly sorrow for sin! Often do I quote to myself that verse—

"Lord, let me weep for nothing but sin,

And after none but Thee!
And then I would—oh, that I might!—
A constant weeper be!"

"It is a bitter sweet," say some, but I say that it is a sweet bitter and that the sweetness predominates—the sweetness of so feeling the evil of sin as to loathe and shun it! It is a miserable state of things to have a hard heart. Even a hard hand may be a burden. It happened to a poor blind woman, who read with her fingers, that, after a while, they lost the delicacy of touch so that she could not distinguish the letters. It was a great grief to her, but, putting up to her lips the precious Bible that she had been accustomed to read, she found that she could read with her lips. She was very glad to have tenderness somewhere. A tender heart is necessary to the reading of the mind of God, so always try to keep your heart tender. A hard heart, or a stony heart, is an awful curse. When you feel your heart beginning to ossify or to petrify, pray God to plunge it in a bath of the Redeemer's blood to make it soft again! The Lord grant that we may so draw near to Him that our heart may be kept soft, for hardness of heart can never come to the man who is kept near to God.

If you draw near to God, dear Friends, *it will also help you to think well of other people*. "Do not speak evil of one another," says the Apostle in the 11th verse. When you know that the great Judge of all, Himself, is near, you will not be so quick as you sometimes are to take His work out of His hands, but you will let *Him* judge. I am sure that the man who lives near to God gets to have a kindly feeling towards others. If ever you find a person saying that there is no life in the Church and finding fault with everybody, you may be sure that that man has not seen Jesus Christ of late, for Jesus Christ speaks not so. He says of His people all He can that is good. Surely, if Christ loves His Church, you ought not to find so much fault with it. "Do not speak evil of one another," Brothers and Sisters, else it will prove that you have not been anywhere near your Master of late!

And, last of all, if we live near to God, *it will help us to think of eternal things*. The Apostle warns us not to say, "We will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain," and all that kind of talk. He who speaks like that has not seen God of late, for he who is much with God thinks of eternal things and he knows how near they are. And he says to himself, "I shall soon be gone. This world is not my rest—there is nothing here that is substantial and abiding." So he is waiting to hear the trumpet sound, "Boot and saddle! Up and away!" and he stands ready, at his Captain's call, to be gone to another and a better world! If you dwell near to God, you will not be afraid of dying—you will rather dread to remain here than to be taken away! Remember, this is your place of exile, and your state of probation. O Lord, bring us near to You! Really, Brothers and Sisters, I do not know anything that can do us so much good in our daily life as walking with God. If you live near to God, the family worries and troubles will not vex your spirit as they now do. You will live above them and the outside world, with all its fault-finding, its anxieties and its ups and downs will seem very small and insignificant to you when you dwell on high and your place of defense is the muni-

tions of rocks. Some of us know what it is not to care even a snap of the fingers when the world seems enraged against us—if we can but get away into the secret chamber of communion where God is pleased to manifest Himself to us.

If you live down in the marshes, you will get the chills and fever. But if you live up on the mountaintop, you will rejoice in the sun's rays before your fellow creatures see them and you will bask in them long after those below have lost sight of them! You will also find the air up there to be fresh and bracing and, among the eagles, you will grow like an eagle, yourself, for you will mount up with wings as eagles, till, one of these days, you will mount so high that you will not come down again, for you will have gone to dwell forever near your Lord!

May the Lord bless you, Beloved, with all that this drawing near to Him is capable of giving to you, for His dear name and mercy's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JAMES 4.

Verse 1. *Where do wars and fights come from among you?* Whether between nations, or parties or individuals—if there are wars and fights, where do they come from?

1. *Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?* Do they not arise from one desiring something, and another desiring the same thing? Is there not a competition or emulation of an evil kind in which each one prefers himself and seeks not the good of his neighbor?

2. *You lust, and have not: you kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: you fight and war, yet you have not.* This is nature's way of trying to get by contention what it desires to possess—fighting, warring and killing—yet the result of all this is nil. After all is done, "yet you have not." There is a simpler and a surer way which men forget—they leave that Divine path untrod—"You have not,"

2. *Because you ask not.* With all your efforts you do not succeed because you omit to pray to God! Prayer would have brought you every blessing that you need, but, instead of going to God and asking at His hands, you rush upon your neighbor and seek to take what you desire as spoil from him. Perhaps some say, "But we do ask." "Well, then," says the Apostle—

3. *You ask, and receive not because you ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts.* The lusts of the flesh come in and put us upon the wrong track. Or if we take the right road, yet, if the lusts are there, God will not bless us because, in doing so, He would be helping us to gratify our lusts.

4. *You adulterers and adulteresses, know you not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?* The Apostle uses this strong language not concerning the actual sin of adultery as the term is commonly understood, but in relation to our not loving God with true chastity of heart, but lusting after something else. This is the very essence of *spiritual* adultery.

We ought to give God the whole affection of our being, but, instead of doing so, we allow at least some of it to wander to other objects and, therefore, we are called, by the Holy Spirit Himself, "adulterers and adulteresses." These may seem to be hard words, but they are true ones. May they bring us to our spiritual senses and cause us to love our God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength!

4. *Whoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God.* In one sense, Christians are the greatest friends of the world, for they desire the good of all men and seek their salvation. But, in another sense, viewing the world as a great conglomerate of evil, we are no friends of the world. There is a certain form of theology, popular nowadays, which teaches us that we ought to remove the line of demarcation between the Church and the world. This kind of teaching may be *called* theology, but it comes not of God—it is a gross lie which we ought to abhor in the very depth of our spirit!

5, 6. *Do you think that the Scripture says in vain, The Spirit that dwells in us yearns jealously? But He gives more Grace.* There is a spirit, resident in the *natural* man, the human nature of man, which is always inclined toward hate and envy, always wanting to get something from other men and always grieved if other men seem to be or to have more than the person himself has. How is this spirit to be met? This verse supplies the answer, "He gives more Grace." "More Grace"—this is the great remedy for hate and envy! "More Grace"—this is the balm for sorrow. "More Grace"—this is our greatest help out of all difficulties. "More Grace"—this is the universal recipe for all that we need—"He gives more Grace."

6, 7. *Therefore, He says, God resists the proud, but gives Grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God.* Lay aside that fighting spirit—that effort to pull others down so as to raise yourself up—and bow before God! Yield yourself wholly to His blessed will. This is the way of peace and the way of joy, too!

7. *Resist the devil.* Who will seek to stir you up to rebellion! Give no place to him. "Resist the devil."

7, 8. *And he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.* Hear this command and practice it. Get near to God in Christ Jesus and you shall soon find Him come to your help in every hour of need.

8. *Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.* For, if you are double-minded, your hands and your hearts must both be cleansed. The Apostle does not say, "Concentrate your thoughts," but he does say, "Cleanse your hearts," for, to have two objectives in life is a kind of spiritual adultery from which we need to be purged, so the command is, "Purify your hearts, you double-minded."

9. *Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.* If the previous verses have rightly accused you of sin, confess your guilt with shame and sorrow—and so come to Christ imploring pardon.

10. *Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up.* If you exalt yourself, He will pull you down. If you lie down in the dust before Him, He will lift you up. It is according to God's usual way of act-

ing to practice these reversals. Mary truly sang, "He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away empty."

11. *Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He that speaks evil of his brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the Law and judges the Law: but if you judge the Law, you are not a doer of the Law, but a judge.* If you cease to think of that which is evil, you will also cease to speak evil. If I speak evil of my brother, I have condemned the Law which bids me love him as I love myself. I have practically said that it is an absurd Law and an unrighteous Law—and this is a great evil in God's sight.

12-15. *There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who are you that judges another? Come now, you who say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas you do not know not what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away. For that you ought to say, If the Lord wills, we shall live, and do this, or that.* We are all too apt to say what we will do and where we will go, forgetting to add, "If the Lord wills, we shall live, and do this, or that."

16, 17. *But now you rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil. Therefore to him that knows to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin.* There are sins of omission as well as sins of commission! May the Lord graciously keep us from both forms of the evil, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—130, 590, 537.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, 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 MAN OF GOD ALONE WITH GOD
NO. 2796

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 26, 1878.

"I have declared my ways, and You heard me: teach me Your statutes."
Psalm 119:26.

WORLDLY men think very little of God. They live at a distance from Him. They have no communion with Him. Like the fool, they have said in their heart, "No God," and they try to realize in their lives their heart's desire. Very different is it with the true Believer. He recognizes God everywhere! He sees God in all the good or ill that checkers life—he believes that God has created every worm that crawls upon the face of the earth and that He has painted every flower that blooms. The whole world is full of God to him who believes in God and he has communion with God wherever he goes. He cannot live without Him—He is his joy and delight. He is a child of God—how can he live happily in his Father's house unless he often sees his Father's face, speaks with Him and hears His voice in return? The Christian makes much of God and God makes much of him, for they have a mutual delight in one another! Hence, in such a text as this, you perceive how the Psalmist talked with God and God heard him—and he knew that God heard him! And then he spoke again to God and said, "Teach me Your statutes."

This is, perhaps, one of the main differences between the Believer and the unbeliever—between him that fears God and him that fears Him not. The first lesson for man is to know his God. The second is to know himself and, as the unbeliever fails in the first, he fails in the second, also. He does not know himself. He does not think much about himself—about his real self, the most important part of his being. For his body, he caters freely—he can scarcely spend enough upon it. But he starves his soul—he scarcely recognizes its existence and he has but little thought or care about the immortality to which it is ordained! But a true Believer knows himself. We are sure, from our text, that he does, for he would not declare his ways if he did not know them. He has practiced introspection and looked within himself. He has practiced self-examination and studied his own inner life. He does not profess to understand himself altogether—for man is the next greatest mystery to God. God is the first mystery and man is the second. He does not understand his own ways. He

cannot always comprehend his own thoughts, or follow the devious wanderings of his own mind, but he does know a good deal about himself, and when he goes before his God, he can truthfully say, "I have declared my ways, and You heard me." Among other things, he has discovered his own ignorance and, therefore, he presents the prayer with which the text concludes, "Teach me." He is even ignorant of God's revealed will, so he prays, "'Teach me Your statutes, O Lord! I know the Book in which they are recorded and I can learn them in the letter, but You teach them to me, in my spirit, by Your Spirit, that I may know them aright."

This, then, is to be the subject of our meditation. Let us come to it looking up to the Lord and asking Him to bless the meditation to each one of us. I shall take the text in two senses. The primary one is, I think, *a man of God alone with God*—"I have declared my ways," ("to God"), "and You heard me: teach me Your statutes." But I judge that it is lawful, especially in the light of the following verse, to believe that the Psalmist may have alluded to his speaking with men, so, in the second part of my discourse, I shall speak of *a man of God considering his own public testimony* and saying, when he had done so, "I have declared my ways, and You heard me: teach me Your statutes. Make me to understand the way of Your precepts: so shall I talk"—which must mean his speaking to others—"so shall I talk of Your wondrous works."

I. So, first, we see here A MAN OF GOD ALONE WITH GOD. And we notice three things about him. He is making his case known—"I have declared my ways." He is rejoicing in an audience which he has obtained—"You heard me." And he is seeking a further blessing—"Teach me Your statutes."

First, *he is making his case known*. I understand this to be, first, the language of a sinner confessing his sin—"I have declared my ways. He is a sensible sinner and, therefore, he is not in a confessional box with the human ear of a fellow sinner to listen to him. He is a rational being who has not degraded himself so low as that. But he is confessing his sin to the great High Priest who can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities"—to Him who cannot be defiled by listening to our tale of sin. To Him to whom, alone, will it avail to confess our sins, for, "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins," if we confess them to Him.

Can each one of us now say, in this sense, "I have declared my ways" to the Lord? For this should be done, not only at our first coming to Him, but continually throughout the whole of our life. We should look over each day and sum up the errors of the day, and say, "'I have declared my ways'—my evil ways, my wicked ways, my wandering ways, my backsliding ways, my cold, indifferent ways, my proud ways. I have declared the way of my words, the way of my thoughts, the way of my imagination, the way of my memory, for it has a treacherous way of remembering evil and forgetting good. I have declared the way of my actions towards You, my God, and there is much to regret. I have declared the way of my actions in my family, in the world and in the church." What a sorrowful stock-

taking each day would be to many professors if they were honest to themselves and to their God! Even those who "walk in the light, as God is in the light," and have the closest fellowship with Him, yet know that it is a very sweet and blessed thing even for them that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin," for even they still sin and it is necessary for each one of them to say continually, "I have declared my ways."

Do you try to hide your sins, dear Friend? It is useless for you to attempt to do so, for God always sees them. Why do you seek to conceal what is always before His eyes? Better far to confess them to Him, that He may then cast it behind His back and remember them against you no more forever! I believe that often, as sinners confessing to God, we miss much true comfort for lack of making a clean breast of our transgressions. Yet the Lord knows what is in our heart even though we do not acknowledge it. It has been well observed that when Moses tried to excuse himself to God for not wanting to go to deliver Israel, he said that he was slow of speech. And God met that objection by giving him Aaron, his brother, to speak for him—but the Lord, in His reply to Moses, also said, "All the men are dead who sought your life." Moses had not said anything about that matter, but God knew that there was that fear in his heart, so He at once put His finger on the sore place. It is well when we can do that for ourselves. When, in our spirit, there is no guile—when we come, as David did in the 51st Psalm and confess the very sin which we have committed. David said, "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God," calling it by its right name—then is it that the soul begins to get peace with God.

"But," someone asks, "are we, then, to confess to God every sin in detail?" No, that would be impossible and probably it would not even be useful. But there must be no wish to conceal any sin from God. Such a desire would be a vain one, for, "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." There must be an acknowledgment of the sins which we have not yet seen in their full heinousness. Each of us will do well to offer David's prayer, "Cleanse You me from secret faults." If we have committed faults which are hidden even from ourselves, we desire to be delivered from them so that they should not remain to our condemnation.

I do not suppose that any unregenerate sinner will act thus towards his God until the Holy Spirit has begun to work graciously within him. While the prodigal was wasting his substance with riotous living, he thought himself a fine gentleman! And even when he was feeding the swine, he only said, "I have had very bad luck." But it was "when he came to himself" that he said, "I will arise and go to my father." And it was when he felt his father's warm kiss upon his cheek that he made the confession, "Father, I have sinned." There is no contrition so deep as that of the man who can say concerning his sins—

"I know they are forgiven—
But, still, their pain to me

Is all the grief and anguish
They laid, my Lord, on Thee."

So, then, our text is, first, the language of a sinner confessing his guilt to his God, but it is more than that. It is, next, the private talks of a patient with his doctor—"I have declared my ways."

See, there is the little room upstairs and there lies the patient whom the physician has come to try to cure. The doctor's first work is to find out all he can about the patient's disease, so he begins by asking concerning the various symptoms that have been noticed. He is sure to look at the sick man's tongue and you may learn a great deal, spiritually, of the condition of a man's heart from the state of his tongue. The doctor will also sound the patient's lungs, test his heart, take his temperature and ask him a great many questions, not merely about what appears on the surface, but about his inmost self. And when, at last, the patient can say, "There, doctor, I have told you all, now will you prescribe for me?" he is in the condition of the Psalmist when he said to the Lord, "I have declared my ways, and You heard me: teach me Your statutes."

The text very accurately describes such a state of things as that which exists when a patient relates his symptoms to the physician and then the physician prescribes for him, for, in addition to sin being a great evil in the sight of God, it is also a disease to which we are all prone and from which only the great Physician can cure us. We cry out against it and our better self fights against it, yet the old man within us, "the body of this death," as Paul calls it, fights against the new nature and we would be overcome were it not for Divine Grace. So it is well for us to declare our ways. Suppose I put it for myself or for you thus, "Lord, I find that even when I am engaged in prayer, my thoughts wander. When I am in trouble, I get fretful and rebellious. When a little difficulty meets me in my business, I do not trust You as I ought. I sometimes find that when I try to be humble, I become desponding, and when I am joyful, I become presumptuous. I seem to be like a pendulum swinging too far this way and then too far that way. I know not how to steer the ship of my life between the Scylla of this sin and the Charybdis of that. O my Master, I am but dust and ashes! I am less than nothing and vanity! If You ask me what ails me, I seem to have all manner of diseases upon me at once! Sometimes I am hot with fever and full of wrath and, at other times, I shiver with chills as though I did not know what I believed and could not lay hold of Your Truth with a firm grip. Sometimes I fear that I have a fatal disease and, certainly, were it not for Your unfailing medicine—the great catholicon—my soul would pine away and die! Yet, with all these evil symptoms, there is one sign that, I trust, is for good. I know where my help lies and I look alone to You for healing. I know that Your precious blood has cleansed me and on that blood, alone, I do rely." Thus the patient tells the Good Physician, as far as he can, what he feels and what is the disease from which he is suffering.

I think, too, that we might use another figure to illustrate the meaning of our text. It is like a client telling his advocate all about his affairs. It is a difficult case in law. There is an accuser who has come forward with very serious charges and he brings witnesses to substantiate what he affirms—the case is a very complicated one. The client says that he does not know how to plead for himself. He says that he is at his wits' end and he asks the advocate whether he has any argument that can avail for him. The advocate replies, "I must first know all about your case before I can advise you, so tell me everything." Now, the Lord Jesus, your great Advocate, already knows all about you yet He likes you to tell it all to Him. It is always a good thing to—

"Tell it all to Jesus,
Comfort or complaint."

Mind that you tell it *all* to Him—do not keep anything back. Tell Him the complex part of your life and tell Him the black part of it—be sure to bring that out. Tell Him that the accuser has good ground for his charges against you and that he can bring abundant witnesses against you—yes, that your own conscience will witness against you and that you do not know of any plea, on earth or in Heaven, that can avail for you unless He will be your Advocate. Then, how dear that Advocate will be to you when He tells you that He can plead His righteousness, His life, His blood and His death, for "if any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

I do not think, however, that we have reached the very marrow of our text until we regard it as describing the intimate communion of friend with friend—"I have declared my ways." When two men become linked together in close friendship, they are in the habit of telling one another all that happens in their lives. And if one of them is in a difficulty, he goes off to his friend and tells him about it. They agree with Solomon that "two are better than one; for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow" and, by mutual counsel, wisdom will be found. The one who is in trouble tells his friend about it and his friend, perhaps, puts to him a number of questions, not out of prying curiosity, but in order that he may become acquainted with the whole case and so be qualified to advise or to help. And we, Beloved, if we really know the Lord in spirit and in truth, are exalted to the position of friends of Jesus. "Henceforth," said He to His disciples, "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 secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His Covenant."

The Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" when he was about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. And we must hide nothing from our God. It ought to be the daily habit of the Believer to commune with his God—we ought to make Him our Confidant in all things. You will go amiss, depend upon it, if you do not wait upon the Lord for guidance. "Bring here the ephod," was David's command to the

priests when he was in perplexity and knew not what he ought to do. Israel made a great mistake with regard to the Gibeonites because the case seemed so simple to them that they felt they did not need to consult the Lord concerning it. Here were men with dry and moldy bread and with old shoes and socks upon their feet. They said they had come from a far country and the matter appeared so plain that the Israelites asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord, but took of their provisions and made a treaty with them, as they would not have done if they had consulted the Lord. I do not think that God's people often go astray in the most difficult cases, for they do take *them* to the Lord in prayer. It is in simple matters that we make our greatest blunders, because we think we know what to do and, therefore, we do not wait upon the Lord for guidance. Yet he who leans to his own understanding is trusting to a broken reed which will be sure to fail him just when he most needs it. So let us, each one, say to the Lord, in the language of the text, "I have declared my ways."

Thus far, we have been thinking of the Believer making his case known. Now, secondly, we are to see him *rejoicing that he has obtained an audience with God*—"You heard me." I cannot tell you how my heart is touched with the sweetness of that short sentence. Did *You* hear *me*, O Lord? What condescension on Your part! You have the whole universe to rule and govern—the sweetest songsters are in Your choirs sounding forth Your praises day without night, yet You heard *me*? And I was not singing Your praises, but confessing my sins! I was not telling the story of all Your wondrous works—I was telling of my own wicked works and of my sorrows and cares—and You might well have said, "These things are too small, too insignificant to be brought before My notice." Yet You did not speak so, for You heard me.

But there is something even more wonderful than His condescension, I think, and that is His patience. It is an amazing thing that He should listen to us and then, when the sad story is told, that He should not turn away in the greatness of His wrath and utterly destroy us. I think that if you were to tell out all that is in your own heart to any one of your most intimate friends, he would never speak to you again. We read many very charming biographies of men and women, but if the whole of their lives could be written—which we may be thankful *cannot* be done—the book would not be fit to be read! But the Lord listens to us in some things that we have to confess to Him, that we would not confess, and could not confess and ought not to confess in any human ear, yet He does not turn away from us in disgust. His pure and holy eyes cannot look upon iniquity except with the utmost abhorrence. He loathes sin in such a way as we can hardly imagine, yet, when a penitent sinner comes to confess to Him, He patiently listens to the whole sorrowful story and feels nothing but pity and love for the guilty narrator of it. This is truly wonderful and is very different from the manner of men. A man would probably say, "You have told me, now, Sir, what I wish I had never heard, for I can nev-

er trust you again. I did not think you were so mean. I could not have believed it of you. You have told me something that has let me know that I have been cherishing a viper in my bosom! Never come to my house again—you are a person with whom I do not wish to be in any way associated." That is how man talks. But when we have told the Lord everything, He does not spurn us from Him, but He says, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." He puts away our sins by blotting them out like a cloud and our transgressions as a thick cloud, blessed be His holy name!

When the Psalmist says, "You heard me," he means, "You heard me with sympathy." There are several different ways of hearing a story. When I have to deal with a case of very deep grief—I do not know whether you have all learned this lesson, but I will tell you how I act and you may be wise if you do the same, especially if you are a young pastor. If you get a case of very deep grief, hold your tongue and let the sorrowful one talk and tell out all the painful details. Those various items may not be very interesting to you, but if you cease to listen to any of them, you will be stopping the process of cure for that poor bleeding heart. Let the sufferer tell it all out and do not grudge the time it takes. Interject a word or two of sympathy now and then, and be really sympathetic all the while, but let the troubled soul tell it all out, just as here the Psalmist says to the Lord, "I have declared my ways, and You heard me." If you do so, the tried one will go away and say, "I was so comforted by my interview with the pastor, or with that friend. It did me so much good." Yet you are conscious that you did nothing but listen to the story of sorrow—and that is the best thing you could possibly have done. "Mother," said a little girl, "I can't think why our neighbor is so glad for me to go in and see her. She has lost her little baby and she sits and cries—and she says I am such a comfort to her! But, Mother, I never say anything! I only just put my arms round her neck and I cry, too." Ah, but that is the best way to comfort the sorrowing! And that is what Jesus does for you when you get near to Him. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmity and it is His being touched that enables us to bear the blow which has so grievously wounded our heart.

"You heard me." Even if the Lord did not seem to answer us, yet there would be much comfort to us from His hearing us, letting us tell all our grief to Him in the full belief that we are not merely telling it out to the air, or speaking to emptiness, but that into His ear and into His heart the story of our grief is falling. There is no comfort like this. Try it, mourning ones, you who love His blessed name!

But I think that the Psalmist meant even more than this when he said to God, "You heard me." Surely he meant, "You did graciously come to my help, 'I declared my ways'—the sinfulness of them—'and You heard me' and did blot out my transgressions. 'I declared my ways'—the disease of sin that was in my soul—and by Your stripes You did heal me. By

Your Spirit You did sanctify me. 'I declared my ways'—my legal difficulties, my accusers' words—and You did hear me by answering them and sending such joy and peace into my soul that I dared even to cry, 'Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again.' I told You all my ways and, like a true and faithful friend, You did not spare anything that You might help me. As You did give Your Son to redeem me and Your Spirit to sanctify me, so did You give Your Providence to succor me and Your Presence to comfort me. 'You heard me.' I did not cry to You in vain." Are not these words wondrously rich, dear Brothers and Sisters? I seem, in talking to you, as if I only skimmed the surface—as a swallow touches the brook with his wing and is up and away again in a moment—but you may dive into their depths in your happy, heartfelt experience!

Now I come, in the third place, to this man of God alone with God *seeking a further blessing*—"Teach me Your statutes." I think the Psalmist means this, "My Lord, I have told You all. Now, will You tell me all? I have declared to You my ways. Now, will You teach me Your ways? I have confessed to You how I have broken Your statutes—will You not give me Your statutes back again? I have acknowledged my weakness. Now, will You not strengthen me, that I may run in the way of Your commandments?"

We will take this request, "Teach me Your statutes," in the same way as we took our first division. "I, a sinner, have confessed to You, O Lord, my wicked ways. Will You not teach me Your statutes, that I may sin against You no more? Teach me how to be holy. Teach me to repent, for repentance is one of Your statutes. Teach me to believe, for faith in Your dear Son is one of Your great Gospel statutes. Teach me to pray, for this shall help to keep me pure, and prayer is a statute of Yours. Teach me to watch against temptation. Teach me to search the Scriptures. Teach me to yield myself up to You as a living sacrifice, which is my reasonable service. So teach me that I shall—

"No more from You depart
No more Your Spirit grieve."

Then, next, our text means, "I am a patient, and You, O Lord, are my Physician. I have told You the symptoms of my case. Now will You teach me Your statutes that I may be healed? I know that Your Word has a healing power, for it is written, 'He sent His Word and healed them.' Now, Lord, heal the bleeding wounds of my conscience by Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word! Heal my darkened understanding by your Spirit's illumination of it through Your Word. You see what my disease is—Your Word is the great Pharmacopoeia which contains remedies for all spiritual maladies—and You know which will best suit my case. Prescribe for me! 'Teach me Your statutes.'"

Then, in the case of a client consulting his advocate, the text means, "I have declared my ways to You, my great Advocate. Now 'teach me Your

statutes,' I pray You that I may be wise to meet my future accusers. 'Teach me Your way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path because of my enemies.' 'Teach me Your statutes' that I may not give occasion to the enemy to accuse me. Make me wise since I have to deal with the craft of the devil and the malice of the world. Teach me when to be silent and when to speak. Give me my Master's wisdom, who baffled all His adversaries though they constantly sought to catch Him in His speech. Teach me how to live so blameless and guileless a life that I may be both wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove. I have told You the difficulty of my ways and how my adversaries seek to entrap me—'teach me Your statutes, that I may escape like a bird from the snare of the fowler.'"

Then, as a friend speaking to his friend, this passage means, "'I have declared my ways,' now 'teach me Your statutes,' O Lord, that I may never lose Your friendship! O my great Friend, I have told You how remiss and how unthankful and unkind I have been to You, but do not be angry with me! Undertake to mend me, I pray You. Make Your poor friend better. Some of my sin springs from ignorance, so 'teach me Your statutes.' Much of it springs from my corrupt heart, so, O Lord, sanctify it by the power of Your cleansing Word! O Jesus, I cannot bear the thought of losing Your friendship! You have taught me the sweetness of it, so do not take it away from me, for if now I were to lose You, I would be, of all men, most miserable! The unregenerate sinner knows not the sweetness of Your love, but, like the swine, he is content with his husks. But I have eaten Heaven's bread and if I am to lose it now, woe is me, for I shall be doubly undone!"

A poor man who has always been poor knows not the smart of poverty like the emperor or the prince who comes down to be a beggar. It must have been a sad sight to see Belisarius, the valiant general, brought down so low as to beg in the streets of Rome and, oh, if a Believer could lose the friendship of his Lord, he would be doubly damned! There would be two Hells for him who had peeped into Heaven and tasted angels' food—and then had lost it and been cast away forever! Blessed be the name of the Lord—that shall never be the case with any true Believer! And that it may not be the case with you, pray this prayer, "O Lord, 'teach me Your statutes.' I am a poor ignorant fool, but. O my blessed Friend to whom I have confessed my ignorance, teach me! I shall be but a dull scholar, yet do not put me out of Your class. It will show what a wonderful Teacher You are if You will teach me! It will make even the angels marvel if You will make a good scholar out of such a dullard as I am! Here I am, Lord, 'teach me Your statutes.'"

II. Now for a few minutes let us turn to the second way of considering our text which is, THE MAN OF GOD STATING HIS TESTIMONY IN PUBLIC.

First, then, according to this way of understanding the text, we have here *a man of God who has borne his testimony*. He has spoken to man experimentally. He has not spoken about something he has read of, but

he says, "'I have declared my ways'—the ways which I myself have trodden. I have told them of my evil ways and warned them against the evils that lurk in the paths of sin. I have told them of the wounds I received in the house of sin, and I have warned others against going there. I have also told them of the ways of penitence, for You have graciously led me in them. I have told them of that bitter sweet or sweet bitter, the pleasing pain of weeping over sin. I have told them of the ways of faith—how I was led by the Law, as schoolmaster, to Christ—how I was shut up from every other confidence and then came and trusted in the Lord. 'I have declared my ways' and I have also told my fellow sinners what the Lord has done for me and in what ways I have been led since I have believed in Jesus. I have told them of the ways of answered prayer which I have trodden, of the ways of gracious help which have been vouchsafed to me. I have told them of my Ebenezers, of the ways of God's Providence and related how I have been succored, again and again, in the hour of my distress. 'I have declared my ways' and said of them all, 'Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life.'"

We are bound, dear Friends, not only to preach Christ's Gospel, but to also preach our experience of it. You remember that remarkable expression of our Lord in one of His last prayers to the Father, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them, also, which shall believe on Me through"—what? "*through their word*." Then, is it *their* word? No, it is the Lord's, yet it is also theirs, for they have made it theirs by personal appropriation and experience of it! The Truth of God never seems to have such vividness about it as when a man tells it out of his own soul. You read it in this blessed Book and you know it is true, for God has revealed it, but when you hear a godly man say, "I have tasted and handled this and have proved its truth," then, somehow, there is a still greater force in it which brings the Truth of God home to you. That is what this servant of God could say, "I have declared my ways."

And he had not declared them with any view to vain-glory, but only that he might glorify God. Neither had he spoken of himself except with the object of persuading others to walk in the ways of the Lord in which he had, himself, been so graciously led. We must always be cautious as to how we speak of ourselves—we shall do well if we can say with the Apostle Paul, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." If we ever do speak about ourselves, it must be only as a foil or setting to that priceless jewel of the loving kindness of the Lord. "I have declared my ways."

The next sentence, "You heard me," teaches us that God had heard this man. What solemn work it is to preach if we have God for a hearer! You know how Richard Baxter felt about this matter—

"I preached as never sure to preach again,
And as a dying man to dying men."

We should so preach as though we knew that every word was being written down by the recording angel and that God Himself was listening

to all that we said. This would make it a very solemn thing to open our mouth for the Lord and to bear testimony for Him, yet what a cheering thing it is that the Lord hears our testimony and can confirm its truthfulness! For, as surely as any of you ever speak for the Lord, you will be misunderstood—and that is not the worst of it—you will also be willfully misrepresented by some of your hearers. The very things you say, they will declare that you ought to have said—and the things that you did not say, they will pretend that you did say. They will turn your words upside down and inside out! I am judging by my own experience, for I have long proved that it is utterly impossible for me to utter a single sentence which someone or other cannot twist into mischief. This is a grievous evil under the sun—that he that speaks is not judged according to his own words, but according to whatever men choose to put into those words and to make them mean—so that the thing that was farthest from our thoughts and which our soul abhorred, has often been set down to us when we neither said nor thought anything of the kind! Now, if any of you are called to pass through that trouble—and I daresay you will if you try earnestly to serve your Master—fall back upon this declaration, "'I have declared my ways,' honestly, simply, plainly, with a pure desire to glorify God and bless my fellow men 'and You heard me.' I appeal to You, O Lord, for You know what was spoken! You are the Supreme Judge and to You I bring my case."

When, with weeping eyes and with broken words, my dear Sister, you talk to some poor soul about the Savior, let it be a comfort to you that the Lord hearkens and hears, and that a Book of Remembrance is kept before Him in which are recorded all such holy acts as you are doing for Him. My dear Brother, perhaps you have not any special gift or talent, but yet you try to talk about Jesus whenever you can and somebody has heard what you said. It was very ungrammatical, and some people made a joke of it—and that grieves you very much, for you know that you were speaking in the sincerity of your heart. Now, do not say one word the less because they jest about you—rather say *more* because you have the double advantage of affording some people a little amusement and, at the same time, of doing good to others! Do not fret, or trouble, but just go straight on with your work for the Lord! And if you really did make a mistake and used the wrong word, you can say, "Ah, but the Lord knew what I meant! You did know, O Lord, with what simplicity of soul and earnestness of heart I spoke that word and if it was not the right word, and if some even see occasion for mirth in it, yet You heard me."

The last word of all is this—and it fits in well with this view of the text—this man needed more teaching, so he prayed, "Lord, 'teach me Your statutes.' Now that I have become a teacher of others, You teach me." No man can teach if he is unwilling to be taught. Any gentleman who has "finished his education" will never be an educator of others. We must be continually making progress if we would lead others onward. I am sure that every Brother here who is engaged in the Lord's work will

find that he needs to get fresh food for his mind every day. He must eat a double portion because he has to feed others as well as to be fed. He has not only to fill his basket with bread for the eater, but also with seed for the sower, so he needs a double—no, a *sevenfold* portion—that he may have enough for others as well as for himself.

"Teach me Your statutes," is a good prayer to be presented by you dear young friends who have lately come into the Church. I am always delighted to hear of your trying to do good. I am glad for you to get into the Sunday school, or into the Evangelists' Society, that you may try to speak for Jesus. But do remember that you need much teaching if you are to teach others. This remark applies especially to some of you. I would not keep you back, even for a minute, from trying to teach others what you already know, but I beg you to try to learn a little more. The other night a dear Brother told some of you a good story of the Negro who heard his pastor say that they all ought to teach something to somebody. Poor old Sambo called out from the gallery that he could teach something. The minister said, "I do not mean you, Sambo, for you only know your A B C." "Ah," said Sambo, "but there are some brethren and little children that don't know their A B C, so Sambo can teach them that."

Well, there is something in that view of the case—if you only know the elements of the Gospel, teach them to those who do not know them. At the same time, dear Brother, if you can learn more, you can then teach more—so do not give up the good habit, on Sabbath days, of going to hear at least one sermon. I would like to turn a lot of the people out half a day on Sundays—I mean you experienced Christian people—that you might go out and teach others, but I would like to bring in some of the young people who are always out at work and do not come in to feed as they ought. They must feed, as well as work! They must get taught, or else their teaching will soon become very vapid and powerless. In all honesty and sincerity, let each one pray, "Lord, teach me more, so that when You hear me next time, there may be more of that which You have taught me and that, when men hear it, they may be more impressed by it, because they learn more from it." May we all first go to Him and learn of Him—then talk to Him and learn more of Him—and then go to others and talk with them about Him!

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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

THE NEED AND NATURE OF CONVERSION
NO. 2797

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER13, 1878.

"Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."
Isaiah 55:7.

SOME years ago [Sermon #1195, Volume 20—ABUNDANT PARDON—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] I preached from the last four words of this verse, laying special stress upon the abundant pardon which is given to repenting sinners through the rich mercy of our God. On this occasion, I am going to put the emphasis upon the first part of the verse, speaking more upon the necessity of the sinner forsaking his evil ways and of the unrighteous man abandoning his evil thoughts. There is urgent necessity for us to continually insist upon this course of action. This Chapter, as we noticed in our reading, is full of Gospel teaching and it expresses, under the most striking and cheering metaphors, both the fullness and the freeness of the Gospel. But the Prophet also insists most clearly that the wicked man must forsake his ways and the unrighteous man must turn from his thoughts and return to the Lord that he may obtain the mercy and pardon that God is waiting and willing to bestow.

This is not a merely legal demand—it is a Gospel demand found in the center of a Gospel Chapter in the writings of the most Evangelical of all the Prophets. The Chapter begins with a number of gracious and wide invitations and so, naturally, leads on to the promise of the coming Savior. Only God Himself could find a Savior for our ruined race and none but God's own Son could be that Savior. Then there follows, in due order, the promise of a people to be saved. The Savior shall not come to the earth in vain. He shall call a people unto Himself and "nations" shall run to Him. Then, following the promise of a Savior and the declaration of the certainty that many shall be saved by Him, there comes in this loving invitation, "Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near." Since He is to have a people who shall be His, forever, put in your claim to be among them! And since, as a Savior, He is near to you, call upon Him and He will hear your call!

This brings us to our text which is consistent with the rest of the Chapter even though some people think it is not. Here we are told, first, that the wicked must forsake his ways. There is no Savior for the man

who will not forsake his sin. Such a man can never be among the people who shall run to Christ, for how can he run to Christ while he continues in the way of sin? Such a man shall seek the Lord in vain and call upon Him in vain, for, while he hugs his sin, he cannot embrace the Savior who hates sin with a perfect hatred. This is the theme upon which I am going to now speak and I want to do it in the spirit of the Master, of whom Malachi wrote, "For who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire, and like the fuller's soap, and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." May the Master bless His own searching Word—and He shall have all the praise!

I. First, then, let us meditate a while upon THE NECESSITY OF CONVERSION. If a man is to be saved, he must turn from his sins. "Right about face!" is the marching order for every sinner! There is no hope of forgiveness for him if he will continue with his face as it now is. He must turn from his sin if he would be saved.

This will be at once evident to you when I ask the questions, "*How would it be consistent with the holiness of God for Him to put aside our past sins and then to allow us to go on sinning as we did before?* How could He be thought to be just and pure if He should remit the punishment for past transgressions without seeing in us any determination to abstain from such sins in the future?" Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, but He never came here to spare their sins. God would never have sent His Son to this earth to be the messenger of sin, yet Christ would be nothing better than the messenger of sin if He had come and said to men, "You may continue in your sin, yet I will forgive you. You may live as you like, yet you shall find mercy with the Lord at the last." It must strike you, in a moment, that such a course as this would be inconsistent with the Character of the Judge of all the earth who must do right! There is no such teaching as that in the whole of the Scriptures—and he who dares to believe it, believes a lie! Nowhere in the whole compass of Revelation is there a promise of forgiveness to the man who continues in his iniquity!

There is a promise of pardon to the sinner who forsakes his wicked way and turns from his evil thoughts. There are many promises of forgiveness to those who confess their sins in humble penitence and who seek to live new lives under the power of the Holy Spirit. Possibly someone would remind me that the greatest promises are given to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is quite true, but the faith which believes in Jesus is a living and active faith which works in the soul a *hatred of sin*—and if a man says, "I believe in Christ," and yet continues to delight in sin, he is a liar and the truth is not in him, for, "faith, if it has not works, is dead, being alone." Only that faith alone which is proved to be a vital and real faith by bringing forth "fruits meet for repentance" will save us! It is no use wanting or trying to be saved without a change of heart and a change of life. "You must be born-again," is Christ's own word to all unregenerate sinners! Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatever a man sows,

that shall he also reap." There has never been any revocation of these Truths of God and I repeat again that in the whole compass of the Word of God there is no promise of pardon to the man who continues in his iniquities!

Neither, dear Friends, is there *a single case in fact, nor one emblem in parable that would lead any man to hope that he could keep his sins and yet be saved.* If you remind me of the woman in the city who was a sinner, I also remind you that her life had been completely changed, otherwise our Savior would not have permitted her to wash His feet with her tears and wipe them with the hairs of her head. Saul of Tarsus was guilty of the great sin of persecuting the saints, but see what a changed man was Paul the Apostle of the Gentiles! Zacchaeus, the rich tax-gatherer, offered to make full restitution and recompense to any whom he might have wronged. So it always is where the Grace of God works effectually. When the Lord Jesus Christ saves a sinner from the *punishment* of sin, He also saves him from the *love* of sin—He makes him holy as well as makes him happy and safe!

The same lesson is taught in our Lord's parables. For instance, there was no rejoicing over the lost sheep while it was still wandering away from the fold—the joy began when that lost sheep was *found* and was brought home on the shepherd's shoulder! A more striking example is that of the prodigal son. There was no joy over him while he was in the far country and no kiss for him from his father while he was feeding the swine. He must come back. He must say, "Father, I have sinned." There must be the forsaking of his former evil ways or else there could be no enjoyment of his father's forgiveness. We must always say, as plainly as we can possibly say it—If you will keep your sins, you shall go to Hell. And if you would go to Heaven, you must part company with your sins. He who would be married to Christ must first be divorced from sin. There is no possibility of walking in the way of the Lord and, at the same time, treading the pathway of evil. "No man can serve two masters." No one can, at the same time, be a servant of the Savior and a servant of Satan.

Besides, dear Friends, our common sense tells us that it *would be highly dangerous to society* if men were to be pardoned and yet were not to be renewed in character and life. If Christ should meet with a man and say to him, "I forgive you because of the precious blood I shed for you on Calvary—go and be a drunkard still! Go and be unchaste! Go and be a thief!" This would be the way to undermine the very pillars of society and, very soon, we would not be safe in our beds. If there were no laws, or if the laws had no system of punishment for the guilty, human society would cease to be endurable! He who rules all things righteously will never set up such a scheme as this! The Judge of all the earth must punish sin! He will by no means clear the guilty.

Moreover, *it would be a serious injury to the man himself* if he could be pardoned and yet not be changed. For God to forgive us without renewing us would be a frightful peril to ourselves. A man, finding himself so easily forgiven and having no change of heart, would plunge into sin worse than ever and, so far as my observation is concerned, I have come to the conclusion that the very worst form of character is produced in a

man who, for some reason or other, thinks himself to be a favorite of Heaven and yet continues to indulge in sin. I remember the horror which passed through me, in my youthful days, when I heard a man who was accustomed to be drunk boast that he could say what none of his drinking buddies could say, namely, that he was one of the elect of God! I felt, child as I was, that he was one of the devil's chosen followers and I do not doubt that he really was. If a man once gets into his head such a perverted notion of the Free Grace of God as to imagine that it is compatible with the love of sin, and a life of sin, he is on the high road to being made into the worst conceivable character! And if such a man as that could be delivered from all the consequences of his sin, from all such consequences as might be looked upon as arbitrarily fixed by the punishing hand of God, (I know that I am talking of an impossibility), even then he must be miserable! Such a man must go on from bad to worse and sin, whatever we may think of it, is misery! The worm that never dies is sin. The fire that is never quenched is sin. And Hell is sin fully developed. "Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death," and that second death is Hell. O Sirs, if you could get rid of the disease, the pain, the headaches which follow upon indulgence in the qualms of conscience sin, it would be a mischievous riddance for you, for the very pain that is caused by sin is part of God's way of calling to you to come back to Him. As long as you are in this world, the consequences that follow after certain forms of sin are really, with all their bitterness—and they are bitter—but a healthful tonic that should make you give up sin and turn to God.

If you go on sinning, you cannot be saved. If you continue to love sin and to practice it, you cannot be saved. Think, for a moment, what any other result would involve. If it were possible for a man to live in sin and yet be forgiven, what would be the value of the work of the Holy Spirit? He has come in order that we may be born-again and have new hearts and right spirits. But if men could be forgiven without having new hearts and right spirits, of what service would the Holy Spirit be? This would be contrary, also, to the whole design of Christ in our salvation. The angel said to Joseph, before our Savior's birth, "You shall call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins." But if they can be saved *in* their sins, where is the meaning of His name? When He hung upon the Cross and one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, "forthwith came there out blood and water." But what is the use of the purifying water if we need not be purified and can be pardoned without being cleansed? Paul wrote to Titus that Christ "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." But how can that purpose be accomplished if men can be pardoned and yet continue to live in sin?

Beside that, the very character of Heaven prevents such a thing being done! We know that the unholy cannot enter there—nothing that defiles can pass the watchers at the pearly portals. Therefore, be you sure of this—that you can never enter Heaven and you can never have forgiveness if you continue to cling to your sins! You must forsake them, or mercy cannot be yours.

II. Having spoken thus upon the necessity of conversion, I turn, for a little while, to the second part of our subject, THE NATURE OF THIS CONVERSION. How is it described here?

First, *it deals with the life*—"Let the wicked forsake his ways." Observe that it is, "his ways" that he is to forsake. That is, his natural way, the way in which he says he was brought up, the way that his natural affections, propensities and passions lead him. He must forsake his ways, even though it is the way in which he has walked these thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, or even 80 years! He will have to get out of his ways, however much he may delight in them! Possibly, he now loves sin so much that he says he could not give it up. There are some sins which men roll under their tongues as dainty morsels—but if you are to be saved, you will have to give them up. If you would have the mercy of God, you must give them all up! You must give up your old sins, your sweet sins, your pet sins. The sins of the flesh with all their pleasure and the sins of the mind with all their pride must be given up, for notice that word, "forsake." "Let the wicked *forsake* his ways." It does not say, "Let him admit that his ways are bad."

There are some who will say, "Oh, yes, I know that my way is very wrong," and there they stop. Such an admission as that will not save you, my Friend! You must *forsake* your way as well as admit that it is wrong. To know that it is wrong and yet to go on in it will double your sin! This kind of confession will not help you in the least. On the contrary, it will only increase your guilt. You must forsake your wicked way if you are to be forgiven. "Oh, Sir," you say, "I am very sorry for all the sin that I have committed!" I am glad that you are and I hope that you will be still more so, but that sorrow, alone, will never save you. It is not saying, "I am sorry," nor yet your being sorry for your sin that will save you! That is right as far as it goes, but you must *forsake the sin as well as be sorry for it*.

"I must forsake it? Well, I resolve that I will do so." Yet that resolve by itself will not save you, for there are plenty of good resolutions that are good for nothing! You have to actually *forsake your wicked ways* before you have complied with the requirements of our text. I know how the devil will try to deceive you, when you have made a good resolution. He will say, "Ah, you are a fine fellow and that is a splendid resolution of yours!" Yet mere resolutions are not worth a penny a thousand! We must *act*, not simply resolve what we mean to do. We must not be like the man who owes a lot of money and has not a penny to pay, yet who keeps on saying to his creditors, "I hope I shall be able to pay you tomorrow." Then, when that day comes, he says he is very sorry, but he missed the friend he expected to see, so he must postpone the payment for a few days. Yet, when the few days have passed, there is still nothing forthcoming. So it is with many who resolve to forsake sin—they are like those who promise—but never pay. This will not do! You must forsake your sin if it is to be forgiven!

"I will tell you what I will do," says one, "I will still keep to my old ways but I will not travel quite so rapidly in them. I will not live such a fast life as I have done." I tell you, Friend, that you must forsake that old way of

yours altogether if you would be saved. If you stand still in it, if you are decent and respectable in it, all that will avail you nothing! You must clear right out of it, for so our text puts it, "Let the wicked forsake his ways." In plain terms, the Prophet means just this. Is your way the way of the drunk? Now, no drunkard can ever inherit the Kingdom of God as long as he continues a drunk, so you cannot be saved if you remain in that condition. Are you a thief? Do you privately cheat in business? All that kind of thing must be given up! It is no use for you to say, "I will do it and yet go to Heaven." You will be damned unless that sin, as well as others, is given up. Or have you been a blasphemer? Do you talk profanely or filthily? You must wash all that foulness out of your mouth if you would be saved. "Let the wicked forsake his ways." Am I addressing any who have practiced vice in unmentionable forms? Oh, how many there are who do that and yet are not ashamed! You must forsake all that, young man, or old man, too—it is no use mincing matters with you. If you mean to go to Hell, go on with your wickedness! But if you would be forgiven for the past, you must cut all connection with these evil things for the future. I most solemnly assure you, in the name of God, that there can be no compromise about this and every other sin. "Let the wicked forsake his ways," whatever the ways may have been. If it is a filthy way, a fleshly way, a way of lust, a way of self-indulgence—any way of sin—it must be forsaken. You must abandon it, or else you must abandon all hope of ever getting to Heaven!

"That is pretty strong language," someone says. Do you think so? I shall have to use still stronger expressions presently, for the next point concerning the nature of this repentance is that *it deals with the man's thoughts*—"Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts." "But thoughts are free," says some unthinking person, "I shall never be hanged for my *thoughts*." No, perhaps not, but have you never heard that old saying, "A man may not be hanged for his thoughts, but he may be damned for his thoughts"? For in thought is often the very essence of sin. A deed might in itself be colorless, but the motive for doing it—the thought at the back of it—puts the venom, virus and guilt into the deed.

As that is the case, what sort of thoughts must the unrighteous man give up? He must give up a great many fine opinions of which he is very proud—his opinion about God, for instance. It is possible that he has thought nothing of Him, or if he has thought of Him at all, he has dared even to judge his Creator and to find fault with what God does! Ah, Sir, you must give up all such thoughts of God and you must come to reverence Him and to regard Him as so great that you are less than nothing in comparison with Him! You will also have to give up your opinion concerning God's Law. You thought it was too severe, too stringent and that you could improve it a great deal. You will have to confess, with the Apostle Paul, that the Law is *spiritual* and that you are "carnal, sold under sin." You will have to change your mind upon a great many subjects if you really wish to be saved. You will have to forsake your old thoughts concerning sin. You said, "Oh, it is a mere trifle—a peccadillo! Poor helpless creatures as we are, God won't be angry with us for such a little

thing as that!" You will have to feel that sin is exceedingly sinful—a great and deadly evil—or you will never be likely to seek and to find peace with God! You will also have to change your mind about the Lord Jesus Christ. He is nothing to you, now, but He will have to be everything to you if you are to be saved by Him. You will have to change your mind about yourself—you fancy that you are a fine fellow, now, but you will have to regard yourself as less than nothing before you come to your right position before God. If ever you are to find mercy at His hands, you will have to forsake your present thoughts on all these matters.

Do you ask, "What other thoughts shall we have to forsake?" I reply—a whole set of thoughts in which many people indulge. To the ungodly man it is often quite a treat to sit down and think of what he calls the jolly days of his youth when he sowed his wild oats. He wishes that he had a handful or two of them left. Ah, Sir, you will have to give up all thoughts of that sort—and you will have to think of those past days with bitter tears of sorrow over the sins that you then committed. The ungodly man often pictures to himself scenes of carnal delight and if he cannot have a share in such scenes, he often wishes that he could. I would remind any of you who have ever done so, that you may commit every sin forbidden in the Decalogue—without having actually committed any one of them—by simply reveling in them in your thoughts! Remember that solemn affirmation of the Lord Jesus Christ concerning the Seventh Commandment, "I say unto you, That whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart." And learn from it how our Lord meant His interpretation to apply to the whole Law of God, so that we should understand that the very thought of evil is sin—and to suck it down as a sweet morsel to think upon, even though we never dared to perpetrate the act is still a gross evil—and if we would be forgiven, we must forsake all these vile, flesh-delighting thoughts!

We must also forsake our thoughts in the sense of turning from all *purposes* of evil. That, indeed, is the main meaning of the Hebrew word used here—"Let the unrighteous man forsake his *purposes*." You say that you will do this or that, without any thought of whether God would have it so or not. Possibly it is your purpose, as you express it, "to have your fling." You have come up from the country, young man. You are pleased that you have gotten away from your mother's apron strings and now you are going to have your own way. Forsake all such thoughts, I implore you! And, if any whom I am now addressing have formed any purpose of sin—if you have resolved to indulge in this or that evil, whatever it may be, I charge you, if you desire to have eternal life—to hate all such purposes and thoughts of sin. The garment spotted by the flesh must be flung away from us and the very thought of evil must be banished from our minds as far as it is possible for us to do so!

Nor is this all, for the text further says, "and let him return to the Lord," so that this conversion *deals with the sinner in his relation to God.* He who would find mercy must return to God to obtain it. Do you ask how you are to do so? Well, first, you must begin to *think* about God. I really believe that some of you do not think half as much about God as you do about the Sultan of Turkey! And with some of you, almost any-

body is a greater factor in your life than God is. With some of you it would not make any difference it there were no God at all, except that you would be rather glad if that could be proved to be the case, for you would feel easier in your mind and could, in such a case, go on in your sin without any of the compunction that you now feel. Yet, is it not a singular state of mind for a man who knows that he is a creature made by God, but who really cares so little about Him that if he could be assured that there were no such Being, he would be better pleased than he is now? Oh, what a wretched state your heart must be in if it feels like that! It will have to be greatly altered if you are ever to be saved!

So, first, you must begin to think of God and then, thinking of Him, you must yield to Him—give up your will to His will and, doing that, you must pray to Him, cry to Him for mercy and then you must trust Him. Especially you must accept His ways of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. And when you do that, then you will be sure to love Him. When you get as far as that, you will be altogether a new creature! Then God will delight in you! Then it will be misery to you to be out of His Presence and it will be the highest joy of your life to have constant communion with Him.

III. Now I finish with the third part of our subject, that is, THE GOSPEL OF THIS CONVERSION.

Possibly somebody says, "You have been preaching the Law to us, Sir." No, I have not! The Law says nothing about *repentance*. The Law curses you from the very first moment when you have broken it. That gracious message, "Repent you, therefore, and be converted, that your sin may be blotted out," is not the utterance of the Law of God, but of the Gospel!

I will try briefly to show you the Gospel of it. It lies, first, in the fact that *God has promised that He will abundantly pardon those who turn from their evil ways*—"Let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." To the man who confesses his guilt, the Law says, "Yes, you are guilty, and you must suffer the penalty attached to your crime." If a person pleads "guilty" in a court of law, the judge does not say to him, "If you will promise amendment, you may go free." No, he pronounces sentence upon him! And God, the righteous Judge might justly have done the same to us but, instead of doing so, He says, "Forsake your wicked ways, and your evil thoughts, and turn to Me, and I will abundantly pardon you. Only repent of your iniquity and abandon it, and it shall all be blotted out. All the evil of your past life shall be forgiven and forgotten and your sins and your transgressions I will not remember against you any more forever." Oh, precious Gospel messages! Who would not turn from his sin when such a gracious promise awaits him in the turning?

Yet there is even more than that, a great deal more, for not only does God bid men turn to Him, *but He enables them to turn to Him!* So the Gospel of this passage is that God the Holy Spirit is freely given to sinners to turn them, first in their hearts and then in their lives. What you cannot do of yourself, the Holy Spirit will enable you to do! There is no form of sin which you cannot conquer by the power of the Spirit of God—and that Spirit is freely given to all who sincerely seek His aid. He is still

here on earth. On the day of Pentecost He descended from Heaven and He has never gone back. "But," says someone, "the Holy Spirit was given to the saints." Yes, I know He was, but He was also given to sinners like yourself, for Peter said to those who were awakened on the day of Pentecost, "Repent, and be baptized, everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." I wish that many of you would pray the prayer, "Turn us, O God, and we shall be turned." You must be turned, by Sovereign Grace, if you would really turn unto the Lord—and you must forsake your wicked ways and your evil thoughts if you are to be saved—but you cannot do this of yourself—the Holy Spirit has been given on purpose to enable you to do it!

There is a further Gospel message in the fact that *Jesus Christ Himself came into the world on purpose that this Divine Spirit might be given in connection with the exercise, by men, of faith in Him.* One of the simplest declarations of the Gospel is, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." And one of the last sayings of our Lord Jesus Christ before He went back to Heaven was, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." To believe is to trust—and whoever trusts Christ Jesus depends upon the merit of His death, relies upon the excellence of His atoning Sacrifice and proves the reality of his faith by confessing it in the Scriptural way—such a man shall is assuredly saved. And, in order to his being saved, he shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit by whose almighty power he shall be enabled to conquer the sin that still dwells within him!

Once more—and this is the part of the Gospel that is the best of all—in order that you might be able to believe that God can have mercy on the guilty and in order that you might be saved, *God gave His Son, Jesus Christ, to offer a full and complete atonement for sin.* I never weary of preaching that glorious Truth of God to you, but I long that when I have done so, you may close in with Christ and that Christ may close in with you, that you may be eternally saved. According to the righteous Law of God, sin must be punished. Conscience tells you that it is not possible that guilt should go without its due penalty. Therefore it was that Jesus came and bore the dread penalty that was due to sin. The lash of the Law of God must fall on someone, so He bared His shoulders to its terrible blows. The sword of Divine Justice was unsheathed and it must smite someone—so Jesus gave His heart to that sword's point and quenched the flaming blade in the crimson fountain of His own blood! Now that this has been done, God can be just and yet the Justifier of everyone who believes in Jesus! And the effect of that atoning Sacrifice upon everyone who truly trusts to it is that he finds himself so changed that he hates the sin he formerly loved! And he rushes out of the wicked ways in which he once delighted, he abhors the thoughts that once charmed him and he turns to the Savior whom he once despised!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 55.

This chapter might very well have been found in the Gospel according to Matthew, or Mark, or Luke, or John, for it is so plain, so simple and so full of Gospel teaching.

Verse 1. *Ho, everyone that thirsts come you to the waters, and he that has no money; come you, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.* Oh, the freeness of Gospel provisions! And, at the same time, their fullness, their plenty, their variety, their sufficiency! Here is a mention of "wine and milk." It is not enough for the Lord to bid us "come to the waters," but He invites us to partake of the choicest luxuries upon which the soul can be fed—He calls us to be filled even to the full and to accept everything for nothing—"without money and without price."

2. *Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not?* Why do you act thus? Can you give any explanation of such folly? The Gospel is consistent with the highest reason. And to believe in Christ is not a thing for which we need make any apology. It is a foolish thing *not* to believe in Him—a foolish thing to be living for the world—to be spending our time and strength for our attainment of some inferior objective which can never satisfy the soul. This "why" is not applicable to the Christian—it is applicable to the worldling. Yet he often thinks himself the only wise man on the face of the earth! "Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not?"

2, 3. *Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto Me.* What a stress these Gospel passages lay upon hearing the Word! "Faith comes by hearing." All the sights, all the shows, all the gorgeous processions and all the external ceremonies in the world will never convert a single soul! But God says, "Hearken diligently unto Me. Incline your ear, and come unto Me."

3. *Hear, and your soul shall live.* Do not quibble, but hear. Do not come to find fault with the Word of God—but "Come unto Me," says the Lord. "Hear, and your soul shall live."

3. *And I will make an everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.* What a surprising promise this is for God to make to men who are so poverty-stricken that they have "no money" in their hand or in their pocket—nothing in fact, that they can bring to Him! Yet the Lord says, "I will make an everlasting Covenant with you." Will God enter into Covenant with a poor sinner and pledge Himself by promise and by oath to do him good forever? Yes, poor troubled, sinful Soul, I trust the Lord, in infinite mercy, is even now calling you by His Grace! And as surely as you come to Him, He will make with you "an everlasting Covenant, even the sure mercies of David."

4. *Behold, I have given Him for a Witness to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people.* God's Witness of His great love to us is His own Son! You cannot doubt God's readiness to receive guilty men, since Christ has come in the flesh. You cannot doubt His love to sinners, since His only-begotten Son has come to be a Witness to it. Oh, for Grace to range ourselves under His banner and to follow His footsteps, for God

has given Him to be "a Leader and Commander to the people"! Nor shall He be a Leader without followers, nor a Commander without an army. Where is He to get His followers and His army? Read the next verse.

5. *Behold, You shall call a nation that You know not, and nations that knew You not shall run unto You because of the LORD Your God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified You.* Observe, there was no communion between Christ and these people, for He knew them not and they knew not Him. It is the Scriptural mode of expressing the great gulf between these. Yet, He is to call them and they are to run to Him. He is to find His subjects and His soldiers among those who have up to now been ignorant of Him. What a gracious Covenant promise this is! Under the guise of a declaration made to Christ, this is really a promise made to the elect of God that they shall be brought back from all their wanderings and be ranged in their ranks beneath the banner of their Lord!

6, 7. *Seek you the LORD while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.* There must be conversion—that is, a turning of the soul, and that must be manifest in the outward life. The wicked must forsake his evil ways, but the change must go much deeper than that—there must be a real spiritual conversion. The unrighteous man must forsake his sinful thoughts and, oh, how glorious it is when, after such a generous exhortation and such a gracious invitation, God sends His Spirit to those whom He calls, to enable them to forsake their own ways and their own thoughts, and to turn to Him! Wherever there is any such a turning as that, it is certain that "He will abundantly pardon."

8, 9. *For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.* I think, dear Friends, that not only may the unconverted pick up many crumbs of comfort as they hear about the abundant provision of Divine Mercy, but that the tried people of God may also be much cheered as they think upon the greatness of the Lord's plans for them! You do not understand, tried child of God, what your Heavenly Father is doing with you. A child cannot always comprehend his father's purposes of love—it is not necessary that he should. Every father may say to his son, "My thoughts are not your thoughts," but with what an emphasis does our Divine Father say it to us! "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

10, 11. *For as the rain comes down, and the snow from Heaven, and returns not there but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater, so shall My Word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing to which I sent it.* Such a promise as this ought to help us to preach in faith! How full our sermons ought to be of the Word of God, for it is not *our word*, but God's Word that is certain to be effectual to the salvation of

our hearers! I remember McCheyne saying that you will generally find that it is God's Word, not man's comment on God's Word, that is blessed to the conversion of souls. There is a Divine charm—a mystic power—about the very Words of the Lord. I can never doubt the Doctrine of Plenary Verbal Inspiration since I so constantly see, in actual practice, how the very words that God has been pleased to employ are blessed to the souls of men—not merely their sense, but the very language! Sometimes a plural instead of a singular noun, or one particular word instead of its synonym, will be made, in the hands of the Spirit of God, the means of reaching some character who, otherwise, would not have been reached. Blessed be God that we believe in His Book! We cannot, we will not give up a jot or a tittle of it—the dot of an I, or the cross of a T. We believe that no part of the Word of the Lord will return to Him void, but it shall accomplish all His good pleasure and prosper in the thing whereunto He has sent it.

12. *For you shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace.* That shall be your happy condition when you have once fed upon Christ! When you have entered into Covenant with God, you "shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace."

12. *The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.* And many of us can testify that it is so. Once reconciled to God, all Nature seems to wear another aspect. Whatever the weather is, it pleases us because it pleases Him who sends it to us and when we look upon the beauties of Nature beneath the sunlight, there is a peculiar glory upon them, for the Light of God that shines more brightly than the sun, is, to the believing eye, upon everything!

13. *Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.* Wherever God's Word is, there are transformations. Miracles, though we see them not in the natural world, are abundant in the spiritual realm. Conversion is the great standing proof of the Presence of the Holy Spirit—and His abiding Presence is the perpetual Witness to the truth of the Gospel. Beyond all arguments from internal or external evidence, stands this one—the Word of God is effectual in the salvation of sinners. Thorns are turned into fir trees and briers into myrtles and, so, God is glorified and "an everlasting sign" is thus preserved among us, "that shall not be cut off."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—708, 103 (Version 2), 722.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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

SWEET STIMULANTS FOR THE FAINTING SOUL
NO. 2798

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, IN THE WINTER OF 1860.

"O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember You from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the Hill Mizar." Psalm 42:6.

HERE is a common complaint of God's people and here are two remedies which David, wisely guided of God, administers with discretion. Let us direct our meditation in this order—first, *let us talk of the complaint.* And then, secondly, *let us look into the Divine medicine chest and use the remedies provided there*.

I. LET US TALK OF THE COMPLAINT "O my God, my soul is cast down within me."

We do not know what was the precise reason why David's soul was cast down. Perhaps it was because he had been driven out of the royal city by his own son—the son whom he had petted and pampered and, thereby, made a rod for his own back. We are pretty sure that he was now denied the privilege of going up to the House of God—he could not now join with the multitude that kept holy day. These two things probably worked together to cast down his spirit—his absence from the tabernacle and the cause of that absence.

I am not sure, however, that these two things combined would have been enough to cast down David's spirit if it had not been for a more bitter ingredient in his cup of sadness. There have been good men in circumstances similar to David's at that time who, even then, could gird up the loins of their mind and hope to the end. When bitten by that which is sharper than a serpent's tooth—an ungrateful child—and debarred from the House of God, they have, even then, been able to stay themselves upon the Lord and to rejoice in the Most High God. The real reason of the Psalmist's distress was, no doubt, that God had, at least to some degree, hidden His face from him and, therefore, the flowers of David's graces all drooped and his joy, which formerly sparkled in the sunlight of God's Countenance, was now dim and dark. Troubles may distress the outward man, but they cannot distress the soul of the child of God while he feels the Lord Jehovah to be his everlasting strength. Yes, it sometimes happens that the very pressure which weighs down the scale of his earthly hopes tends to lift up the opposite scale of his spiritual peace! As long as

God is with him, trials are nothing, for he casts them upon Jehovah. But once let God withdraw from him for a while and he is troubled—that mountain which seemed to stand fast begins to rock and shake—and to prove the instability and insufficiency of all mortal grounds of confidence.

The causes of our being cast down are very numerous. Sometimes it is pain of body—perhaps a wearing pain which tries the nerves, prevents sleep, distracts our attention, drives away comfort and hides contentment from our eyes. Often, too, has it been debility of body—some secret disease has been sapping and undermining the very strength of our life and we knew not that it was there while we have been drawing insensibly near to the gates of death. We have wondered that we were low in spirits, whereas it would have been a thousand wonders if we had not been depressed! We have marveled that we have been cast down, whereas a physician would tell us that this was but one of many symptoms which proved that we were not right as to our bodily health.

Not infrequently has some crushing calamity been the cause of depression of spirit. Trial has succeeded trial. All your hopes have been blasted, your very means of sustenance have been suddenly snatched from you. While all your needs have remained, the supplies have been withdrawn from you. At other times, it has been bereavement that has brought you down very low. The axe has been at work in the forest of your domestic joys. Tree after tree has fallen—those from whom you plucked the ripest fruits of sweet society and kindred fellowship have been cut down by the ruthless woodsman—you have seen them taken away from you forever so far as this world is concerned. Or else it may be that you have been slandered. Your good has been evilly spoken of, your holiest motives have been misinterpreted, your most Divine aspirations have been misrepresented and you have gone about as with a sword in your bones while the malicious have taunted you, saying, "Where is your God now?" The cases of depression of spirit are so various that it must be, indeed, a rare panacea, a marvelous remedy, which would suit them all! Yet, when we come to speak of the remedies mentioned in our text, we shall find them suitable to most of these cases, if not to all—and to all in a degree, if not to the fullest extent.

Let us pass now, from the most obvious, to *the more subtle causes of soul-dejection.* This complaint is very common among God's people. When the young Believer has first to suffer from it, he thinks that he cannot be a child of God, "For," he says, "if I were a child of God, would I be like this?" What fine dreams some of us have when we are just converted! We fancy that we are going to sail straight away to Heaven and to have a prosperous voyage all the way! The wind is always to blow fairly for us, there is never to be a rough wave, no storm-cloud is to hover over the ship all the day long—and if there are any nights, the stars will be so brilliant that it will be as bright as day! Or, possibly, we imagine that we have come into a country where everybody will be kind to us, where all circumstances will be propitious to us, where everything will tend to nurture our piety and our own hearts—indeed, will forever get rid of legal terrors and perilous alarms! Oh, silly creatures that we are if we dream

thus foolishly! We know not what we are born to in our second birth, for, as a man is born to trouble by his first birth—when he is born a second time, he is born to a double share of trouble! Then, he was born to physical and mental trouble, but now that he is born-again, he is born to spiritual trouble and as he shall have new joys, so shall he also have a long list of new sorrows.

All that, however, is unknown to us at the first. And when it comes upon us, it surprises us. Am I now addressing one who is ready to exclaim, "I give up all hope. I am sure I cannot be a child of God because I am so cast down"? O you simple soul, the most advanced saints suffer in just the same way! Men who have been for forty, fifty, 60 years followers of Christ complain that, sometimes, it is a question with them whether they have ever known Christ at all! There are seasons with them when they would, if they could, creep into any mouse hole and hide their heads rather than be seen among God's people because they fear that they are hypocrites—and that the root of the matter is not in them. Why, I tell you, young Christians, that the most experienced Believers, the men who have great doctrinal knowledge and much experimental wisdom, the men who have lived very near to God and have had the most rapt and intimate fellowship with their Lord and Savior are the very men who have their ebbs, their winters and their times when it is a moot point with them whether they really love the Lord or not! Even the Apostle Paul was not exempt from doubts and fears, for he wrote, "We were troubled on every side; without were fights, within were fears." And, on another occasion, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." The man after God's own heart, even David, a man of experience so deep that none of us can fully decipher, much less rival it—a man of love so fervent that few of us can do more than aspire to catch the hallowed flame—nevertheless, had to cry aloud, and that very often, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me!"

"But," says one, "this death-like faintness comes upon me so often that, certainly I cannot be a child of God." Yes, but let me tell you that, possibly, it will come even more! Or, should it come more seldom, if you shall have weeks of pleasure, or even months of enjoyment, it is possible that your doubts will then be doubled in intensity and your soul will yet have greater trials to experience! So great a Savior is provided for our deliverance that we must expect to have great castings down from which we need to be delivered. Why, Believer, what are one half of the promises worth if we are not the subjects of doubts and fears? Why has Jehovah given us so many *shalls and wills* but because He knew that we should have so many accursed *ifs and perhapses*? He would never have given us such a well-filled storehouse of comfort if He had not foreseen that we would have a full measure of sorrow. God never makes greater provision than will be needed, so, as there is an abundance of consolations, we may rest assured that there will also be an abundance of tribulations! There will be much fear and casting down to each of us before we see the

face of God in Heaven! This disease of soul-dejection is common to all the saints—there are none of God's people who altogether escape it.

Let me go a step further and say that *the disease mentioned in our text, although it is exceedingly painful, is not at all dangerous*. When a man has a toothache, it is often very distressing, but it does not kill him. There have been some who have foolishly and peevishly wished to die to escape from the pain, but nobody does die of it. The bills of mortality are not swelled by its victims. And, in like manner, God's children are much vexed with their doubts and fears, but they are never killed by them. They are a great trouble, but they are not like a mortal disease. They are sorely vexatious, but they are not destructive. Why, it is possible for you to have real faith and yet to have the most grievous unbelief! "Oh," you say, "how can faith and unbelief live together?" They cannot live together in peace, but they may dwell together in the same heart. Remember what our Lord Jesus said to Peter "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" He did not say, "O you of no faith," but, "of *little* faith." Thus there was *some* faith, though there was also much doubt. So, in the Psalmist, there was some faith—there was, indeed, a great deal of faith—for he said, "O my God," and it takes great faith to truly say, "my God." Yet is there not also great unbelief here? Otherwise, would his soul have been cast down at all? But, meanwhile, had he not the yearnings of lively hope in God? If not, would he have dared to say, "Therefore will I remember You from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the Hill Mizar?

The fact is, we are the strangest mixture of contradictions that ever was known. We shall never be able to understand ourselves. God knows us altogether, but we shall never, at least in this life, completely comprehend ourselves. You remember that verse about the holy women at the sepulcher of Christ? After they had heard the angel's message, "they departed quickly from the sepulcher *with fear and great joy*." What a strange mixture! On the one hand, we have the golden fruit of joy—and on the other hand, the black fruit of fear. So it makes a kind of checker-work—there are blacks and whites, joys and sorrows, bliss and mourning mingled together! The highest joy and the deepest sorrow may be found in the Christian and the truest faith and yet the most grievous doubts may meet together in the child of God. Of course, they only meet there to make his heart a battlefield—but there they may meet—and his faith may be real while his doubts are grievous.

I would remark, yet further, that it is not only possible for a man to thus be cast down and yet to have true faith all the while, but *he may actually be growing in Grace while he is cast down*! Yes, and he may really be standing higher when he is cast down than he did when he stood upright. Strange riddle! But we who have passed through this experience know that it is true. When we are flat on our faces, we are generally the nearest to Heaven. When we sink the lowest in our own esteem, we rise the highest in fellowship with Christ and in knowledge of Him. Someone said, "The way to Heaven is not upward, but downward." There is some truth in the saying, though it is upward in Christ, it is downward in self. As Dr. Watts sings—

"The more Your glories strike my eyes,
The humbler I shall lie."

The inverse is equally true—

"The humbler I lie at my Savior's feet,
The more His glories strike my eyes."

This very casting down into the dust sometimes enables the Christian to bear a blessing from God which he could not have carried if he had been standing upright. There is such a thing as being crushed with a load of Grace—bowed down with a tremendous weight of benedictions—having such blessings from God that if our soul were not cast down by them, they would be the ruin of us. It is a good thing for us, sometimes, when fears frighten us and prosperity distresses us. Some of you may not understand what I am saying. You will not until you have this experience of which I have been speaking, but it does so happen that bitters often cleanse and sweeten the spiritual palate of God's children, while there are sweets which make their mouth full of bitters! I know that I have had songs in the night after I have had groaning during the day and, often, a salutary blow from God's loving hand, though it has made me smart, has cured me of some other far more baneful smart. Where kisses wounded, blows have healed.

The Christian life is a riddle and most surely are God's people familiar with that riddle in their experience. They must work it out before they can understand it. So I say again that this casting down is consistent with the most elevated degree of piety. Depression of spirit is no index of declining Grace—the very loss of joy and the absence of assurance may be accompanied by the greatest advancement in the spiritual life. Mark you, if it continues month after month, and even year after year, then it is a sign of great weakness of faith—but if it comes only occasionally, as clouds pass over our sky, it is well. We do not want rain all the days of the week and all the weeks of the year, but if the rain comes sometimes, it makes the fields fertile and fills the brooks—and after the shower has fallen and the sun shines again, it puts a new brightness upon the face of Nature and makes the birds clear their throats and sing a new song! The earth never looks so beautiful as when she rises up like one that has washed his face in the brook and, in the shining water, shows the freshness of her verdure and tells of the wondrous skill with which God has been pleased to adorn her. Even so is it with the Christian when he comes forth from great and sore troubles with his harp returned, his psaltery vocal with praise and his lips gratefully confessing to his God, "You have increased my greatness and comforted me on every side."

Painful as is this disease of soul—dejection—it is often very helpful to our spirit when we are obliged to cry, with David, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me." To be cast down is often the best thing that could happen to us. Do you ask, "Why?" Because, when we are cast down, it checks our pride. We are very apt to grow too big. It is a good thing for us to be taken down a notch or two. We sometimes rise so high, in our own estimation, that unless the Lord took away some of our joy, we would be utterly destroyed by pride. Were it not for this thorn in the flesh, we would be exalted beyond measure.

Besides, when this downcasting comes, it gets us to work at self-examination. That religion which has begun to be a matter of form and ritual to us, becomes a thing to be considered in deeper earnest. We look at it as a real thing because of our real doubts. Often, I am sure, when your house has been made to shake, it has caused you to see whether it was founded upon a rock. While your ship had nothing but fine weather, you sailed along too presumptuously. But when the storm threatened, then it was that you reefed your sails and turned to your chart to find your latitude and longitude, fearing that there might be danger ahead. So you get good to your soul by being made to examine yourself. A great loss in business has sometimes helped a man to become rich, for he has been more careful in his dealings afterwards. He has begun to change a system of trade which, perhaps, might have brought him to insolvency—and thus his business has been put upon a firmer footing than before. Even so, this downcasting of spirit, by leading us to search ourselves, may help, in the end, to make us all the richer in Divine Grace. When our soul is cast down within us we begin to have closer dealings with Christ than we had before. A long continuance of calm induces listlessness. There is a way of being wanton towards Christ. We begin to think that we can do without Him—we imagine that we have such a store of ready money that we can trade on our own account. But when gloomy doubts arise, we go back to the place where our spiritual life commenced and we sing again—

"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Your Cross I cling."

There is such a tendency in all the branches of the living and true Vine to try to bring forth fruit without deriving nourishment from the stem, so the Lord, every now and then, takes away the visible flowing of Divine consolation in order that we may consciously realize our entire dependence upon Him. When you and I were little and we were out at eventide walking with our father, we sometimes used to run on a long way ahead, but, by-and-by, there was a big dog loose on the road and it is astonishing how closely we then clung to our father! You remember how John Bunyan depicts that trait in the character of the children who went on pilgrimage with their mother, Christiana. "When they were come up to the place where the lions were, the boys that went before were glad to cringe behind, for they were afraid of the lions and so they stepped back and went behind. At this their guide smiled and said, 'How now, my boys, do you love to go before when no danger does approach, and love to come behind as soon as the lions appear?'" Just so is it with our doubts and fears. We run so far ahead that we lose sight of Christ—frightful things alarm us—and then we flee back again to the shadow of His Cross! This experience is good and healthful for us.

One other benefit that we derive from being cast down is *that it qualifies us to sympathize with others*. If we had never been in trouble we would be very poor comforters of others. It would do most physicians good if they were required, occasionally, to drink some of their own medicine. It would be no disadvantage to a surgeon if he once knew what it

was to have a broken bone. You may depend upon it that his touch would be more tender afterwards! He would not be so rough with his patients as he might have been if he had never felt such pain himself.

Show me a man who has never had a trial and I will show you a man who has no heart. Above all things, save me from the man who has never had any trouble all his life—let me not go into his house, or be near him anywhere else. If I am sick, let him not even pass by my window lest his shadow should fall upon me and make me worse, for he must be a cold-hearted, unsympathetic man if he has never known a trial and has never had to pass through the furnace of affliction!

I know that whenever God chooses a man for the ministry and means to make him useful, if that man hopes to have an easy life of it, he will be the most disappointed mortal in the world! From the day when God calls him to be one of His captains and says to him, "See, I have made you to be a leader of the hosts of Israel," he must accept all that his commission includes—even if that involves a sevenfold measure of abuse, misrepresentation and slander. We need greater soul-exercise than any of our flock, or else we shall not keep ahead of them. We shall not be able to teach others unless God thus teaches us. We must have fellowship with Christ in suffering as well a fellowship in faith. Still, with all its drawbacks, it is a blessed service and we would not retire from it. Did we not accept all this with our commission? Then we would be cowards and deserters if we were to turn back! These castings down of the spirit are part of our calling! If you are to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ, you must endure hardness. You will have to lie in the trenches, sometimes, with a bullet lodged here or there, with a saber cut on your forehead, or an arm or a leg shot away—where there is war, there must be wounds—and there must be war where there is to be victory!

II. I shall not say more about our being cast down. I have probably said enough about the disease, so now let us open the great medicine chest, and examine THE TWO REMEDIES here mentioned. "O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember You from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, and from the Hill Mizar."

The first remedy for soul-dejection is, *a reference of ourselves to God*, as David says, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember You." If you have a trouble to bear, the best thing for you to do is not to try to bear it at all, but to cast it upon the shoulders of the Eternal! If you have anything that perplexes you, the simplest plan for you will be not to try to solve the difficulty, but to seek direction from Heaven concerning it. If you have, at this moment, some doubt that is troubling you, your wisest plan will be not to combat the doubt, but to come to Christ just as you are and to refer the doubt to Him. Remember how men act when they are concerned in a lawsuit—if they are wise, they do not undertake the case themselves. They know our familiar proverb, "He who is his own lawyer has a fool for his client." So they take their case to someone who is able to deal with it and leave it with him. Well, now, if men have not sufficient skill to deal with matters that come before our courts of law, do you think that you have skill enough to plead

in the court of Heaven against such a cunning old attorney as the devil who has earned the name of "the accuser of the brethren," and well deserves the title? Never try to plead against him, but put your case into the hands of our great Advocate, for, "if any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." So, refer your case to Him—He will plead for you and win the day! If you should attempt to plead for yourself, it will cause you a vast amount of trouble and then you will lose the day after all.

Often, when I call to see a troubled Christian, do you know what he is almost sure to say? "Oh, Sir, I do not feel this—and I do fear that—and I cannot help thinking the other!" That great "I" is the root of all our sorrows—what I feel, or what I do not feel—that is enough to make anyone miserable! It is a wise plan to say to such an one, "Oh, yes! I know that all you say about yourself is only too true, but, now, let me hear what you have to say about Christ. For the next 24 hours at least, leave off thinking about yourself and think only of Christ." O my dear Friends, what a change would come over our spirits if we were all to act thus! For when we have done with self and cast all our cares upon Christ, there remains no reason for us to care, or trouble, or fret! That saying of Jack the Huckster, which I have often repeated—

"I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my All-in-All"—

describes the highest experience, though it is also the lowest. It is so simple and yet so safe, to live day by day by faith upon the Son of God who loved me, and gave Himself for me—to be a little child—not a strong man, but a little child who cannot fight his own battles, but who gets Jesus to fight them for him! To be a little weak one who cannot run alone, but who must be carried in the arms of the Good Shepherd. We are never so strong as when we are weak, as Paul wrote, "When I am weak, then am I strong." And we are never so weak as when we are strong, never so foolish as when we are wise in our own conceit and never so dark as when we think we are full of the Light of God. We are generally best when we think we are worst! When we are empty, we are full—when we are full, we are empty. When we have nothing, we have all things, but when we fancy that we are "rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," we are like the Laodiceans and know not that we are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Oh, for Grace to solve these riddles and so to live, day by day, *out of self and upon the Lord Jesus Christ*!

Let me give you an illustration. It is the easily-imagined case of a poor old woman who has no money of her own, but who has a rich friend who says to her, "Come to my house every Saturday and I will give you so much for a regular allowance. And if there is anything else that you need, I will pay for it—all your needs shall be supplied." He does not give her a large sum of money to keep, for she might not know how to spend it wisely, or she might be robbed of it—he gives it to her week by week. One Saturday morning the old lady is full of fear and alarm. If you happen to call upon her just then, you will hear her complaining, "I have not a

farthing in the world! I have just spent my last sixpence. I have no money in the bank, no houses from which I can collect rent! I have nothing but these few things that you see here—how am I to live with only this?" If you did not know anything more about the woman, you would sit down and pity her, would you not?

As it gets to be nearly twelve o'clock, she says, "I must be going." You ask, "Where?" She replies, "I am going to my friend who tells me to go to him every Saturday and he will give me all I need." "Why," you exclaim, "you silly old soul, you have been telling me all this tale of need and exciting my pity, when you are really a rich woman! Just because you do not happen to have it in hand, you have been telling me this pitiful story which is really not true." In like manner, when I see an heir of Heaven sitting down and mourning and weeping because he has not got this, and he has not got that—and when I turn to the Scriptures, and read, "All things are yours; and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." And I find promises like this, "All things, whatever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive." Or this, "The Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give Grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." If I do not say this to the one who is murmuring without cause, I say it to myself, for I have often been as foolish as the old woman of whom I spoke just now, "O you foolish self, how slow of heart you are to believe! How foolish you are to be thus sitting down and bemoaning your own emptiness when Christ is yours, with all His boundless fullness, when the Father's love and the Spirit's power and the Savior's Grace are all engaged to bring you safely through your trials, to rid you of your troubles and to land you triumphantly in Heaven!"

Be of good cheer, then, tried and depressed Believer, and apply this sacred remedy to yourself! Remember the Lord! Refer your case to Him and look to Him for all that you need!

David's other remedy for his soul, when it was cast down within him, was *the grateful remembrance of the past when, by the Lord's tender mercies, it was lifted up*—"therefore will I remember You from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the Hill Mizar." Look up your old diary—many of you have gray hair—so your notebooks go back a long way. Let us read one or two of the entries. Why, here is a bright page! Though the one preceding it is black and full of sorrow, this page is bright with joy and jubilant with song! What do I read? I see written here—

"I will praise You every day!
Now Your anger's turned away,
Comfortable thoughts arise
From the bleeding Sacrifice."

You wrote that verse in your diary just after you had found the Savior and your sins had been forgiven you for His sake. Well, then, although your harp is now unstrung and you are not praising your Lord today, I pray you to remember that hour when first you knew His love and to say, "If I had never received more than that one mercy from Him, I must bless Him for it in time and bless Him for it throughout eternity!" Here is another page in your diary. I see that you had been enduring some temporal trouble and that your earthly friends had forsaken you. But, in the

middle of your trouble, just where I might have expected to find these words, "I am utterly cast down, for God has forsaken me," I find written here—

"When trouble, like a gloomy cloud
Has gathered thick and thundered loud,
He near my soul has always stood,
His loving kindness, oh, how good!"

Do you think that He is not standing by your side now? If there is a loud thundering and if there is a thick darkness, will He leave you? Surely these reflections upon what you have experienced in the past should lead you to trust in Christ for the present! And, as you think of all His dealings with your soul, You may well say—

"Can He have taught me to trust in His name,
And thus far have brought me to put me to shame?"

God forbid that we should ever think that He was so cruel as to enlighten, comfort, cheer and help us so long and then leave us, at last, to sink and perish!

In this diary of yours, I also find one sweet record which is a great contrast to your present sad and gloomy state. You must have had a vision of Christ Crucified, for you have written—

"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."

Yet you, who have been at the foot of the Cross, are afraid that you will be cast away at the last! You have known the sweetness of Jesus' love, yet you are cast down! He has kissed you with the kisses of His lips—His left hand has been under your head and His right hand has embraced you—yet you think He will leave you to sink, at last, in your trouble! You have been in His banqueting house and you have had such food as angels never tasted, yet you dream that you shall be cast into Hell! Shame on you! Pluck off those robes of mourning! Lay aside that sackcloth and those ashes! Snatch your harps down from the willows and let us together sing praises unto Him whose love, power, faithfulness and goodness shall always be the same!

If there are any here who are strangers to all these things, I can only wish that they might even know our sorrows, in order that they might have an experience of our joys to treasure up in remembrance. Believers in Jesus are not a miserable crew—they have songs to sing and they have good reason to sing them! They have enough to make them blessed on earth and to make them blessed forever and ever!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 119:17-28.

Verse 17. *Deal bountifully with Your servant, that I may live, and keep Your word.* O Lord, I am Your servant, yet, I pray You, do not pay me wages according to my deserts, but according to the greatness of Your mercy! "Deal bountifully with Your servant." Little mercy will not be enough for such great sins and such great needs as mine. Deal very generously with Your poor servant who is so full of necessities, "that I may live," for, if You will only let me live, it will be of Your bounty since I deserve not even that gift. Only to have my life still spared shall be regarded by me as a great favor from You. I want not to live to please myself, for that would not be living at all, but "that I may live, and keep Your word." A holy life is the only true life, the only life that is really worth having—and he that has it has been dealt bountifully with by his God. I commend this verse to each servant of the Lord as a prayer that may be continually presented to Him.

18. *Open You my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Your Law.* This is one of the first parts of God's bountiful dealings with us. There is no mercy that is so great as mercy to one's own person, to one's own eyes, for instance, which are such essential parts of ourselves. Lord, when You are dealing bountifully with me, I do not ask for riches, but I do ask that my eyes may be opened. I do not ask You to give me more than You have given in Your Word, but I do ask for opened eyes with which I may perceive what You have put there, otherwise the beauties of Your Word may be useless to me by reason of my blindness. This blessed Book teems with marvels—it is a world of wonders. It records many miracles, but every page of it is itself a miracle and a mass of miracles—yet we must have them revealed to us or we shall not discover them. Revelation, itself, must be revealed to every person individually by the Spirit of God, or else he will never see it.

19. *I am a stranger in the earth: hide not Your commandments from me.* Humane men deal kindly with exiles. God has commanded us to be generous to strangers and He will certainly be so Himself. Lord, because of Your love, I find myself like an exile among the sons of men. But be not a stranger to me. What should I do, in this world, without You, and without Your Word? "Hide not Your commandments from me."

20, 21. *My soul breaks for the longing that it has unto Your judgments at all times. You have rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from Your commandments.* God cannot stand the proud—it is very seldom that they can stand one another! And if proud men loathe pride as they see it in others, you may rest assured that the good and great God will not endure it. How sternly He rebuked it in the angels that kept not their first estate. How He rebuked it in Pharaoh! All through history it may be seen how God has been continually abasing the proud and giving Grace to the humble.

22. *Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept Your testimonies.* He had lived honestly and uprightly and yet men slandered him. Was there ever a man upon earth who was good and true, who was not slandered? God Himself was slandered in Paradise by the old serpent—and the Lord Jesus was constantly being slandered by wicked men—so

can any of us hope to escape the envenomed tongue of the slanderer? Yet it is very painful and we may well pray to be delivered from it, especially if we can add, with the Psalmist, "for I have kept Your testimonies."

23. *Princes also did sit and speak against me: but Your servant did meditate on Your statutes.* Sometimes men can bear what the commonalty say, but to have the great ones of the earth speaking against them is thought by some to be very hard. The Psalmist says, "Princes also did sit and speak against me." What did he do under such circumstances? Did he rise up in anger and answer them? Or did he sit down and consider how he could defend himself against them? Far from it—"Your servant did meditate on Your statutes." He seems to say, "I did not think it was worth my while to leave the Scriptures, even for a moment, so as to speak to them, but I went on studying Your Word and left them to say what they pleased." We shall be wise if we do likewise.

24. *Your testimonies also are my delight and my counselors.* While these princes were taking counsel against the Psalmist, he also went and took Counsel's advice against them! But that Counsel's advice was the advice of the Word of God. He stuck to the Scriptures! Little as he had of them, yet that little he greatly prized. The Pentateuch furnished him with five Inspired Counselors to whom he resorted in his time of need. Let us imitate his example, especially as we have the complete Canon of revelation to advise and counsel us!

25-28. *My soul cleaves unto the dust: quicken You me according to Your word. I have declared my ways, and You heard me: teach me Your statutes. Make me to understand the way of Your precepts: so shall I talk of Your wondrous works. My soul melts for heaviness: strengthen You me according unto Your word.* The Word of the Lord is available for quickening, teaching and strengthening. As Paul wrote to Timothy, "All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." May that gracious Spirit, who Inspired it, always teach us its inner meaning!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—34, 634, 622.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, 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 CHURCH ENCOURAGED AND EXHORTED
NO. 2799

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

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 27, 1878.

"Bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth." Isaiah 43:6.

IF YOU will look at the connection of these words, you will see that they were spoken with the view of encouraging the Church—"Fear not: for I am with you: I will bring your seed from the East, and gather you from the West; I will say to the North, Give up; and to the South, keep not back: bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth." The Lord loves His Church and He loves to see her full of courage and confidence, but, sometimes, her ministers appear to labor in vain and to spend their strength for nothing. The services in connection with the various agencies of the Church appear to be like plowing upon a rock. The bread is cast upon the waters, according to the Lord's command, but it is not found again even after many days have passed away. At such times the Church begins to tremble—she is full of fear. She cannot give up her mission which is the enlightenment of the world, but she is very apt to continue in it with a faint and feeble heart and, consequently, to do what she is doing as a matter of mere routine, with very little zeal, or love, or hope, or joy.

Now, Beloved, the Lord would not have it so. He intends that His cause and Kingdom shall prosper in the world. It is written concerning the Messiah, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He has set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for His Law"—and He would not have His people to be discouraged! Does not the farmer, after sowing his seed, wait a long while for the precious fruits of the earth? And for such fruits as those which are to be reaped by us we may well be content to wait, not merely for weeks, or for months, but for centuries! We need not be in such a hurry as we often are. God has great leisure. He lives not merely in time, He inhabits eternity. A thousand years are to Him but as one day, so He can afford to wait. We are only children and we feel that we must have something done at once, or we may be dead and gone and never see it—but Jehovah is always the same and of His years there is no end, so He bids us cease to judge by the appearances after a few days or years of toil for Him and to believe in the grandeur to be revealed in the ages yet to be, for, before the end of the age, this prophecy must

be fulfilled and Christ shall "set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for His Law."

My subject, on this occasion, is intended to cheer up the workers for Christ, to encourage those who are seeking to serve the Lord by giving them full assurance that the Lord has a people whom He means to save, that they will be saved, are being saved, now, and that it becomes us to see to it that we help—each one of us according to his or her own measure—in this glorious work.

I. The first Truth of God that I see in the text is that THE LORD HAS CHILDREN FAR AWAY—"Bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth."

Some of them are *far away in the matter of locality*. They are not dwelling where the Gospel is preached. They are nowhere near to the happy shores where the message of salvation is constantly being proclaimed. Some of them are where roads have not as yet been made and the commerce of civilization has not come. I doubt not that, in dark Africa, the Lord Jesus has multitudes of those who are redeemed with His precious blood—those who are elect according to the foreknowledge of God—whom He is determined to save. And in those lands of which Mr. Hudson Taylor spoke to us the other night—in Tibet, in Manchuria, in Tartary—Christ has a people whom He has ordained unto eternal life and whom He means to bring unto Himself. In all nations and among all kindreds, people and tongues, there is a remnant according to the election of Grace upon whom the eyes of God are especially set, and of whom He has declared, in His eternal purpose, "They shall be Mine in that day when I make up My jewels." It should be a great encouragement to every missionary of the Cross to know that the Lord has a people everywhere. He said to Paul, concerning Corinth, "I have much people in this city" and that assurance encouraged the Apostle to preach the Word there. We can never tell where the Lord has much people, but this we do know—our commission runs thus, "Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature"—and one reason for this command is because the Lord has many of His sons and daughters who are far off as a matter of locality.

But we know that He also has many sons and daughters who are far off in a worse sense than this—for they are *far off as to character*—as opposed to God as darkness is to light! Alas, alas, that it should be so! Yet so it is, for the whole race of mankind has gone astray. But God has His chosen people among the fallen race. Some of the human race have gone further astray than the rest by gross criminality, or by long-continued habits of abominable filthiness, yet even among those who are reckoned to be beyond the pale of decent society, among those who have gone the full length of their tether and who could not go any further in sin if they were to try to do so—the Lord still has sons and daughters whom, in due time, He intends to bring to Himself and to save! It is a great joy to us, when we think of the fallen masses of London, to know that many a daughter of our Lord shall be washed and cleansed though now impure, unhallowed, and vile. It is a comfort to us to think that many a son of God shall yet be redeemed by power, having already been redeemed by price, and shall be brought to Jesus' feet, though now a slave to sin and

an ardent lover of everything that is evil! Oh, yes, the Lord has a chosen people whom He means to fetch out of the worst dens and kennels of London—a people whom He intends to allure away from the frivolities of fashion, the blasphemies of infidelity and the degradations of superstition! He will effectually call them out from all their old associations, for He has chosen them and Christ has redeemed them—and He will, in this sense, bring His sons from far and His daughters from the ends of the earth!

There are some who are far off in another sense. It is not so much character that puts them far off from God, as their *not being in the way of hearing the Gospel*. The Kingdom of God has come near to most of you. You, dear Friends, who constantly occupy your seats here, or who attend other places of worship where Christ is preached, are not far off in this sense—you are near. Alas, that some of you should be so near the Kingdom of God and yet should not enter it! "You are not far from the Kingdom of God," said Christ to one of the scribes, yet we do not know that that man ever crossed the border line and entered the Kingdom! It is a mournful fact that so many are willing to go down into the bottomless Pit with Gospel invitations and exhortations ringing in their ears. Bitter, indeed, shall be that man's cup who deliberately puts from him the cup of Everlasting Life—and bitter shall be the bread that he shall eat forever who refuses to take the Bread of Life, even though it is set before him and pressed upon his acceptance every Sabbath! But there are great numbers of persons, even in our own land, who are not in the way of hearing the Gospel. They have been brought up under some form of religion which they believe to be right, but, as long as they adhere to the faith of their fathers, they never hear the doctrine of free and full salvation by the Grace of God! They are content with what they hear, but there is little likelihood of their ever being converted, for the Gospel, by which men are converted, is not allowed to have access to them. Yet, notwithstanding this, it is our firm conviction that there are many among them who are the sons and daughters of God and who shall yet be brought near to Him.

It happens, sometimes, that the more unlikely ones are the first to be converted. You probably remember the story of the man who went to hear George Whitefield preach and who had filled his pocket with stones to throw at God's servant. But, as Whitefield preached the Gospel, the man dropped one stone after another until, at last, all the stones were gone out of his pocket and, better still, God had taken the stony heart out of his flesh and given him a heart of flesh! There have been others who have never heard the Gospel, yet who are opposed to it—but, in some remarkable way they hear it for the first time and all their opposition is overcome! It is love at first sight with them, but it is true love! They lay hold on Christ by faith and are saved! When Lady Erskine was riding, one day, near where Rowland Hill was preaching in the open air, she paused and listened to him and he put the Word of Life so clearly before her that she accepted Christ then and there, and became one of the greatest helpers of the Methodist Reformation of the time!

The Lord may work in a similar fashion in other cases—those who seemed as if no one could get at them shall be reached by the Gospel and

be converted. The Lord does bring in His chosen ones! As I look round in this audience, I can joyfully remember some of you who seemed as little likely ever to be brought to accept Christ as any people on the face of the earth—yet here you are, happy in the Lord and rejoicing in His Divine Grace! I am sure that with many of you, your own experience must make you feel that the Lord has other sons to bring from far, and daughters to come unto Him from the ends of the earth. If you will walk down any of our streets and chalk upon the door of a house in which you think it is most unlikely that anybody will ever be converted, I should feel almost certain that someone will be brought to Christ, by Divine Grace, out of that very house! The Grace of God often comes into the most unlikely hearts.

Once again, the Lord Jesus Christ saves by His Grace some who *are far off in their own apprehension*. It is not really true that they have been more sinful than others, but they think they have. It is not because they do not hear the Gospel that they are not converted, for they do hear it and, generally, they are among the most attentive hearers, but they consider that theirs is a case which the Gospel cannot touch. They imagine that they are excluded from all participation in the mercies of God. To hear them talk, you would suppose that they had read the roll which contains the names of those for whom the Divine act of amnesty and oblivion has been passed and had discovered that their names were not written there. Well now, dear Friends, though you are far off through your own fear and apprehension, I want to comfort you with the assurance that the Lord has many sons and daughters who are in a similar condition to yourself! I can speak from experience upon this point, for I was long in that sad condition. I judged that the salvation of my brother, sisters and friends was possible, but not my own. I came to the conclusion that all other young men might be saved, but—I did not quite know why—yet I nevertheless felt that I never could be saved. I imagined that I had sinned away my day of Grace, or something of that sort equally absurd—yet I lived to prove that it was not so, for the Lord brought His son from far. And you, also, dear Friend, may bow at the feet of Jesus! And He is here to say to you that however far off you may be in your own apprehension of your case, His Word still applies to you, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Even if you feel that you cannot come to Him, look up to Him, for He has said, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." Who will say that He cannot look? A babe may look! A person with little education may look! One who is dying may look! A half-blind man may look! So, look unto Christ and be you saved, even though you are at the very ends of the earth!

So you see that the Lord has children who are far off from Him in several senses. Have you ever known what it is to have a child of yours far off from you? Thank God, some of us have never had the sorrow of having our children far off from us in character, or in love. They have always been true to us and worthy to be held dear by us, yet we know, from our observation of others, something of what it must be to have a son a long way off. What does a father or a mother do when the son is a long way off? Why, they like to hear all they can about him—especially they love to hear from him—to get a letter or a message from their boy. Well, now,

our Heavenly Father watches over all His poor wandering children. Many of them have forgotten Him, but He has not forgotten them. He exercises a wonderful care over them long before they are converted and checks them in a thousand ways. There are some of you who would have laid violent hands on yourselves, before you were converted, if it had not been for God's restraining mercy! And some of you had so grossly sinned that you might have sinned the sin that is unto death if God had not held you back in the nick of time! Long before regenerating Grace is manifest, there is a prevalent Grace which watches over the heirs of mercy who know not that they are heirs of mercy—and keeps them from going down into the Pit because the Lord has found a Ransom. You who have been brought to Christ, though you were far from Him, can tell this story as no others can!

II. Now we pass on to the second point which is that THE LORD IS BRINGING HOME SOME OF THESE FAR-OFF ONES. In our text He gives this command, "Bring My sons from far."

To whom is this command spoken? I think we shall be right if we say that it is spoken much in the same way in which the Lord said, "Let there be light," "and there was light." His fiat did the deed. So God says, "Bring My sons from far," and, therefore, we may be sure that they will be brought to Him!

First, *Providence obeys this command*. Everything that happens in the mysterious movements of Providence is operating, under the controlling power of God, for the bringing in of His chosen. I like to read the newspaper somewhat in John Newton's fashion—with the view of knowing what is my Heavenly Father's next move—watching to see where next He means to turn His hand. I am not a great believer in the wisdom of our rulers, nor of any rulers whatever, but I rejoice that "the Lord reigns" and that He is just as certainly effecting His eternal purposes by the folly of man as by the wisdom of man! To me, the one thought concerning all the kingdoms of the earth is this—how is the Gospel advancing in Turkey, or in Afghanistan, or in other lands? I care for this world only for the sake of God's own people in it. The world is all scaffolding—the Church of Christ is the true building. The ultimate purpose of God is the gathering out of the world as many as He has given unto His Son, Jesus Christ, that they may have eternal life in Him and glorify Him forever. As you see those awful wheels of Providence revolve, those wheels that are full of eyes—and as they grind on in their ever-widening circles, you stand aghast and are awed and terrified by them—yet you may know that they are always revolving with this purpose—the fulfillment of the everlasting counsel of God and the giving unto Christ to see of the travail of His soul that He may be satisfied. God is saying to the North, "Give up," and to the South, "Keep not back." His voice in Providence is saying to all the powers that be, "Bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth."

The same is true on a small scale. All manner of afflictions that come to men are sent to touch their conscience and to bring them back to God. Many are brought to God by the loss of infants, by their own sickness, or by falling into poverty, who, speaking after the manner of men, would never come to God if it were not for these trying experiences. Many are

my Master's black dogs with which He fetches His sheep into the fold! And when they won't come at the call of the Gospel, He often says, "Fever, fetch him in. Death, bring him to Me." There is a mother who will not come to Christ in any other way, so He sends the black dog of bereavement to her—her child is carried to the cemetery and in the day of her distress she seeks the Lord! This is frequently God's way of working, but, by one means or another, He will bring His sons from far and His daughters from the ends of the earth. All the dispensations of His Providence shall work to that end.

This seems to me to be a charge *given to all God's people*, as well as to Providence, "Bring My sons from far." You know Me. You love Me, so, look after My wandering children." There is a well known proverb, "Love me, love my dog," but God could give us a better one, "Love Me, love My children—love poor sinners. Go and find them and bring them back to Me." Do not be satisfied till you have brought them in. Make this your life work—let it be the one thing you live for—to bring God's children from far. Are there some whom you know who are very near to the Kingdom? Try and bring them, but do you also know some others who are a long way off? Then, single them out! Pray more for them than for other people! Be most diligent to bring in those who are the worst and the least likely to come to Christ. "Bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth." Be sure not to neglect them. Whatever else you do, mind that you preach to the Jerusalem sinners, the biggest and blackest sinners whom you can find anywhere. This is God's command to us who have ourselves been already brought to Him.

But this command would be of no force unless my text were, as I have already said it is, a fiat. In consistency with this command, *the Holy Spirit goes forth*, in ways known to Himself, and He brings God's sons from far and His daughters from the ends of the earth. You remember the story of Thorpe and the other members of the Hell Fire Club who met together for profane purposes on the Sabbath? It was decided that Mr. Thorpe should imitate Whitefield, so he went to hear that mighty preacher of the Gospel, got the sermon well memorized, preached it to his infidel companions and, by God's Grace, became converted while doing so! He left the Hell Fire Club to become a heavenly fire preacher all the rest of his life! O Sovereign Grace, what is there that you cannot do? When God says, "Bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth," they are sure to be brought and laid at His feet—and added to His Church—to the praise of the glory of His Grace!

III. Now I am going to conclude with my third point which is that THIS IS SAID FOR THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF GOD'S CHURCH.

This command has a very intimate connection with Christ's Church. Our text says, "Bring My sons and My daughters." But the 5th verse says, "I will bring your seed." Then, saved souls are the seed of the Church as well as the sons and daughters of God! God puts a wonderful honor upon human instrumentality. Paul represents himself as being, spiritually, both father and mother to souls that were born to God. He wrote to Philemon, "I beseech you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds." And to the Galatians he wrote, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ is formed in you." Thus, great honor was

put upon instrumentality—and the Lord is pleased to consider converts as the children of His Church as well as His own children!

Now then, Beloved, you who are members of the Church of the living God, will you not take a deep interest in the bringing home of the far-off ones who are your own children—the children of the Church—as well as the children of God? I trust that some of you will find them to be, literally, your own children—your own flesh and blood! May they all be converted and may your word be blessed to their conversion so that they may become your own spiritual children! The whole Church of God ought to think, with the deepest sympathy, of all those who are hopeful, those who are impressed, those who are coming to Christ and never to rest satisfied until they are all brought safely home! We should never be content till we get them to confess their faith in Christ and know that they are, indeed, saved in the Lord with His everlasting salvation!

Many of you know that I am expecting my son home from Australia. One feels inclined to run down to Plymouth to meet the ship and I would like to send some of you down to meet those who are coming where they first touch the land—that is, where they begin to believe in Jesus. Do you not feel that you want to go as far as you can to meet the sinner who is coming to Christ, to try to take away his last fear, to smooth the last wrinkle from his face and to tell him that he is fully and freely forgiven through the precious blood of Jesus? I hope, dear Christian friends, that you will all have deep sympathy with our Heavenly Father, so that you will say, "If He is bringing His sons from far, let us go meet them and do the utmost that we can to show them that they shall have a hearty welcome, not only to their Father's house, but also to our hearts."

I have known professing Christians whose children have grown up to be their sorrow and their curse. I said to a Sister who brought the last of her children to join the Church, "You are a favored woman, for I know some who, I hope, are Christians, yet their children are turning out very badly." She said, "Have you noticed, Sir, whether they have family prayer or not?" That was a wise question, for, where there is no family prayer, we cannot expect to see the children grow up in the fear of God. There may be a public profession of religion, but, if there is no *practice of religion at home*—if its true position is not distinctly recognized every day—we cannot wonder if the young people do not go in the right way. Neglect anywhere is sure to bring evil consequences, but in keeping God's commandments there is always a great reward. I have seen many of God's faithful servants who began their Christian life early and took their stand for Christ and, in taking that stand, had to bear opposition, persecution and loss—yet they soon got over all that and God greatly prospered them! They brought up their children in the fear of the Lord and it cost them many a pang to speak severely to them, or to use the rod when it was needed—but they did what God would have them do and He blessed them. And now you can see the venerable patriarch with his children and his grandchildren around him, prospered in his business, happy in his own person, blessed himself and made a blessing to others! Many a time I have seen this cheering sight and I have learned that even in this life, in keeping God's commandments there is great reward!

The Church of Christ has a further interest in these far-off sons and daughters from the fact that not only are they her seed, *but they are coming home to her*. All those who are God's spiritual children shall certainly come into His Church. They may not join our portion of His Church, but they will help to strengthen the true Church of God. But some of these far-off ones will come to us—so should we not be getting ready to welcome them? Let us have no surly tempers in our midst, no cold hearts and no divisions, because when these young converts come among us, they will be frightened if they find us full of evil passions and with little or no love to Christ. I like to see a Church keep herself in such a state that she is always ready to welcome "the little stranger"—the new-born child of God—whenever it comes into her midst. Whatever quarrels there may be in the streets, we must always have peace at home for the sake of these little ones. I would like, sometimes, to say to those who have noisy church meetings, or who display a party spirit, "Hush! Be quiet for the sake of these newcomers. Do not let them be hurt in their feelings and injured in their minds."

And to you older Christians I would affectionately say, "Always keep your hearts young, warm and cheerful, that you may be a help to those who have just come into the Church for, if they see a crabby looking face, or if they hear harsh and unkind words, they are very likely to say, "This is not the place for us! This cannot be our Father's house." Or else they will think, perhaps, that they have met an elder brother like the one in the parable—and it is very likely that they have—and it is always a pity if the poor prodigal, when coming back, meets his elder brother before he meets his father! It was a great mercy for the prodigal that he met his father first, for his loving welcome enabled him afterwards to endure very different treatment from his unbrotherly elder brother! Do not let any of us play the elder brother in *that* fashion, but let us be glad to receive the wanderers whenever they come and unite with us!

For, remember that these who are coming—these outsiders who are going to be brought in—these far-off ones who are being brought home—*will greatly help us when they do come*. Read the 7th verse—"Even everyone who is called by My name: for I have created him for My glory." That is the kind of converts and members that we want—those who are created for God's Glory! Brothers and Sisters in Christ, we are living for God's Glory, are we not? Is not that the great end and objective of our being? Well, here come some recruits to join our ranks and some of them are the best recruits that can be found anywhere! A number of young Christians constantly coming into a church is a great blessing to that church. It tends to keep all the members alive and full of earnestness and vigor.

"But," say some of the older friends, "these young converts are so imprudent." Bless them! The Lord increase their imprudence, for that is one of the grandest things in the world when it is sanctified! It was most imprudent, on the part of the Apostle Paul, to go into those cities where he was stoned, dragged out and left for dead!. It was most imprudent of him, was it not, to lose his reputation and his standing among men simply that he might preach Jesus Christ and Him Crucified? May our young converts always maintain such grand imprudence as that!

"But, Sir," say the objectors, "these young people who are coming into the church do not know much." For that matter, Brothers and Sisters, we do not know much either, so we cannot keep them out on that ground! "But they have zeal without knowledge." Yes, Brother, and it is quite possible to have knowledge without zeal. Both of those things are bad when alone, but, my Brother, if you have the knowledge and they bring the zeal, you have only to trade with them a little in the way of barter, to your mutual benefit. You can give them some of your knowledge, which will not be to their loss, and they can give you some of their zeal, which will be very much to your gain—so fetch them in as speedily as you can!

I remember the case of a godly man who prayed very fervently for the conversion of his children, yet he never saw one of them saved until he was the means of bringing to Christ a very desperate sinner—and when that great sinner was converted, *he* became the means of the conversion of that good man's children! The Lord has many ways of working out His eternal purposes. There are some people for whom you are praying, yet, possibly, you will never bring them to Christ by merely praying for them. While others for whom you have never yet specially prayed, if you will talk to them faithfully and earnestly, you may bring them in by God's great Grace, and then they may be the means of bringing in others. You must never imagine that you are to pick and choose who is to be saved! That is not a matter that is left to you—the Lord's choice may be very different from your choice. The way for you to ascertain God's choice is to talk about Christ to everybody you meet—*try to bring everyone to Christ*. The Lord will do the sorting far better than you can—He never makes a mistake. Your part is to cast the net into the sea and to enclose all the fish if you can get them in—and then haul them ashore if it is possible. There will not be one more really in the Gospel net beside those whom God has ordained to bless and save. Therefore do not be afraid to cast the net in again and again. Especially, dear Friends, let all of us look after the far-off ones who are coming home and be ready to welcome them!

God grant that they may not be wrecked in the last part of their voyage! May all go safely, even if roughly, with them and may they come to land praising redeeming Grace and dying love in which song you and I will join both now and forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 43:1-7, 18-28; 44:1, 2.

Isaiah 43:1. *But now thus says the LORD that created you, O Jacob, and He that formed you, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name; you are Mine.* Observe the tender ties that bind our God to His people—creation, the formation of them for His praise, redemption, the purchase of them for Himself and the calling of them by their name. The Lord remembers the bonds which unite us to Himself even when we forget them. He recollects His eternal love and all the deeds of mercy that have flowed from it. Though our memory is treacherous and our faith is feeble, "yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself." Blessed be His holy name!

2. *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.* His Presence is all that we need even in the deepest floods of tribulation—this He has promised to us. He does not say what He will do for us, but He does tell us that He will be with us, and that is more than enough to meet all our necessities.

2. *And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you.* That is a wonderful picture of a man walking through fire and yet not being burned. But there was a greater wonder that was seen by Moses, which may well comfort us. He saw a bush that burned with fire and yet was not consumed. Now a bush, in the desert, is usually so dry that at the first application of fire, it flames, glows and is speedily gone. Yet you and I, who are, spiritually, just as dry and combustible as that bush was naturally, may burn, and burn, and burn, yet we shall not be consumed because the God, who was in the bush, is also with us and in us!

3. *For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior: I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you.* And He has given infinitely more than that for us who are now His people, for He gave His only-begotten Son that He might redeem us with His precious blood! Now that we have cost Him so much, is it likely that He will ever forsake us? It is not possible!

4. *Since you are precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you: therefore will I give men for you, and people for your life.* How sweetly this verse comes home to those whose characters have been disreputable! As soon as they are truly converted to Christ, they become "honorable." "Since you are precious in My sight, you have been honorable." God does not call His people by their old names of dishonor, but He gives them the title of "Right Honorable," and makes them the nobility of His Court! "Unto you that believe, He is an honor," and you have honor in Him and from Him.

5-7. *Fear not: for I am with you: I will bring your seed from the east and gather you from the west, I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth; even every one that is called by My name: for I have created him for My glory, I have formed him; yes, I have made him.*

The Lord seems to dwell upon that note of the creation of His children for His own Glory. This accounts for many of our troubles and for all our deliverances—it is that God may be glorified by bringing His children through the fires and through the floods. A life that was never tested by trial and trouble would not be a life out of which God would get much Glory. But they that do business in the great waters see the works of God and His wonders in the deep and they give Him praise and, besides, when they come to their desired haven, then they praise the Lord for His goodness and God is thereby glorified.

18, 19. *Remember you not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing.* It is a very profitable thing to remember the things of old. It is greatly beneficial to us to study what God did in years and ages long gone by—yet God intends to do for us something in the future that shall eclipse all the past! Especially was this

true in Isaiah's day, for the coming of Christ, which was then in the future, was to be such a sun-rising of mercy that all the stars of blessing that had shone before, would seem to be lost in the brightness of His appearing! Dear Friends, do not always dwell on the past. You who are getting gray are very apt to say that the former things and former times were better than now. Do not say so, but believe this promise of Jehovah, "Behold, I will do a new thing."

19, 20. *Now it shall spring forth; you shall not know it. I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. The beast of the field shall honor Me, the dragons and the owls.* I have sometimes laid hold of this text and have been comforted by it concerning the conversion of the very worst of men. Some people say, "What is the good of going among blasphemers and profane persons with the Word of God?" Well, if the beast of the field—the dragons and the owls shall honor Him—we need never think of leaving any of the sons of men to perish! It is not what they are, but what God is, that should give us confidence concerning them. Even if they were worse than they are, the Omnipotent Grace of God would still be able to reach them and to convert them—let us have no doubt about this matter!

20. *Because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to My people, My chosen.* Oh, the wonders of the love of God! Wherever He has a chosen people, every mercy shall certainly come there! If they are in the wilderness, waters shall come to them! If they are in the desert, rivers shall flow to them! They shall have drink till they come where they can drink to the full at the living fountains of water at God's right hand.

21. *This people I have formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise.* Here is this same note again. Yet mark what kind of people they had been—a people whom God had greatly loved, but who had backslidden from Him. They had wandered very far away from God, yet still His purpose of love did not change—"This people I have formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise." What a blessed, "shall," that is, uttered by One who knows how to make it good by deeds of mighty Grace!

22. *But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob; but you have been weary of Me, O Israel.* They were not much like Jacob, for he prayed at Jabbok and became Israel, who wrestled till he prevailed, saying to the Angel, "I will not let You go except You bless me." Yet here are people who bear the same name—"Jacob" and "Israel," yet God has to say to them, "You have not called upon Me, O Jacob. You have been weary of Me, O Israel."

23. *You have not brought Me the small cattle of your burnt offerings; neither have you honored Me with your sacrifices.* Is that true of any of you? Have you restrained prayer and have you also stinted God in your offering? Whereas He gave His Son for you, have you refused the small cattle of your burnt offerings?

23. *I have not caused you to serve with an offering, nor wearied you with incense.* "I have laid no tax upon you. I have not demanded so much of your income as a condition for your being members of My Church. I have left it to your love and gratitude to bring your freewill offerings to Me."

24. *You have bought Me no sweet cane with money.* No perfume or incense that should sweeten the temple of God.

24. *Neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices: but—* Oh, this "but! "But"!

24. *You have burdened Me with your sins.* You have made a servant of your Master—treated your Redeemer as if He were your slave!

24. *You have wearied me with your iniquities.* Oh, what a terrible verse this is about a people whom God had formed for Himself and who shall yet show forth His praise! Alas, this is how they sometimes still are—indifferent, ungrateful, presenting Him no tokens of love, but, on the contrary, disobedient, grieving Him and vexing His Holy Spirit. What will He do with them now? "Cut them off, and reject them," says one. Yes, that is what men would do—but that is not what God will do. Listen!

26. *I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins.* You have forgotten His mercies—but He will forget your sins! You have grieved Him—but He still has a tender heart towards you! He will blot out your sins. Oh, how this ought to melt us! How this ought to encourage us to begin again in better style—to be much in prayer, much in holy service and much in self-sacrifice!

26-28. *Put Me in remembrance: let us contend together: state your case that you may be acquitted. Your first father has sinned, and your teachers have transgressed against Me. Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.*

Isaiah 44:1, 2. *Yet now hear, O Jacob My servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: thus says the LORD that made you, and formed you from the womb, which will help you; Fear not, O Jacob, My servant; and you, Jesurun, whom I have chosen.* He comes back to that point, again, you see—"Israel whom I have chosen: thus says the Lord that made you." See the deep argument for Infinite Love? God will not forsake the work of His own hands. "I have formed you, and chosen you; therefore, fear you not, but come to Me anew, and serve Me henceforth with all your heart."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—625, 627.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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

"PRAY, ALWAYS PRAY"
NO. 2800

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 12, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 3, 1878.

"In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you, for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God." John 16:26, 27.

THE present time in which we live is highly favored and ought to be highly valued. Let us never grudge the Patriarchs their communion with God when, sometimes, He spoke personally into their ear, or revealed Himself visibly to them. Blessed are our eyes, for they see, and our ears, for they hear the things which kings and Prophets waited for in vain. That which was denied to them has been revealed to us and we are, therefore, peculiarly privileged. Though John the Baptist, living on the very verge of the Gospel dispensation, was the greatest man who had been born of woman, yet the least in the kingdom of Heaven is greater than he—and we are now living in that kingdom of Heaven, although there is, at present, much to mar the glory of the reign of Christ on earth. Be grateful, therefore, O you sons of men who are also sons of God—be grateful that you live in this truly golden age, for, with all its sorrows and all its shortcomings, it is an age of great mercy and of high privilege!

I venture even to set the present period above that brave age in which Jesus dwelt here among men. We are very apt to look upon that time as being the sunniest era which the Church of God ever enjoyed, yet it was not so. The dispensation of the Holy Spirit is of a higher order than the dispensation of the humiliated and suffering Savior. That was the day of the Church's childhood, when her Lord instructed her by pictures and taught her letters, but kept back many of the grander and deeper Truths of God because she was not able to bear them. But now the Holy Spirit has been given to lead us into all Truth and He takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us. It was but the twilight of the Gospel dispensation, or only its dawning hour when our Lord was here. True, He is the Sun of Righteousness, but His disciples saw only a little of His Glory, for their eyes were but slightly opened and they had less of the Light of God from Him than we have, though the blessedness of His corporeal personal Presence is denied to us.

At that time there was much backwardness in prayer even among the Apostles of Christ. Just before our text, we read that Christ said to them,

"Hitherto have you asked nothing in My name." We read of our Master praying—

"Cold mountains and the midnight air,
Witnessed the fervor of His prayer"—

but we read very little about the prayers of the disciples. They did once get as far as to say, "Lord, teach us to pray," but very little did any of them seem to know, then, of the power of prayer. Now, the Lord has not only taught us to pray, but He has also given us the Holy Spirit to help our infirmities and to make intercession for us with groaning which cannot be uttered. In many other respects upon which I need not, now, dwell in detail, we are far in advance of the highly-favored 12 who remained with Christ, or the privileged 70 who were sent forth by Him to teach, to preach and to heal the sick. It is a blessed period in which we live and I want you who are believers in Christ to prize your privileges. If you have been lamenting your lot, I want you to feel that your birth could scarcely have been at a more auspicious period and that to be living in the time when the Spirit of God has been given—and His sacred influences are exercising their power in the Church—is a high honor which God has granted to you!

I am led to make these remarks because our text commences with the words, "At that day," which is the present period, the time when Christ has returned to His Father's right hand after His terrible death-pangs on Calvary—the period when we are no longer full of sorrow because He died, but our sorrow has turned into joy on His account and on our own, too. It is "at that day" that the blessings I am going to speak of are given to us, so that we are even now enjoying them, or ought to be doing so.

Taking the text as referring to the period in which we live, I notice, first, *the Believer's daily exercise*—"In that day you will ask in My name." Secondly, we have *the Believer's privileged position*—"I do not say to you, that I shall pray the Father for you, for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God." Then, thirdly, I shall try, practically, to suggest what should be *the Believer's natural conclusion* from the blessed Truth of God which is here revealed to us.

I. First, then, let us notice THE BELIEVER'S DAILY EXERCISE. It is to ask and to continue asking—"In that day you will ask in My name."

It is a very simple matter to ask, but how gracious it is, on the part of God, to append to such a simple thing as asking the promise of giving! He has not said, "Deserve the blessing," but, "Ask for it." He does not say, "Purchase it," but, "Ask for it." Not, "Labor until you at length procure it by your own toil," but, "Ask for it." Brothers and Sisters, if Heaven is to be had for the *asking* and if all that is needed to bring us to Heaven is to be had for the *asking*, who would not ask? Whatever else a Believer may fail to do, he should never fail, surely, in asking! If we have never asked God for anything at all, we may be quite sure that we were never converted. A prayerless soul must be a Christless soul. But if we are really in Christ, we must have practiced the sacred art of asking and we

ought to go on continually with it. If there is any difficulty in our minds, let us ask, for the Holy Spirit can solve it. If there is any need in our homes, let us ask, for our Heavenly Father can supply it. If there is any weakness in our spiritual nature, let us ask, for God can strengthen us. If there is any longing desire of our soul which even leads to great heaviness of spirit, let us ask, for our desire can be granted if it is a right one—and our heaviness can be removed. To ask, my Brothers and Sisters, is very simple—and let the Lord's name be praised that, usually, the best asking is that which is the most simple!

To ask anything of God does not require that you should use a set form of words. The children in your family do not read a petition to you when they need any favor at your hands—they state their need in childish language—you understand them and grant their request if it is a right and proper one—and compliance with it is within your power. Act in just the same way with your God! We are often far too careful about picking and choosing the phrases that we use in prayer. Do you think that God is pleased with a display of oratory, or that He takes notice of your elocution when you come to the Throne of Grace? It may suit a teacher of English composition to criticize your sentences, but God thinks much more of your *desires* than of the words in which they are expressed. It may be natural for a scholar to consider the accuracy of your terms, but God especially marks the earnestness of your soul. There is no other place where the heart should be so free as before the Mercy Seat. There, you may talk out your very soul, for that is the best prayer that you can present. Ask not for what some tell you that you should ask, but for that which you feel the need of—that which the Holy Spirit has made you to hunger and to thirst for—ask for that.

Ask always. Your whole life should be spent in asking! When the morning breaks, ask for the mercy needed during the day. And when the day has closed its eyelids and you go to your bed, ask for the protection and rest that you need during the night. Ask when your voice can be heard only by your God in secret. And ask when your tongue may not be able to move, but only your spirit whispers into the ear of God. Never hesitate to ask because of the greatness of the blessing you desire. The Lord is a great God though you are so little—and He delights to give great things to those who ask them at His hands. And be not backward to ask because of your unworthiness. You can never have any worthiness of your own—therefore, if a sense of unworthiness would check your prayer, now, it might always hinder you from praying. Yet the Lord bids you pray, so it must be right for you to pray! Ask when you have fought for something and cannot win it. Ask when you have toiled for it and cannot gain it—ask and have it! Come before your God in all the rags of your sinfulness and conscious ill-desert and ask, for that is all you have to do. "Ask, and you shall receive," is the message that shines out with heavenly radiance over the Mercy Seat. Read it and obey it—open your mouth wide, for God will fill it.

Our Lord told His disciples that in addition to asking, *they were to ask in His name*—"In that day you will ask in My name." That is the most delightful way of asking. We often say, at the end of our petition, "Lord, grant it, for Jesus' sake," and that is a very proper plea. It means, "Because of what Jesus did, will You not deal well with me? I have done nothing that can ensure a favorable answer to my supplication, but will You not give it to me because Jesus deserves it? For His sake, hear me, O Lord!" That is a good way to pray, but it is a still better way if you can use the name of Christ and ask in His name. You know what you do at a shop when another bids you go there and purchase goods in his name and charge them to his account. Or suppose that you have authorized your servant to go to a certain shop and you have said to the trader, "Whatever he comes for in my name, let him have it." Perhaps he has no money of his own. Possibly he is a very poor person, but, armed with your authority, he can get from that trader as much as you could get if you were to go. His warrant carries him as far as your name has weight. So, Jesus says to us, "Use My name when you are speaking to My Father." "And how far may I go in using that name?" As far as Christ Himself can go! Whatever power there is about the name of Jesus, whatever influence it has in His Father's heart, that power and that influence we are permitted to exercise in prayer! My Lord, I used to ask You to do certain things for Your Son's sake, but now I come with a still stronger plea, for He has bid me use His name and ask that You will do for me even as You would do for Him. My Father, if You can refuse your First-Born, then you can refuse me. And if I am asking for such a thing as He could not ask for, neither would I wish to ask for it—I desire to make this the gauge of my prayer, both for its extent and for its acceptance. If He would have refused to pray it, so also would I. And if that which I ask at Your hands seems a blessing to me, but would not have seemed a blessing to Him, I would say, "Not as I will, but as You will," that I may still be able to use His name. No right-minded man would use another person's name improperly—and if you are asking God for something for yourself merely with a selfish motive, you must not defile that blessed name of His by linking it with such a prayer as that! But, using His name aright, you have great liberty and a high privilege in being permitted to come and pray, not only for the sake of Jesus, but also in the *name* of Jesus!

Our text tells us that this asking in the name of Christ is to be the constant exercise of Christians "in that day." What is that day? According to the context, it is *the time of persecution*—"They shall put you out of the synagogues, yes, the time comes that whoever kills you will think that he does God a service." At such a time as that, Christians are sure to pray. We have not, perhaps, in England, at the present day, a tenth of the prayer that used to go up in the dark days of Queen Mary. Ah, Beloved, when Brothers and Sisters are in prison for the faith—when they are likely to be laid on the rack—when the little church has to be called together because the pastor is to be burned tomorrow morning and the young people all want to be up early to stand round and to cheer him

with their weeping eyes if they cannot do anything more for him. And when the youngsters come home and their fathers ask them why they went there, they say they went to learn the way if they should have to die in the same manner themselves—ah, then, prayer is a reality! And when they gather together in out-of-the-way corners and in lonely caverns—when they dare not raise their voices lest the watchers should hear them and take them to prison—yet, in solemn undertones they cry unto the Lord—then it is real prayer! It is that effectual fervent prayer of righteous men that avails much. Then it is, if ever, that the Church of God does really pray! If any of you are, in your little way, at all subject to persecution, be sure to pray, for our Savior said, "In that day you will ask in My name." Let that persecution be a sort of reminder to you of your duty and privilege! If you have been at all slack in prayer and somebody treats you ill for Christ's sake, say, "Now is the time for me to pray more earnestly than ever, for Jesus said, especially of the time of persecution, 'In that day you will ask in My name.'"

If you read further on in the chapter, you will find that "that day" is *when the Spirit of God has instructed the followers of Christ*. "In that day," He said, "you shall ask Me nothing." That is, "You shall put no questions to Me, for the Spirit of God shall instruct you. He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you." Now, the more Light of God and understanding a man gets from Heaven, the more he will pray. If there is any so-called light that makes a man lax in prayer, that light is darkness. Some time ago, when there were a great many people about who professed to be perfect, I heard of one who had grown so conceited that she said her mind was so conformed to the will of God that there was no need for her to pray because her mind and God's mind were so perfectly at one. Yes, and when a person imagines that he is so good that he need not pray, he had better begin by crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." I daresay you have heard of those people who climb so high up the ladder that they fall down the other side—and that is exactly what people do when they begin to carry any Truth of God to extravagance and push a point beyond its legitimate issues. That which makes you cease to pray is of the devil, so say to him, "Get you behind me, Satan." The very suggestion that you can do without prayer must have come from beneath—it cannot have come from above. The more the Spirit of God teaches a Christian the things of God, the more it makes him ask in the name of Jesus Christ.

Once again, that day is *a day of great joy*—"your sorrow shall be turned into joy…In that day you will ask in My name." Perhaps someone says, "But sorrowful times are good time for prayer, are they not?" I grant you that they are, but, oh, when sorrow is turned to joy, doubt gives place to faith and Hope, herself, becomes eclipsed by a measure of delightful fruition—then is the time to pray! When your heart is ready to dance and your mouth is full of sweetness, then draw near to God in prayer. When He has given you most, then ask all the more from Him! Suppose this is a good day with you—a day of glad tidings—then seize

such a good opportunity to pray! There is a high tide in your affairs just now—then take it at the flood, that it may lead you on to spiritual wealth and wash you up high and near to your God! O Beloved, if ever in your lives you pray, let it be especially when the Lord reveals Himself so graciously to you that your heart is glad and your glory rejoices! Let that be a day of asking in the name of Jesus Christ!

Brothers and Sisters, I wish I could speak even more impressively upon this most delightful theme. For if there is one point, more than others, that touches the very vitals of Christian existence, it is this prayerfulness—this asking of God and receiving from Him in answer to our earnest believing supplication. Is prayer a reality with you, dear Friends, or is it a mere mockery? Is it a sort of religious rite that you feel bound to perform, or has it become as essential to your spiritual being as breathing is to your natural being? Is it now to you a matter of course that you should pray? Is it as natural for you to ask of your Father who is in Heaven as it is for your little children to ask of you who are fathers on earth? I feel that it must be so with me—not praying merely because I ought, but because I love the sacred exercise—not praying at a certain hour because it is the set time for prayer, but praying because I *want* to pray, praying because I *must* pray! A man scarcely needs to be reminded that he must breathe. It is essential to his very life that he should breathe and it is essential to our spiritual life that we should pray. I never thought it necessary to prepare a discourse to exhort you to eat, neither ought it to be necessary to exhort Christians to pray. It should be to you an instinct of your new nature, as natural to your spiritual being as a good appetite is to a man in health. There should be a holy hunger and thirst to pray. And the soul never prays so well as when it is reminded, not by the hour of the day or night, but by its real needs—and when it resorts to its place of private prayer, not because it thinks it ought, but because it feels that it must, and shall, and will go there—and is delighted at the privilege of having communion with its God!

My objective, in the second part of my sermon, will be to stir you up to such a feeling as that, so I will say no more upon this first portion of my theme, the Believer's daily exercise—"In that day you will ask in My name."

II. Well now, secondly, we have THE BELIEVER'S PRIVILEGED POSITION with regard to praying.

Believers ought to be abundant in prayer because, first, *they have the holy Spirit to prompt them*. Is that in the text? Yes, or, at least it is implied in the text, for Jesus says, "In that day you will ask." But how could He affirm so positively that we should ask unless He intended to send His Spirit to lead us to ask? The promise is, itself, *a guarantee that He will see it fulfilled!* So we have the Holy Spirit to prompt us to pray—but not merely to prompt us to pray, but to tell us for what we should pray, "for we know not what we should pray for as we ought" until He teaches us! Someone perhaps asks, "Why do you pray, when everything is settled by the Divine decree?" It is true that everything is so settled and it is for that

very reason that we pray! The Spirit of God leads us to desire exactly what God has decreed and though we cannot open and read the book of His decrees, the Holy Spirit can read that book, so He guides us to pray in accordance with its secret records—and He also makes intercession for us "according to the will of God." "For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so, no man knows the things of God, but the Spirit of God."And what the Spirit of God knows to be the mind of God, He makes our mind to be, also, and thus we also pray "according to the will of God." A true prayer is the echo of the eternal purpose of God. We say that "coming events cast their shadows before them" and our prayers are the shadows before God's mercies. Who would not pray when prayer becomes to him a consecrated mystery in which one Person of the Sacred Trinity operates upon his mind and excites his desires? It ought to lead us to be much in prayer because our prayers are prompted by the Holy Spirit—

"Pray, always pray, the Holy Spirit pleads
Within you all your daily, hourly needs."

Next, we ought to be much in prayer *because we have the high honor of being allowed to use the name of Christ in our prayer*—"In that day you will ask in My name." If a king were to entrust us with his seal, or if that king had the power to make money as fast as he willed it simply by his signature—and he allowed us the use of that signature—I do not think many of us would remain poor. If he would only give us that privilege, we would take care to make considerable drafts before we had finished with his seal and signature! And our Lord Jesus does, as it were, take off the signet ring from His finger and says to His servants, "Ask in My name." And, therefore, we issue drafts upon the Infinity of God! There is no limit put to our requests except this, "All things, whatever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive." Oh, how this ought to encourage us to pray! Shall we allow such a golden opportunity as this to pass by unused? O Believers, with the Holy Spirit to tell you what to ask and the Lord Jesus to endorse your asking, will you not pray without ceasing?

But, beyond all this, there is the great encouragement to constant prayer which we derive from the fact that *our Lord Jesus Christ is continually making intercession for us*. Our poor prayers are blotted, blurred and stained with sin. But our Great High Priest sprinkles them with His own most precious blood and so purifies them, and then, with His own dear hands, He lays them before the Mercy Seat—and for His sake they are sure to be accepted! "If any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." And He is always pleading for us. So, as we have a Divine Intercessor within the veil who never forgets to present our prayers before His Father's Throne of Grace, how boldly ought we to come to the Mercy Seat! And what large things we ought to ask of God in Christ's name!

Our text, however, seems to me to suggest that our Lord Jesus wished to prevent His disciples from making a mistake concerning His intercession, so, on this occasion, He said, "I do not say to you, that I will pray

the Father for you." There was no need that He should say that just then, for He had already said it a great many times, so He needed not to repeat it. But, at that time, He seemed as if He meant to say, "I do not want you to exaggerate even My intercession at My Father's expense. I will intercede for you, but you must not imagine that I do so because My Father is unwilling to hear you when you come to Him in My name. You must not get into your minds the strange idea that, by My pleading, I shall make My Father willing to bless you, for the Father Himself loves you.'" This brings us to a very precious point which is that we should be greatly encouraged to pray, not only because the Spirit prompts us and the Son intercedes for us, but *because the Father Himself loves us.*

Oh, how we ought to pray now that we have the ear—no, more, the very *heart* of the King! To have such a Teacher as the Holy Spirit and such an Advocate as our Lord Jesus Christ ought to be a great encouragement to us—but to have the heart of the King, Himself, is best of all! "The Father Himself loves you." You know, dear Brothers and Sisters, that shallow thinkers often make mistakes concerning the Father and the Son in relation to the Atonement. They think that the Atonement of Christ was necessary to make the Father love His people, whereas the Truth of God is that the Father, *because* He loved His people, gave His only-begotten Son to make propitiation for them! God was always love, as truly love as the Son was and is—we must make no mistake about that matter. So, concerning Christ's intercession, there is a tendency, in certain quarters, to fall into the error of supposing that the Father is difficult to please and that Jesus must pacify Him before He will grant our requests. It is not so, "for the Father Himself loves you." I think that when a sinner is coming to God, he had better, at first, fix his eyes wholly upon Jesus the Mediator, but as for those of us who have believed in Jesus, we are forgiven, we are in a totally different position from that in which the unbeliever stands. We have had our sins blotted out and we may come to the Father Himself—of course, always coming through the Mediator—yet all the while rejoicing in His gracious assurance, "The Father Himself loves you."—

"Pray, always pray, though weary, faint, and lone,
Prayer nestles by the Father's sheltering Throne."

The text says that the Father loves us *because we have loved Jesus, and have believed that He came forth from the Father.* Do not make the mistake of imagining that the love of God to us is caused by our love to Christ. Oh, no! "We love Him because He first loved us." The first love of God is a love of benevolence—a love of compassion—a love towards the unworthy and the undeserving. God, out of love, forgives us and saves us, but there is another love, besides that, which we must never forget. When He has brought us to love His dear Son—when He has brought us to trust in Him because we believe that He came forth from the Father, then the Father has a love of complacency and delight toward us. You can easily see the difference between the two kinds of love, for it is often illustrated in human history. A man finds a poor child in the street and

he takes pity upon it, carries it into his house, clothes it and cares for it. That is one kind of love—the love of benevolence. But suppose that child should develop into a beautiful boy, or a lovely girl, who, with engaging manners, should ingratiate himself or herself into the very heart of the one who was so kind to it in earlier days? Then there springs up a second sort of love.

The man says, "I loved that child when I picked it up, a bundle of rags and filth, and misery, but look at its loveliness now! See how this little one takes to the rest of the family—see how grateful it is—how it loves me! I cannot help loving it more than I did at the first." That is another kind of love altogether, and the Lord has just such a love as that, only of an infinitely higher kind, toward all who trust and love His Son! You know that the Father loves Jesus Christ so much that when He sees that you, also, love Him, He loves you all the more for that reason. He had unbounded confidence in Christ when He sent Him into the world—and when He sees that you, also, have confidence in Him, He loves you, too, for you two are agreed upon that matter. Nothing binds people together so much as a common love to the same object. If there is some one person who is dear to both, there is at once a tie between the two. How often a husband's heart is held firmly by the wife because, between the two, there is a little one who is dear to both of them! Perhaps, in some foolish fit of anger, they might have parted from one another, but their child is the bond that holds them together. And between us and our God, in a sense infinitely above my poor comparison, there is a wonderful union because He confides in Jesus, and we confide in Him, too. He loves Jesus, and we love Him, too, and now, because of this, our Savior says to us, "The Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God."

I cannot explain this marvelous mystery, but I want you who know that you do love Christ, and believe that He came forth from God, to open your whole souls and try to take in this sublime Truth of God, "*The Father Himself loves you*." Not, "pities you." Not, "promises to help you." Not, "considers you," but, "the Father Himself loves you." It is no use attempting to explain what love is—you must feel it if you would realize what it is. You did not doubt your mother's words when you were little and she caught you in her arms and said, "I love you." You believed her, you rested in her love and you returned it as far as you could. So the great God says to you, "I love you because you love My Son. There are many faults and failings in you, but you love My Son, so I love you." Did you not say, just now, "Lord, you know all things, you know that I love You"? You said that to the Lord Jesus and, because it is true, the Father Himself loves you! I remember when one of the sweet passages in Solomon's Song came home to my heart with absolutely ravishing power—it seemed to carry me right out of myself—it was that verse in which the Heavenly Bridegroom says to His spouse, "You are all fair, My love; there is no spot in you." That is what the Lord says to His people as He sees them in Christ. When He perceives that they love Christ, He calls them

His Hephzibah, that is, "My delight is in her." "The Father Himself loves you." This little sentence is not so much a theme for preaching as for quiet meditation! You need to get alone into your chamber, sit down and just ring that silver bell again, and again, and again, "the Father Himself loves you." Do you love *me*? Why should He love *me*? How can He love *me*? Yet Jesus knows and, as He says it is so, then so it is, glory be to His holy name!

III. I have little time left to speak of THE BELIEVER'S NATURAL CONCLUSION which he is to draw from these words of Christ.

He says, first, "*If all this is true, then, what power I have*! What power I have at the Mercy Seat with the Spirit to prompt me, Christ to plead for me and the Father, Himself, smiling at me as I come—and saying to me, 'Come and welcome, for I love you; none can be more welcome than you are. Come, My child, ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.'" But, Beloved, have you ever really believed that you have this power? Have you not asked and hoped when you ought to have asked and *believed*? Have you not asked as if there was just a bare possibility that you might be heard? Have you not prayed as though your many pleadings and your abundant tears *might* move the hard heart of God? Has not your supplication often been presented on some such theory as that? If so, I hope that in future you will be able to rise to the Believer's true position and say, "I am God's child and He loves me—and coming to Him through Jesus Christ His Son, and moved by His Holy Spirit, I will ask of Him whatever I need, for I know that I shall receive that which I have asked of Him in the name of Jesus and for His sake."

If you ever realize that you have that power, (and I earnestly hope that you will), *take care that you use it*. Use it for your children, use it for all your relatives, use it for any of the seat-holders who sit near you and are unconverted. Pick them out and pray for them by name—and be not content till you hear that they are saved! May I ask you also to use this power in prayer on my behalf? I shall be so rich if you who have power with God will pray for me! My preaching will be poverty-stricken if you cease to pray for me. You who can pray, I beg you to plead with God for His Church, for His Truth, for His cause on the earth. These are dark days, but you can bring on a spiritual summertime if you know how to pray that effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man that avails much. The Truth of God seems, for a while, to be suffering defeat, and the battle for the right waxes hotter and fiercer, but the banner of victory will soon float in the breeze if you know how to pray aright! The praying legion is the conquering legion! Bring to the front the men and women who can pray—and the devil will tremble and flee, for well he knows that those who are mighty with God are mightier even than he is. The history of the future depends very largely upon the prayers of the present. If you and other Believers restrain prayer, you may help to bring on long, dark, chilly winters for the Church of God—but if you and they are aroused to go up, as Elijah went to Carmel and if, with your face between your knees, you cry mightily unto the Lord God of Israel, surely, as the Lord lives,

you shall see the skies covered with clouds and there shall be "a sound of abundance of rain."

I speak reverently, yet truthfully, when I say that the keys of Heaven swing at the belt of the man who knows how to pray. I mean not commonplace praying, such as some practice, but such prayer as I have been speaking of—prompted by the Spirit of God—first purified and then presented by the Savior—and offered by a man who knows that the Father Himself loves him. I am awestruck as I think of the tremendous power of which prayer is capable. It is not Omnipotent, yet it commands Omnipotence. It is not Omniscient, yet prayer is as the very eyes of God! He who can truly pray has first read the heart of God and then spoken out what is there. Prayer overcomes the Eternal! What more can I say of it? When Israel sinned against the Lord, Moses pleaded for the guilty nation even after God had said to him, "Let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of you a great nation." But the prevailing prayer won the day, for, "the Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people." May God teach you, who are loved of the Father because you love the Son, to pray such a prayer as that of Moses!

In a specially-careful manner, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, we ought to mention the answers to prayer which we have received. It would not be prudent, proper, or even possible, to mention all of them, for there are love passages in prayer between Christ and the soul which never must be told unless it is in choice company, and on rare occasions. Some of our communing with the Lord Jesus are too sacred, too spiritual, too heavenly ever to be spoken of this side the gates of pearl—but the bulk of the Lord's replies to our petitions are such as might be written across the skies, that every eye might read them. Make sure that you do not bury these gracious facts in the lead of ingratitude. Imitate David, who tells us in Psalm 118:5, "I called upon the Lord in distress: the Lord answered me, and set me in a large place."

Yes, and do not only declare how God answers prayer, but tell of the power of faith in all the ways in which it moves itself. Sit down at the fireside and talk of faith's doings to your children, that they may tell them to their children and to the generations yet to follow—that all men may know that all things are possible to him that believes. Recount the fulfillment of promises to faith, deliverance from trouble through faith and the enjoyment of supreme happiness through faith. Sound it forth in all your neighborhoods that, "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes." Ring out clearly such words as these—"Trust you in the Lord forever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." Tell everybody why you know that it is so, for you have turned to friends in the time of trouble and they have given you the cold shoulder. You have even been foolish enough to hope for help from great men who had it in their power to aid you, but they have looked down upon you with disdain and wondered how you dared to ask such aid from their high mightiness!

Let all men know that the Majesty of Heaven has never thus treated your humble appeals. From the Throne of the Highest there has never come a harsh reply, or a contemptuous rejection of your lowly suit. No, the Lord has been better to you than even your hope expected or your faith believed! God has answered you richly, helped you efficiently, gladdened you abundantly and filled your spirit with a sweet content. Truly, God is good to Israel! It is no vain thing to wait upon the Lord. The path of faith is the path of strength and safety!

How unhappy is the lot of some here present who never pray! It matters little what other power you possess—if you have no power with God, you are powerless! To those who never pray, or who insult God with an empty form of prayer in which there is no heart, there will come a day when *they will pray*. As surely as they live and die as they now are, they will pray! But their prayers will not be answered. Dives prayed for a drop of water to cool his burning tongue, but his request was refused, for it was too late to pray, then—yet he might have had the Water of Life to drink had he prayed while he was upon the earth! It is in Hell that prayer, of a sort, abounds, but the answer to such petitions is, "Because I have called, and you refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; but you have set at nothing all My counsel, and would none of My reproof; I, also, will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear comes." Ask now, I entreat you, for God will hear you if you call upon Him now. But "when once the Master of the house is risen up, and has shut the door," no knocking "at that day" will avail to get it open again! No pleading, moaning, groaning, crying or wailing will then prevail, for prayer will have had its day, and Justice, with drawn sword, will stand before the Mercy Seat, barring the way to it forever.

The Lord bring you all to believe in Jesus, and to fervently love Him with a pure heart before it be too late, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—782, 735.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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

By the Grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in modern English, and more than 450 Spanish translations, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

A FEAR TO BE DESIRED
NO. 2801

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 19, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 7, 1878.

"They shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days."
Hosea 3:5.

THIS passage refers, in the first place, to the Jews. If we read the whole verse and the preceding one, we shall see that they describe the present sad condition of God's ancient people and inspire us with hope concerning their future—"For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king or prince, without sacrifice, without ephod or teraphim. Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days." From this and many other texts of Scripture, we may conclude, without a shadow of a doubt, that the Jews shall, one day, acknowledge Jesus to be their King. The Son of David—who is here, doubtless, called by the name of David, and who, when He died upon the Cross, had Pilate's declaration inscribed over His head, "This is Jesus the King of the Jews"—will then be acknowledged by them as their King and then shall they be restored to more than their former joy and glory. God has great things in store for the seed of Abraham in the latter days. He has not finally cast them away and He will be true to that Covenant which He made with their fathers—and on Judaea's plains shall roam a happy people who shall lift up their songs of praise unto Jehovah in the name of Jesus Christ their Lord and Savior! Whenever that shall happen, we, or those who will then be living, may know that the latter days have fully come because it is foretold here and in other passages that this is what will occur in the latter days. I am not going to attempt any explanation of the prophetic intimations concerning the future, but this one fact is plain enough—when the end of the world is approaching and the fullness of the Gentiles is gathered in, and all the splendor of the latter days has really commenced, then "shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They shall fear the Lord and His goodness."

On this occasion I intend only to call your attention to this expression, "They shall fear the Lord and His goodness," for what Israel will do, in a state of Divine Grace, is precisely what all spiritual Israelites do when the Grace of God rests upon them. The fear of the Lord, which is the begin-

ning of wisdom, fills the heart and the goodness of the Lord becomes the source and fountain of that fear in the hearts of all those whom the Lord has blessed with His Grace. So I shall, first of all, ask you *to notice a distinction which is to be observed*. Secondly, *a Grace which is to be cultivated* and then, thirdly, *a sin which is to be repented of in the case of many*.

I. First, then, here is A DISTINCTION TO BE OBSERVED.

Human language is necessarily imperfect. Since man's fall and especially since the confusion of tongues at Babel, there has not only been a difference in speech between one nation and another, but also between one individual and another. We probably do not all mean exactly the same thing by any one word that we use—there is just a shade of difference between your meaning and mine. The confusion of tongues went much further than we sometimes realize and so completely did it confuse our language that we do not, on all occasions, mean quite the same thing to ourselves even when we use the same word. Hence, "fear," is a word which has a very wide range of meaning. There is a kind of fear which is to be shunned and avoided—that fear which perfect love casts out—because it has torment. But there is another sort of fear which has in it the very essence of love and, without which there would be no joy even in the Presence of God! Instead of perfect love casting out this fear, perfect love nourishes and cherishes it and, by communion with it, derives strength from it. Between the fear of a slave and the fear of a child, we can all perceive a great distinction. Between the fear of God's great power and justice which the devils have—and that fear which a child of God has when he walks in the Light with his God, there is as much difference, surely, as between Hell and Heaven!

In the verse from which our text is taken, that difference is clearly indicated—"Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They shall fear the Lord"— so that *this fear is connected with seeking the Lord*. It is a fear which draws them towards God and makes them search for Him. You know how the fear of the ungodly influences *them*—it makes them afraid of God, so they say, "Where shall we flee from His Presence?" If they could, they would take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost part of the earth if they had any hope that God could not reach them there! At the last, when this fear will take full possession of them, they will call upon the rocks and the hills to hide them from the face of Him who will then sit upon the Throne of God, whose wrath they will have such cause to dread! The fear of God, as it exists in unrenewed men, is a force which always drives them further and yet further away from God. They never get any rest of mind until they have ceased to think of Him—if a thought of God should, perchance, steal into their mind, fear at once lays hold upon them again—and that fear urges them to flee from God.

But the fear mentioned in our text draws to God! The man who has this fear in his heart cannot live without seeking God's face, confessing his guilt before Him and receiving pardon from Him. He seeks God be-

cause of this fear. Just as Noah, "moved with fear," built the ark wherein he and his household were saved, so do these men, "moved with fear," draw near unto God and seek to find salvation through His love and Grace. Always notice this distinction and observe that the fear which drives anyone away from God is a vice and a sin—but the fear that draws us towards God, as with silken bonds, is a virtue to be cultivated!

This appears even more clearly in the Hebrew, for they who best understand that language tell us that this passage should be read thus, "They shall fear *toward* the Lord, and *toward* His goodness." *This fear leans toward the Lord.* When you really know God, you shall be thrice happy if you run toward Him, falling down before Him, worshipping Him with bowed head, yet glad heart—all the while fearing *toward* Him, not away from Him! Blessed is the man whose heart is filled with that holy fear which inclines his steps in the way of God's commandments, inclines his heart to seek after God and inclines his whole soul to enter into fellowship with God that he may be acquainted with Him and be at peace.

It is also worthy of notice that *this fear is connected with the Messiah.* "They shall seek the Lord their God and David their King"—who stands here as the type of Jesus, the Messiah, the King of Israel. And further on it is said, "They shall fear the Lord and His goodness." And I should not do wrong if I were to say that Christ is Jehovah's goodness—that, in His blessed Person, you have all the goodness, mercy and Grace of God condensed and concentrated. "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." So that fear which is a sign of Grace in the heart—that fear which we ought all to seek after—always links itself to Christ Jesus! If you fear God and know not that there is Mediator between God and men, you will never think of approaching Him. God is a consuming fire—then how can you draw near to Him apart from Christ? If you fear God and know not of Christ's Atonement, how can you approach Him? Without faith, it is impossible to please God—and without the blood of Jesus there is no way of access to the Divine Mercy Seat. If you know not Christ, you will never come to God! Your fear must link itself with the goodness of God as displayed in the Person of His dear Son, or else it cannot be that *seeking* fear, that fear *toward the Lord* of which our text speaks. It will be a fleeing fear, a fear that will drive you further and yet further away from God into greater and deeper darkness—into dire destruction—in fact, into that Pit whose bottomless abyss swallows up all hope, all rest and all joy forever!

II. Let this distinction be kept in mind and then we may safely go on to consider, in the second place, THE GRACE WHICH IS TO BE CULTIVATED—"They shall fear the Lord and His goodness."

We will divide the one thought into two and, first, I will speak about that fear of God which is the work of the Holy Spirit—a token of Grace, a sign of salvation and a precious treasure to be always kept in the heart.

What is this fear of God? I answer, first, *it is a sense of awe of His greatness.* Have you ever felt this sacred awe stealing insensibly over

your spirit—hushing and calming you—and bowing you down before the Lord? It will come, sometimes, in the consideration of the great works of Nature. Gazing upon the vast expanse of waters—looking up to the innumerable stars, examining the wing of an insect and seeing there the matchless skill of God displayed in the minute. Or standing in a thunderstorm, watching as best you can, the flashes of lightning and listening to the thunder of Jehovah's voice—have you not often shrunk into yourself and said, "Great God, how awesome You are!"—not afraid, but full of delight, like a child who rejoices to see his father's wealth, his father's wisdom, his father's power—happy and at home, but feeling oh, so little? We are less than nothing, we are all but annihilated in the Presence of the great eternal, infinite, invisible All-in-All. Gracious men often come into this state of mind and heart by watching the works of God and so they do when they observe what He does in Providence. Dr. Watts truly sings—

"Here He exalts neglected worms
To scepters and a crown—
And on the following page He turns,
And treads the monarch down."

The mightiest kings and princes are but as grasshoppers in His sight! "The nations are as a drop in a bucket and are counted as the small dust of the balance," that has not weight enough to turn the scale. We talk about the greatness of mankind, but "all nations before Him are as nothing and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity." Again Dr. Watts wisely sings—

"Great God! How infinite are Thee!
What worthless worms are we!"

When we realize this, we are filled with a holy awe as we think of God's greatness and the result of that is that we are moved to fall before Him in reverent adoration!

We turn to the Word of God and there we see further proofs of His greatness in all His merciful arrangements for the salvation of sinners—and especially in the matchless redemption worked out by His well-beloved Son, every part of which is full of the Divine Glory. And as we gaze upon that Glory with exceeding joy, we shrink to nothing before the Eternal—and the result is once again lowly adoration. We bow down and adore and worship the living God with a joyful, tender fear which both lays us low and lifts us very high, for never do we seem to be nearer to Heaven's golden Throne than when our spirit gives itself up to worship Him whom it does not see, but in whose realized Presence it trembles with sacred delight!

It is the same fear, but looked at from another point of view, which has regard to the holiness of God. What a holy Being is the great Jehovah of Hosts! There is no fault in Him, no deficiency, no redundancy. He is whole and, therefore, holy. There is nothing there but Himself, the wholly perfect God. "Holy! Holy! Holy! is a fit note for the mysterious living creatures to sound out before His Throne above, for, all along He has

acted according to the principle of unsullied holiness. Though blasphemers have tried, many times, to—

"Snatch from His hand the balance and the rod,
Rejudge His judgments, be the god of God,"

they have always failed and still He sits in the lonely majesty of His absolute perfection, while they, like brute beasts, crouch far beneath Him and despise what they cannot comprehend! But to a believing heart, God is all purity. His Light is "as the color of the terrible crystal," of which Ezekiel writes. His brightness is so great that no man can approach it. We are so sinful that when we get even a glimpse of the Divine Holiness, we are filled with fear and we cry with Job, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eyes see You. Therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." This is a kind of fear which we have need to cultivate, for it leads to repentance and confession of sin, to aspirations after holiness and to the utter rejection of all self-complacency and self-conceit. God grant that we may be completely delivered from all those forms of pride and evil!

The fear of God also takes another form, that is, *the fear of His Fatherhood, which leads us to reverence Him*. When Divine Grace has given us the new birth, we recognize that we have entered into a fresh relationship towards God—namely that we have become His sons and daughters. Then we realize that we have received "the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Now, we cannot truly cry unto God, "Abba, Father," without, at the same time, feeling, "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." When we recognize that we are "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ," children of the Highest, adopted into the family of the Eternal, Himself, we feel at once, as the spirit of childhood works within us, that we both love and fear our great Father in Heaven who has loved us with an everlasting love and has "begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away."

In this childlike fear there is not an atom of that fear which signifies being afraid. We who believe in Jesus are not afraid of our Father—God forbid that we ever should be! The nearer we can get to Him, the happier we are. Our highest wish is to be forever with Him and to be lost in Him. But, still, we pray that we may not grieve Him. We beseech Him to keep us from turning aside from Him. We ask for His tender pity towards our infirmities and plead with Him to forgive us and to deal graciously with us for His dear Son's sake. As loving children we feel a holy awe and reverence as we realize our relationship to Him who is our Father in Heaven—a clear, loving, tender, pitiful Father—yet our Heavenly Father who "is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him."

This holy fear takes a further form when our *fear of God's Sovereignty leads us to obey Him as our King*, for He, to whom we pray and in whom we trust, is King of Kings and Lord of Lords and we gladly acknowledge His Sovereignty. We see Him sitting upon a Throne which is dependent

upon no human or angelic power to sustain it. The kings of the earth must ask their fellow men to march in their ranks in order to sustain their rules, but our King "sits on no precarious throne, nor borrows leave to be" a king! As the Creator of all things and all beings, He has a right to the obedience of the entire creature He has made. Again I say that we who believe in Jesus are not afraid of God even as our King, for He has made us, also, to be kings and priests, and we are to reign with Him, through Jesus Christ, forever and ever!

Yet we tremble before Him lest we should be rebellious against Him in the slightest degree. With a childlike fear we are afraid lest one revolting thought or one treacherous wish should ever come into our mind or heart to stain our absolute loyalty to Him. Horror takes hold upon us when we hear others deny that "the Lord reigns"—and even the thought that we should ever do this grieves us exceedingly—and we are filled with that holy fear which moves us to obey every command of our gracious King so far as we know it to be His command. Having this fear of God before our eyes, we cry to those who would tempt us to sin, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" It is not because we are afraid of Him, but because we *delight* in Him, that we fear before Him with an obedient, reverential fear! And, Beloved, I do firmly believe that when this kind of fear of God works itself out to the fullest, it crystallizes into love. So excellent, so glorious, so altogether everything that could be desired, so far above our highest thought or wish, are You, O Jehovah, that we lie before You and shrink into nothing! Yet, even as we do so, we feel another sensation springing up within us. We feel that we love You and, as we decrease in our own estimation of ourselves, we feel that we love You more and more. As we realize our own nothingness, we are more than ever conscious of the greatness of our God! "Your heart shall fear and be enlarged," says the Prophet Isaiah, and so it comes to pass with us. The more we fear the Lord, the more we love Him, until this becomes to us the true fear of God—to love Him with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. May He bring us to this blessed climax by the effectual working of His Holy Spirit!

Now I want to dwell, with somewhat of emphasis, upon the second part of this fear—"They shall fear the Lord *and His goodness*." It may, at first, seem to some people a strange thing that we should fear God's goodness—but there are some of us who know exactly what this expression means, for we have often experienced just what it describes. How can we fear God's goodness? I speak what I have often felt and I believe many of you can do the same as you look back upon the goodness of God to you—saving you from sin and making you to be His child—and as you think of all His goodness to you in the dispensations of His Providence. You may, perhaps, be like Jacob who left his father's house with his wallet and his staff—and when he came back with a family that formed two bands and with abundance of all that he could desire, he must have been astonished at what God had done for him! And when David sat upon his throne in Jerusalem, surrounded by wealth and splendor, as he

recollected how he had fed his flock in the wilderness and afterwards had been hunted, by Saul, like a partridge upon the mountains, he might well say, "Is this the manner of man, O Lord God?"

In this way, *God's goodness often fills us with amazement*—and amazement has in it an element of fear. We are astonished at the Lord's gracious dealings with us and we say to Him, "Why have You been so good to me for so many years and in such multitude of ways? Why have You manifested so much mercy and tenderness toward me? You have treated me as if I had never grieved or offended You. You have been as good to me as if I had deserved great blessings at Your hands. Had You paid me wages, like a hired servant, You would never have given me such sweetness and such love as You have now lavished upon me, though I was once a prodigal and wandered far from You. O God, Your love is like the sun—I cannot gaze upon it—its brightness would blind my eyes! I fear because of Your goodness."

Do you know, dear Friends, what this expression means? If a sense of God's goodness comes upon you in all its force, you will feel that God is wonderfully great to have been so good to you. Most of us have had friends who have become tired of us after a while. Possibly we have had some very kind friends who are not yet tired of us, but, still, they have failed us, every now and then, in some points—either their power could not meet our need, or they were not willing to do what we needed. But our God has poured out His mercy for us like a river! It has flowed on without a break. These many years He has continued to bless us and has heaped up His mercies, mountain upon mountain, until it has seemed as though He would reach the very stars with the lofty pinnacles of His love! What shall we say to all this? Shall we not fear Him, adore Him and bless Him for all the goodness that He has made to pass before us? And, all the while, feel that even to kiss the hem of His garment, or to be beneath His footstool is too great an honor for us?

Then there will come upon us, when we are truly grateful to God for His goodness toward us, *a sense of our own responsibility* and we shall say, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" We shall feel that we cannot render to Him anything compared with what we ought to render—and there will come upon us this fear—that we shall never be able to live at all consistently with the high position which His Grace has given to us. As God said concerning His ancient people, we shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that He has procured for us. It will seem as though He had set us on the top of a high mountain and had bid us walk along that lofty ridge—it is a ridge of favor and privilege, but it is so elevated that we fear lest our brain should reel and our feet should slip because of the height of God's mercy to us! Have you ever felt like that, Beloved? If God has greatly exalted you with His favor and love, I am sure you must have felt like that many a time.

Then, next, *this holy fear is near akin to gratitude*. The fear of a man who really knows the love and goodness of God will be somewhat of this

kind. He will fear lest he should really be, or should seem to be, ungrateful. "What," he asks, "can I do? I am drowned in mercy. It is not as though my ship were sailing in a sea of mercy—I have been so loaded with the favor of the Lord that my vessel has gone right down and the ocean of God's love and mercy has rolled right over the masthead. What can I do, O Lord? If You had given me only a little mercy, I might have done something in return to express my gratitude. But, oh, Your great mercy in electing me, in redeeming me, in converting me, in preserving me and in all the goodness of Your Providence toward me—what can I do in return for all these favors? I feel struck dumb and I am afraid lest I should have a dumb heart as well as a dumb tongue! I fear lest I should grieve You by anything that looks like ingratitude."

Then the child of God begins, next, to fear *lest he should become proud*, "for," he says, "I have noticed that when God thus favors some men, they begin to exalt themselves and to think that they are persons of great importance. So, if the Lord makes the stream of my life flow very joyously, I may imagine that it is because there is some good thing in me and be foolish enough to begin to ascribe the glory of it to myself!" A true saint often trembles concerning this matter. Sometimes he is even afraid of his mercies! He knows that his trials and troubles never did him any hurt, but he perceives that, sometimes, God's goodness has intoxicated him as with sweet wine, so he begins to be almost afraid of the goodness of his God to him. He thinks to himself, "Shall I be unworthy of all this favor and walk in a way that is inconsistent with it?" He looks a little ahead and he knows that the flesh is frail and that good men have often been found in very slippery places, and he says, "What if, after all this, I should be a backslider? You, O Lord, have brought me into the banqueting house and Your banner over me is love. You have stayed me with flagons, and comforted me with apples. You have laid bare Your very heart to me and made me know that I am a man greatly beloved! Shall I, after all this, ever turn aside from You? Will the ungodly ever point at me and say, Aha! Aha! Is this the man after God's own heart? Is this the disciple who said he would die rather than deny his Master?" Such a fear as that very properly comes over us at times—and then we tremble because of all the goodness which God has made to pass before us.

I think you can see, dear Friends, without my needing to enlarge further upon this point, that while a time of sorrow and suffering is often, to the Christian, a time of confidence in his God, on the other hand, a time of prosperity is to the wise man, a time of holy fear. Not that he is ungrateful, but he is afraid that he may be. Not that he is proud—he is truly humble because he is afraid lest he should become proud. Not that he loves the things of the world, but he is afraid lest his heart should get away from God—and so he fears because of all the Lord's goodness to him. May the Lord always keep us in that state of fear, for it is a healthy condition for us to be in! Those who walk so very proudly and with too great confidence are generally the ones who first tumble down. My observation and experience have taught me this. When I have met with anyone

who knew that he was a very good man and who boasted to other people that he was a very good man—he has generally proved to be like some of those pears that we sometimes see in the shop—very handsome to look at, but sleepy and rotten all through!

Then, on the other hand, I have noticed a great many other people who have always been afraid that they would go wrong and who have trembled and feared at almost every step they took. They have feared lest they should grieve the Lord and they have cried to Him, day and night, "Lord, uphold us!" And He has done so and they have been enabled to keep their garments unspotted to their life's end. So, my prayer is that I may never cease to feel this holy fear before God and that I may never get to fancy, for a moment, that there is, or ever can be, anything in me to cause me to boast or to glory in myself. May God save all of us from that evil! And the more we receive of His goodness, the more may we fear, with childlike fear, in His Presence!

III. Now I must close with just a few words upon the last point which is, A SIN TO BE REPENTED OF.

I cannot help fearing that I am addressing some to whom my text does not apply except by way of contrast. Are there not some of you, who are unsaved, and yet who do not fear God? O Sirs, may the Holy Spirit make you to fear and tremble before Him! You have cause enough to fear. If you live all day long without even thinking of God, or if, when you do think of Him, you try to smother the thought at once—if you say that you can get on very well without Him and that life is happy enough without religion—I could weep for you because you do not weep for yourselves! You say, "We are rich," yet, all the while, you are wretched, miserable and poor. Your poverty is all the worse because you fancy that you are rich. You are also blind. That is bad enough, yet you say, "We can see." It is doubly sad when the spiritually blind declare that they can see—for they will never ask for the sacred eye-salve, or go to the great Oculist who can open blind eyes—as long as they are satisfied with their present condition. It is a great pity that many unconverted men do not fear God even with a servile fear. If they would only begin with that, it might prove to be the lowest rung of the heavenly ladder and lead on to the blessed fear which is the portion of the children of God!

There are others of you, I am afraid, who never fear either God or His goodness. How I wish you would do so, for the Lord has been very good to you. You were saved at sea after you had been wrecked. You were raised up from fever when others died. You have prospered in business, on the whole, though you have had some struggles. Blessed with children and made happy in your home—all this you owe to the God whom you have never acknowledged! The goodness of God to some ungodly men is truly amazing! I think, when they sit down at night, when everybody else has gone to bed, and remember how they began life with scarcely a shilling to bless themselves with, yet God has multiplied their substance and given them much to rejoice in—I think their hearts ought to be full of gratitude towards their Benefactor. I would like all such

people to remember what God said by the mouth of the prophet Hosea, "She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal. Therefore will I return and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness." Take care, O you ungrateful souls, that the Lord does not begin to strip you of the mercies which you have failed to appreciate! I pray that you may be led to confess from where all these blessings came and to cry, "My Father, You shall be my Guide henceforth and forever. Since You have dealt so lovingly and tenderly with me, I will come and confess my sin to You and trust in Your dear Son as my Savior and Friend, that I may henceforth be led and commanded by You, alone, and may fear before You all the days of my life."

May God grant to everyone of us the Grace to believe in Jesus, to rest in Him and then to walk in the fear of the Lord all our days, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 103.

Verse 1. *Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name.* We ought to be always blessing God. This sacred employment should be like an atmosphere surrounding us at all times. Yet there are special seasons when we feel as if we must wake ourselves up and brace ourselves up for some special adoration, talking to ourselves as the Psalmist does here.

2. *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.* Alas, that forgetfulness of God's benefits is an evil kind of worm that eats into the very heart of our praise. Oh, for a retentive memory concerning the loving kindness of the Lord! Come, my heart, you have been thinking of many things while you have been away from the House of Prayer. Now forget them! Perhaps you have even dwelt upon your sorrows and remembered the wormwood and the gall. If so, now let those sad memories vanish, "and forget not all His benefits."

3. *Who forgives all your iniquities.* What a great, "all," that is! From your childhood until now you have been full of iniquities—and the Lord has been equally full of forgiveness.

3. *Who heals all your diseases.* There is no other physician like He—and all human physicians, whatever skill they may possess—derive it from Him! Blessed be the healing God!

4. *Who redeems your life from destruction.* Else had you, long ago, gone down into the Pit! But redemption has kept you out of it. Your natural life and your spiritual life have both been preserved to you through the precious blood of Christ.

4. *Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies.* We talk about crowned heads. There are many such here in this assembly. Let

everyone whose head is crowned "with loving kindness and tender mercies" magnify the name of the crowning Lord!

5. *Who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagles.* You were down on the ground lately, with all your feathers shed, but they have grown again and you are up on the wing once more. Your youth has been given back to you! Renew, then, your praises of your God. With the dew of your youth restored to you, let the dew of your gratitude also abound. Who would not bless the Lord when he knows the blessedness of pardoned sin, a wounded spirit, healed, the life redeemed from destruction, youth restored like the eagle's and the whole being crowned with loving kindness and tender mercies?

6. *The LORD executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.* Therefore let the oppressed praise Him! Let the justice which adorns His Throne be the subject of our constant delight. There is no act of oppression, on the part of the great ones of the earth, at which He will wink—"The Lord executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed."

7. *He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel.* Bless Him for having thus revealed Himself, giving us His Holy Word in which we see Him as in a mirror. When God makes Himself known to His people, then is the time for them to praise Him! You can scarcely worship an unknown God, but when He makes Himself known by special revelation in your heart, then you must and you will praise Him.

8. *The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.* Therefore again praise Him. All who know and love the Lord should form a great orchestra continually magnifying His holy name!

9. *He will not always chide: neither will He keep His anger forever.* So that if you are just now being chided by Him—if you have some consciousness of His anger—begin to bless Him that it will not last long! "He will not always chide." Behold the rainbow painted on the storm cloud and bless the name of the Lord even while you are under His afflicting hand.

10. *He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.* Therefore praise Him again and again. Had He dealt with us as we deserve, we should not have been here. But we are still here, on praying ground, and on pleading terms with the Most High! Therefore let us praise Him.

11. *For as the Heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.* Such great mercy as this should have the highest praise of which we are capable. This verse speaks of the height of God's mercy—the next one tells of its breadth.

12. *As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.* They are gone—never to return! It is impossible that they should be imputed against us any more forever! Therefore praise Him to the very utmost.

13. *Like as a father pities his children, so the LORD pities them that fear Him.* Notice that as this sacred song rises, it gets more tender. If it is not quite so jubilant, the praise is all the deeper and quite as thrilling. One of the sweetest thoughts that we can have concerning God is that which relates to His fatherly tenderness toward His children.

14. *For He knows our frame. He remembers that we are dust.* Let His name be praised for this! Dust must be handled daintily, lest it should resolve itself into its separate particles—and God thus delicately handles us.

15, 16. *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.* Yet does God think of us, even as He does of the grass—and as He gives to each blade of grass its own drop of dew, so do we seem to feel hanging about each one of us a glistening drop of mercy, for which let us praise His holy name as the sunlight of His favor sparkles in every drop of His loving kindness!

17, 18. *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.* Then, surely, we must bless God for His favor to our posterity, for His loving kindness, not only to ourselves, but also to our children, and our children's children! As we look back, we praise the God of our fathers and as we look forward, we praise the God of our children's children!

19. *The LORD has prepared His throne in Heavens and His kingdom rules over all.* For which again let us say, "Hallelujah!" The Lord of Hosts is no dethroned monarch! He has not lost His power to govern all whom He has made! "His kingdom rules over all."

20. *Bless the LORD, you His angels that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word.* Magnify Him more than ever, if that is possible, you mighty hosts who—

"Day without night
Circle His Throne rejoicing."

21, 22. *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.* The praise is now spread widely, over all the universe! Yet, O my heart, do not forget your own personal note in it—"O Bless the Lord, O my soul."

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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

LUKEWARMNESS
NO. 2802

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 26, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DURING THE WINTER OF 1860-61.

"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot: I would you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth."
Revelation 3:15, 16.

IF this had been an utterance of mine, it would have been accounted vulgar. As a sentence of Scripture, I suppose it may be permitted to escape the censure of fastidious modern critics. The vernacular tongue and the homely figure may be decried as vulgarities, but if so, it will be by those whose tastes have been ill-schooled. A vicious refinement has come into vogue. If men call things by their right names and use good old Saxon words, they are perpetually brought under the lash for having indulged in vulgarities. A return to such "vulgarities" in the pulpit would be a return to power! I would far rather have, again, the homely language of Hugh Latimer, with all it singularity—and, I must confess, with some of its grossness—than have the namby-pamby style of modern times in which sacred things are spoken of as if they were only meant to be whispered in drawing rooms and not to be uttered where men meet in everyday life. The fact is, the Bible is a book which deals with things as they are—a book which, just like all of God's works, is glorious because it is natural and simple. God has not polished the rocks in the valleys. He has not set the mountains all in order, nor has He yet been pleased to make all parts of the earth just as fair and beautiful as if they had been intended to form a lovely landscape! But, at least, in some places He has hewn them out and left them rough and rugged—to stand in all their naked glory. So is it with this Book of God. There are things in it at which the too-polite shrug their shoulders—not so many, perhaps, in the original as in our translation—but still, sufficient to shock a prudish taste. The Bible is, none the less, chaste because it scorns to call foul things by fair names. I love the Word of God because, while it is a God-like Book, it is also a man-like Book. In all the Glory of His Infinite Wisdom, the Lord has written to us this Divine message in the rugged grandeur and sublime simplicity of language which even a child can comprehend!

The Lord Jesus here uses a plain, homely metaphor. As tepid water makes a man's stomach heave, so lukewarm profession is nauseous to the Almighty. He could better endure either the coldness of apathy or the

warmth of enthusiasm—but the man who is lukewarm in religion moves Him to the deepest loathing. He vomits him forth from His mouth! His very name shall be dismissed from the lips of the Lord with the most sickening abhorrence that fancy can paint. It is an utterance so strong that no sentence of the most vehement and impassioned orator could rival it. There is such a depth of disgust in this warning against lukewarmness that I know of no figure within the range of imagination—and no words in the whole vocabulary of language which could have conveyed the meaning of "Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness," so fully, or with such terrible force!

I am going to try to show you, from this text, first, some *reasons why lukewarmness in religion is so distasteful to Christ.* And then to point out to you *some dissuasive against lukewarmness*, urging you to be fervent in your Master's cause.

I. First, then, I am to give you SOME REASONS WHY LUKEWARM RELIGION IS SO DISTASTEFUL TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

And first, let me say that it is so *because it is a direct insult to the Lord Jesus Christ.* If I boldly say that I do not believe what He teaches, I have given Him the lie. But if I say to Him, "I believe what You teach, but I do not think it of sufficient importance for me to disturb myself much about it," I do, in fact, more willfully resist His Word! I as much as say to Him, "If it is true, yet it is a thing which I so despise and consider so contemptible, that I will not give my heart to it." Did Jesus Christ think salvation of such importance that He must come from Heaven to earth to work it out? Did He think the Gospel, which He preached, so worthy to be made known that He must spend His life in proclaiming it? Did He think the redemption, which He worked out, to be so valuable that He must shed His own precious blood in order to complete it? Then, surely, He was in earnest, so, if I profess to believe the Truths that He taught and yet am indifferent, do I not insult Christ by seeming to insinuate that there was no need for Him to be in such dead earnest—that, in fact, He laid these things too deeply to heart?

His intense zeal was not on His own account, but on behalf of others and, according to all reason, those who are the interested parties for whom Christ's solemn engagements were undertaken should be even more earnest than He was, if that could be possible! Yet, instead of that being the case, here is Christ in earnest and we—too many of us—are lukewarm, "neither cold nor hot." This lukewarmness does not merely seem to give God the lie, it does not merely appear to censure Christ, but it does, as it were, tell Him that the things which He thought were so valuable, are of no worth in our esteem—and so it insults Him to His face! O my Brothers and Sisters, have you ever really thought what an insult it is to God when we come before Him with lukewarm prayers? There stands the heavenly Mercy Seat. The road to it is sprinkled with the precious blood of Jesus, yet we come to it with hearts that are cold, or we approach it leaving our hearts behind us. We kneel in the attitude of prayer, yet we do not pray! We prattle out certain words, we express thoughts which are not our real desires, we feign needs that we do not feel. Do we not thus degrade the Mercy Seat? We make it, as it were, a

common lounging place rather than an awful wrestling place, once sprinkled with blood and often to be sprinkled with the sweat of our fervent supplication. When we come to the House of God to which Jesus Christ has invited us as to the banqueting house full of rich provisions, do we not come up, full often, just as we go to our shops—no, not with so much earnestness as we take with us to the Exchange or to the counting house? What do we thus seem to say but that God's House is a common place, that the provision thereof is but ordinary food and that the solemn engagements of God's sanctuary are but everyday things—not worthy of the zeal and energy of a sensible man, but only meet to be attended to with lukewarmness of spirit.

I think if I were to pause longer, here, I could prove to you that I went not too far when I said that lukewarmness is an insult to God. It insults Him in all that is dear to Him by casting a disparagement upon everything which He would have us to believe to be precious.

Does the Lord Jesus deserve such treatment at our hands? May He not well say to us, if we are lukewarm, "I would you were cold or hot"? O Jesus, Your heart was full of love to those in whom there was nothing lovely! You did leave the glories of Your Father's House, though there was no necessity for You to do so, save the Divine necessity which was found in Your own heart, for You did love Your Church so much that You did become bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh. You did fight her enemies. You did rescue her out of the hands of him who was stronger than she was. You did pour out Your life's blood as the ransom price for her redemption. Your pangs were grievous, Your sufferings were bitter, Your anguish was extreme. I look up to Your thorn-crowned brow. I gaze into Your marred face and see those eyes red with weeping and those emaciated cheeks, and I say, "O Jesus, You are worthy of the best place in the human heart! You ought to be loved as never one was loved before. If there are flames of love to You in my heart, let them burn like coals of juniper and let them be fanned to a most vehement heat." Oh, if it is possible for us to feel warm emotions, we ought to feel it here!

Is it not a sad thing that after all Christ's love to us, we should repay it with lukewarm love to Him? Which would you rather have—lukewarm love or positive hatred? Perhaps you have but little choice with regard to most people, but were it one very dear to you—the partner of your life, for instance—lukewarm love would be no love at all! What but misery could there be in a family where there was only lukewarm love? Is a father content with half-hearted affection from his children? In those relationships we give all our heart, but with regard to Christ, who has a far greater claim on us than husband, or father, or mother, or brother—how is it that we dare to offer Him a distant bow, a cool recognition, a chill, inconstant, wavering heart? Let it be so no longer, Beloved! O my Brothers and Sisters, I bid you, by His agony and bloody sweat, by His Cross and passion, by all the pangs that went through His sacred body and by the deeper anguish of His inmost soul, I beseech you, either love Him or hate Him! Either drive Him from the door of your heart and let Him know that you are not His friend—or else give Him a whole heart full of affection, almost ready to burst with the fervor of your love toward Him!

But though these two things—insult and ingratitude to Christ—would be quite sufficient to justify the strong expressions in our text, let me remind you, further, that *the lukewarm professor compromises God in the eyes of the world by all that he does and says*. If a man is an infidel, openly profane, known to have no connection with Christ and His cause, let him do what he may—he brings no scandal on the Savior's name. He has no fear of God before his eyes, he is in open enmity against the Most High and, therefore, though he is rebellious and wicked, full of sedition and blasphemy, yet he does not compromise the dignity of God. But when the lukewarm professor of Christianity goes forth before ungodly men, they say, "This man pretends to be a child of God. He professes to have been washed in the blood of Christ. He stands before us and challenges our observation as one who declares that he is a new creature in Christ Jesus. He tells us that he is the workmanship of the Holy Spirit, that he has been begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Now, whatever *that* man does, the world considers his acts to be those of a new creature in Christ Jesus—to be, in fact, acts inspired by God's Spirit within him! The world does not make distinctions, as we do, between the old Adam and the new. Their reason does not endorse our beliefs, true though they are, concerning the old and the new natures. Men of the world look at us as a whole and if they see anything wrong in our principles or practice, they set it down at once to the account of our religion and charge it with inconsistency.

Now, lukewarm Professor, what do worldlings see in you? They see a man who says he is going to Heaven, but who is only travelling at a snail's pace. He professes to believe that there is a Hell, yet he has tearless eyes and never seeks to snatch souls from going down into the Pit. They see before them one who has to deal with eternal realities, yet he is but half awake! They see one who professes to have passed through a transformation so mysterious and wonderful that there must be, if it is true, a vast change in the outward life as the result of it—yet they see him as much like themselves as can be. He may be morally consistent in his general behavior, but they see no energy in his religious character. When they hear a solemn, stirring sermon concerning the wrath of God, they say, "It is all very well for the minister to appeal to our emotions, but what does it matter? The people who constantly hear him are not in earnest. The saints who profess to believe what he says, trifle over it, and are, no doubt, in their hearts, as incredulous as we are." Let the minister be as earnest as he may, the lukewarmness of professors, to a large extent, neutralizes any effect which his ministry produces because the world will judge the church not so much by the pulpit as by the pew! Worldlings say, by their conduct, if not in so many words, "There is no need for us to make any stir about religion—these saints take it remarkably easy, yet they think all will be well—we do quite as much as they do. They seem to think that, after all, it would be fanaticism to look upon the things that they hear from the preacher as facts—they do not act as if they were realities and so," they say, "doubtless they are *not* realities and, as one form of religion is as good as another—and there is nothing

of value in any one of them—we see no reason why we should have any religion at all."

Thus, the careless worldling is lulled to sleep by the lukewarm professor who, in this respect, acts the part of the siren to the sinner, playing sweet music in his ears and even helping to lure him to the rocks where he will be destroyed! This is a solemn matter, Beloved. In this way great damage is done to the cause of the Truth of God and God's name and God's honor are compromised by inconsistent professors. I pray you either to give up your profession, or to be true to it. If you are really God's people, then serve Him with all your might. But if Baal is your god, then serve him. If the flesh is worth pleasing, then serve the flesh. But if God is Lord paramount, then cleave to Him. Oh, I beseech and entreat you, as you love your own souls, do not play fast and loose with godliness! Either let it alone, or else let it saturate you through and through! Either possess it, or cease to profess it. The great curse of the Church—that which brings more dishonor upon the Lord than all the ribald jests of scoffing atheists—is the lukewarmness of its members! Well may He say to His lukewarm Church, as He does in our text, "I will vomit you out of My mouth."

Yet once more, notice that wherever *there is lukewarmness in religious matters, it is out of place*. There is no spot near the Throne of God where lukewarmness could stand in a seemly position. Take the pulpit, for instance. Ah, my Brothers, of all spots in the world, if lukewarmness comes here, then is the preacher indeed undone! He should be, of all men, the most in earnest who undertakes the charge of souls, for he has that solemn charge ringing in his ears—"I have set you a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear the word at My mouth, and warn them from Me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, you shall surely die; if you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at your hands." They who have to deal with hardhearted sinners—they who have to preach unpalatable Truths of God—surely *they* should not make men's hearts harder and the Truth more unpalatable by uttering it in a half-hearted manner! It will go hard with the man who has exercised his ministry with indifference. "If," said one of old, "there is a man who finds the ministry an easy place, he will find it a hard matter, at the last, to give in his account before God."

If, my Brothers, there should be any professed ministers of Christ who never know what it is to travail in birth for souls. If there are men who take up the ministry merely as a profession and exercise it as they might do in any secular calling. If they preach merely as a matter of routine or because they consider it is a pleasant occupation, it would have been better for them if they had never been born! Far better would it have been for them to have broken stones by the wayside than to have been preaching the Gospel and leaving their hearts out of their sermon! Yes, I know not whether it would not have been better to have been a devil in Hell than to have been a minister in the pulpit without his heart in his work. Baxter's "*Reformed Pastor*" stirs my very soul whenever I read its glowing periods—those fiery thunderbolts which he hurls at the heads of

idle shepherds and lazy ministers! I have read nearly the whole book through to those who are studying for the ministry in connection with this Church and I have often seen the tears start from their eyes while listening to the burning language of that fervent preacher and writer! Every time I have read a chapter in that book, I have felt that the next Sabbath I could preach—I *must* preach—with greater earnestness after reading the solemn words of that mightiest of ministers, Richard Baxter! Ah, Beloved, we need to have more of that earnestness in the pulpit! What if my young Brothers should study less and be more earnest? Rather let them study as much as they can, but, oh, if the Holy Spirit will but shed His sacred fire upon the dry fuel of their studies, how much more will be accomplished for the Kingdom of Christ than is done now! So, you see, dear Friends, that lukewarmness is out of place in the pulpit.

So it is, my Brothers and Sisters, in the Sunday school, with the tract distributor and even with the private Christian, the humble attendant upon the means of Grace. Everywhere, lukewarmness in religion is to be loathed and abandoned, for it is a gross and glaring inconsistency! I would not have you go with a lukewarm heart, even to distribute tracts! I would not have you dare to visit the sick unless your heart is filled with love to Christ! Either do such work well, or do not do it at all. Either put your heart into the work, or let someone else do it! We have had too many men of straw filling up our ranks. We have had too many automatons going forth to fight our battles. We have counted our legions and said, "A brave host they will be"—but if our army is sifted, if our ranks are thinned—we will probably find that fewer true soldiers of the Cross will accomplish more if they are not impeded in their onward march by the mixed multitude of those who *pretend* to join the army of the living God.

I hope that lukewarm professors will find themselves thoroughly out of place among us. I do not think they could long be happy here. There are so many Brothers and Sisters here with a red-hot spirit that they would soon get burned and they would say "This is not the spot for us." If you, lukewarm Professors, come among us, you will be asked to do 50 things and you will be teased till you do them—for the good people here will not be content unless you do all that you can—and they will probably want you to do two or three times more than you can! I am sure that in all places where God has sent warm-hearted men to preach the Gospel, you will find yourselves extremely uncomfortable if you want to be lukewarm. I certainly could tell you of some chapels where you could take your seat and where you would be greatly needed for the support of the ministry. The minister would never wake you. I daresay if you paid an extra half-crown a quarter, he would let you sleep on as long as you liked! If you did not join the church, nobody would ever think of asking you whether you were a member or not. In our fashionable churches, of course, people do not speak to one another—that would be quite beneath their assumed dignity. No man would dare, in such a place as that, turn to his neighbor and say, "Are you a child of God?" Well, if you mean to be lukewarm, go to one of those places—do not stay here lest we should worry

you by our importunities! I question whether anybody would come here, for a few Sundays, without some Brother or Sister walking up to him and asking him whether he was a follower of Christ or not—and the question would be repeated, by one or another, until he came to some decision concerning his soul.

II. Now I will turn to the second part of my subject, in which I am to give you SOME DISSUASIVES AGAINST LUKEWARMNESS. I have exposed its evils, now let me try to dissuade you from it.

Let me remind you that *as Christians you have to do with solemn realities*. You have to do with death, with eternity, with Heaven, with Hell, with Christ, with Satan, with souls that must live forever—can you deal with these things in a cold spirit? If you can deal thus with them successfully, it will be one of the greatest marvels in the world, for these things demand the whole man! If but to praise God requires that we call up all the powers of our soul, how much more is needed to serve God and to serve Him, not in the hewing of wood and the drawing of water, but in the winning of souls, in preaching His Gospel, in propagating His cause and extending His Kingdom? Here, my Brothers, are stern and solemn things for us to deal with—and they must not be touched by any but those who come warmheartedly to deal with them.

Remember, too, that these were very solemn things with you once. Perhaps you have been converted 10 or 20 years, yet can it be that these Truths of God now fall lightly upon your ears and excite but little emotion? There was a time when it needed little to make you earnest. You were, then—

"Laden with guilt and full of fears."

Your groans were deep. You could not sleep at night. You were laboring under such a heavy burden that it seemed to crush your soul all but into the lowest Hell. Then, you prayed in earnest and you sought God in earnest! Oh, how you, in those days, longed to be able, even, to stand in the aisle if you could but hear the Word of God! Though the distance you had to come was great and the pressure of the crowd to enter the House of Prayer was inconvenient. And though you were almost ready to faint, sometimes, before the sermon was finished, you bore up through an insatiable desire to listen to the Gospel message which might be the means of your salvation! Do you not remember how, at that time, you thought every unsaved person was a fool—and especially thought that you, yourself, were a fool for having so long left these great realities untouched and almost unthought of—while the trifles of a day were engrossing all your thoughts? Oh, then, I conjure you, by those days long gone by, think as earnestly, now, of those things as you did then! Let your past experience be the standard of your present zeal! You ought to have advanced beyond that, but if you have not, be patient enough to go back and begin again where you began before—be humble enough to ask God to revive the sincerity of your penitence, the reality of your Grace, the eagerness of your desires and the flaming passion of your heart.

And remember, further, that *there have been times, with you, when these things did seem worthy of a warm heart*. Perhaps you remember when a child out of your Sunday school class died and then you thought,

"Oh, that I had taught that child more earnestly, and prayed over it with all my heart!" Possibly, when your own child died, you cried, "O Absalom, my son, my son!" And the thought wounded you to the quick that you had not taught that child as you might have done—and that you had not wrestled with God in prayer for that child's soul as you ought to have done. Have not I also had to think like this when I have buried some of your kinsfolk or acquaintances? As I have looked down into the grave of some unconverted hearer, the tears have streamed from my eyes and, afterwards, I have awakened at night with some solemn and terrible dream embodying this black thought—"Have I been faithful to that soul? Have I dealt with that spirit, now departed, as I would deal with it if I had another opportunity of preaching to it?"

Sometimes I feel that I can even say, with the Apostle Paul, "I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." But there are other seasons of awful questioning when I tremble, lest, out of so numerous a flock, the loss of even one should be attributed to the shepherd's neglect! Do not some of you remember, when the cholera was so rife, how solemn you thought the things of God to be? And when the fever came into your house and one after another died, you thought there was nothing worth living for but to be prepared to die and that your whole business, from that time, should be to seek to warn others, lest they should perish and go to the dread place of torment!

Let me remind you, also, that *the day is coming when you will think these things worthy of your whole heart.* When you and I shall be stretched upon our dying beds, I think we shall have to regret, above everything else, our coldness of heart. Among the many sins which we must then confess, and which, I trust, we shall then know were pardoned and "laid upon the Scapegoat's head of old," perhaps this will lie the heaviest upon our heart and conscience—"I did not live as I ought to have done. I was not as earnest in my Lord's cause as I should have been." Then will our cold sermons, like sheeted ghosts, march before our eyes in dread array. Then will our neglected days start up, each one seeming to wave its hair as though it were one of the seven furies and to look right into our hearts, and make our very blood curdle in our veins. Then will our Sunday school classes appear again before us—and those who taught us to teach others will come and reprove us for having despised their training and not having profited by that holy instruction which we received when we were set apart for God's cause and were first trained to serve in His great army. We may reckon these things of small importance, now, but when we lie on the borders of eternity, we shall think them worth living for and worth dying a thousand deaths for!

I believe that, then, some of those Truths of God which we have kept back, those ordinances which we have neglected and those precepts which we have despised, will seem to grow into an awful mass, too heavy for our soul to endure—just as, sometimes, in a dream, a mountain appears to rise from a single grain of sand and to swell, and swell, and swell till its stupendous weight seems to oppress our brains and to crush the very life out of us! If you have lived lukewarmly, the things of God will

then, even though you are a child of His, darken your dying hour and weigh down your spirit with a fearful load of sad reflections!

Yes, and there will come a time when the things of God will seem yet more real than even on our dying bed! That will be *when we stand at the bar of God*. Am I prepared to stand there with a ministry half discharged? What shall I do if I have to give account before God for sermons preached without my heart being put into them? How shall I appear before my Maker if I have ever kept back anything which I thought might have been useful to you, if I have shunned to rebuke any of you when I ought to have done so, if I have not warned you faithfully and loved you tenderly, even as my own soul, and sought to woo you to the Savior? How can I give in my account, as a steward of the Lord, if I have only served Him half-heartedly? O God, grant, I beseech You, that, notwithstanding a thousand infirmities, Your servant may always be free from that great sin of being lukewarm in Your cause!

And what do you think, Sirs, you will do, as professed followers of Christ, if you have been lukewarm professors, if you have had a name to live and yet have been dead, or if you have been only half alive, with all your energies paralyzed? Ah, Sirs! Ah, Sirs! I world not, for all the world, live as some of you are living—just observing some of the externals of godliness without the vital power thereof. Giving Christ a little of your substance just for a mere show, offering Him a little of your time just to pacify your conscience, taking His name upon you to hide your own defects—but still a stranger to His Grace—unconsecrated, undevoted, not yielding yourself wholly to Him, but still living to the flesh while pretending to be quickened by the Spirit! Living with your heart in your business, but no heart in your religion—closely pursuing the world, but following Christ afar off—firmly grasping the world's plow, but only now and then lightly touching Christ's plow and looking back even as you do! O Sirs, I tell you, when the earth begins to reel, when the heavens begin to shake, when the stars fall from their places and begin to dash abroad like bewildered men, you will be bewildered, too! Your heart, too, shall shake and your grand hopes totter to destruction if you have only served Jesus with a lukewarm heart. God give us Grace to make our religion all! That we may put our whole heart into it and live it out and then be prepared to die for it, if need be, and God so please, that we may live to enjoy the results of it in Glory!

I am fearful, full often, in addressing the same congregation, Sabbath after Sabbath, and week after week, now by the space of seven years, [this sermon was preached in the winter of 1860-61] lest my voice should grow stale to you. And I can truthfully say that I would rather cease to preach at all than preach to people to whom my voice had become so familiar that it was only like the ringing of an old bell to which they gave no heed! No, there must be feeling in the congregation as well as earnestness in the preacher, otherwise let me resign my commission! I pray God, if I am spared to minister to you, year after year, and you are spared to sit in the pew to hear the Word, that there may be earnestness in you and earnestness in me that we may never come down to the dead level of some of the churches of which I spoke a little while ago—as you may think, in a spirit

of censure, but as God knows, in a spirit of loving faithfulness—old churches that have come to be like pools without outlets, covered over with the sickly duckweed of respectability. Stagnation in a church is the devil's delight.

I do not think He cares how many Baptist chapels you build, nor how many churches you open, if you have only lukewarm preachers and people in them. He cares not for your armies if your soldiers will but sleep—nor for your guns if they are not loaded. "Let them build as much as they like," He says, "for those buildings are not the batteries that shake the gates of Hell." What we need is new zeal, fresh energy, more fire! Our old Baptist cause has become very slack. The great mass of Baptists appear to be ashamed of their opinions and many of our ministers say so little about Baptism that people forget that there is such an ordinance of Christ! If we have held our tongues concerning Baptism, we have that sin lying at our door for which we shall have to give account—and I trust that we shall not continue in it any longer. If Believers' Baptism is an ordinance of Christ—and we know that it is—we ought to speak out plainly about it. I recommend our Brothers and Sisters to distribute tracts upon the subject as widely as they can and, especially, to make known the teaching of the New Testament upon this matter. If Paedo-Baptist ministers will only preach upon it, I need not do so, for that will send some of their people to search the Scriptures—and that is all that we want. If our views are not in accordance with God's Word, let us abandon them! But if they are in harmony with our Lord's teaching, let us not hold our tongues concerning them. We have had too much of this guilty silence—let us boldly proclaim the whole Truth of God and, by terrible things in righteousness, answer You, O God! Bring on the clash of arms once again and let Your Church win the victory! Give the victory to the right and the true and let all error be trampled underfoot! So be it, O Lord, and unto Your name be all the Glory! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
DANIEL 9:1-13.

Verses 1, 2. *In the first year of Darius, the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; in the first year of His reign, I, Daniel, understood by books the number of the years whereof the Word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the Prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.* And, therefore, discovering that the end of the captivity had nearly come, he set himself to plead mightily with God that now He would turn the hand of His love upon the destroyed and desolate city of Jerusalem. Notice that Daniel recollected the exact date when the captivity was to end—and when you and I have had a term put to any trial or chastisement from God, we ought to remember it, and record it among our special memoranda. I am afraid it is not always so. We do not forget when a great sorrow overtook us—we can, probably, recollect when some dear one died—we remember the very day of the week and month when that happened. But are we equally tenacious of the memory of God's loving

kindness? I am afraid not! Yet it should be so. We should be able to write about it as definitely as Daniel did when he said, "In the first year of Darius, the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes"—and then mention the time when we had some peculiarly choice communion with God, or when we were led out in more than usually earnest prayer, or when we had a specially gracious answer from our God.

3. *And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes.* "I set my face unto the Lord God." This expression is full of meaning. When men resolutely set their faces to prayer, bending their whole mind that way, seeking God, with their faces towards Him, not in pretense, but in deep and solemn earnestness, then it is that they succeed with their supplication! Daniel speaks of "prayer and supplications," by which we may understand that he prayed much and prayed often, setting apart a regular and considerable portion of his time for the holy exercise. He was a very busy man, for he was the first of the presidents over the 120 princes, yet, for all that, or because of that, he would have his time for communion with God! And he was wise in so acting, for any portion of our time that is stolen from prayer is also stolen from ourselves. The old saying is true, "Prayer and provender hinder no man's journey."

4. *And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the Covenant and mercy to them that love Him, and to them that keep His commandments.* You must have noticed how, in prayer, holy men of old were known to vary the names of God. Here we find Daniel addressing Him as "the great and dreadful God," but that title was not chosen at random, for the Prophet felt that as Jerusalem had remained so long a desolation, the terrible aspect of God's Character was more conspicuous even than the tender one. Yet he coupled with it that gracious Truth of God, "keeping the Covenant and mercy to them that love Him, and to them that keep His commandments."

5, 6. *We have sinned and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and from Your judgments. Neither have we hearkened unto Your servants the Prophets, which spoke in Your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.* Daniel confesses the sins of the nation and he spares no proper epithets in describing them—"We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled." He saw at least a shade of different meaning in each word that he employed. These are not vain repetitions! Daniel multiplied his expressions because he had an intense sense of the sinfulness of sin and the guilt of his people. Observe, too, how he notes the aggravation of their sin in their refusal to listen to the messages which God had sent to them by His servants. If there is anything in the world that can make sin to be more than ordinarily sinful, it is when sin is persisted in—notwithstanding the manifest warnings of God.

7. *O Lord, righteousness belongs unto You, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day, to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all*

the countries where You have driven them because of their trespass that they have trespassed against You. This verse might be just as truly spoken now as in the first year of Darius, the Mede, for we, also, can say, " O Lord, righteousness belongs unto You"—we cannot find it anywhere else! And the other part of the verse is equally true, for unto us belongs confusion of faces, as it did to the men of Daniel's day.

8, 9. *O Lord, to us belongs confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against You. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him.* What a precious assurance this is! Just in proportion to your sense of sin, will you value it. If you feel that confusion of face belongs to you, you will also rejoice to know that mercies and forgiveness belong to the Lord and that He is waiting to bestow them upon all who seek His face in penitence and faith!

10, 11. *Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His Laws which He set before us by His servants the Prophets. Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your Law, even by departing, that they might not obey Your voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, because we have sinned against Him.* It was a part of that old Covenant that if they sinned against the Lord, they should be scattered among all the peoples of the earth, and their sufferings exactly tallied with what God had threatened. This fact is used by the Prophet in some measure as a source of consolation, for He argues that if God is true to the black side of the Covenant, He will also be faithful to the bright side of it! And it is so—He who faithfully fulfils His threats will just as faithfully keep His promises.

12, 13. *And He has confirmed His words, which He spoke against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole Heaven has not been done as has been done upon Jerusalem. As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand Your Truth.* Oh, sad hardness of heart and impenitence that, though Jerusalem had been so sorely smitten, yet the people turned not unto God in prayer!

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, 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 SADDEST CRY FROM THE CROSS
NO. 2803

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 2, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 7, 1877.

"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani? That is to say, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me."
Matthew 27:46.

DURING the time that "Moses kept the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law," he, "came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb," and there he saw a strange sight—a bush that burned with fire and yet was not consumed! Then Moses, apparently overtaken by curiosity, was drawing near in order to examine this phenomenon when he heard God's voice say to him, "Draw not near here: take off your shoes from your feet, for the place where on you stand is holy ground." We also may well feel, as we think of our Lord Jesus in His agony, that the voice of God speaks to us from the Cross and says, "Curiosity—bold, daring, prying intellect—draw not near here! Take off your shoes from your feet, for the place where on you stand is the very Holy of Holies unto which no man may come except as the Spirit of God shall conduct him."

I think I can understand the words, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" as they are written by David in the 22nd Psalm, but the same words, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" when uttered by Jesus on the Cross, I cannot comprehend, so I shall not pretend to be able to explain them. There is no plummet that can fathom this deep! There is no eagle's eye that can penetrate the mystery that surrounds this strange question! I have read that once upon a time Martin Luther sat down in his study to consider this text. Hour after hour, that mighty man of God sat still—and those who waited on him came into the room, again and again, and he was so absorbed in his meditation that they almost thought he was a corpse. He moved neither hand nor foot, and neither ate nor drank, but sat with his eyes wide open, like one in a trance, thinking over these wondrous words, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" And when, after many long hours, in which he seemed to be utterly lost to everything that went on around him, he rose from his chair, someone heard him say, "God forsaking God! No man can understand that!" And so he went his way. Though that is hardly the correct expression to use—I should hesitate to endorse it—yet I do not marvel that our text presented itself to the mind of Luther in that light. It is

said that he looked like a man who had been down a deep mine and who had come up again to the light. I feel more like one who has not been down the mine, but who has looked into it—or like one who has been part of the way down and shuddered as he passed through the murky darkness but who would not dare to go much lower, for this cry, "Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani?" is a tremendous deep; no man will ever be able to fathom it.

So I am not going to try to explain it, but, first, *to utter some thoughts about it.* And then, secondly, *to draw some lessons from it.* We may find many practical uses for things which are beyond the grasp of our minds—and this saying of our Lord may be of great service to us even though we cannot comprehend it.

I. First, then, let me utter SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT THIS STRANGE QUESTION—"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

Jesus was accustomed to address God as His Father. If you turn to His many prayers, you will find Him almost invariably—if not invariably—speaking to God as His Father. And, truly, He stands in that relationship both as God and as Man. Yet, in this instance, He does not say, "Father," but, "My God, My God." Was it that He had any doubt about His Sonship? Assuredly not! Satan had assailed Him in the wilderness with the insinuation, "If You are the Son of God," but Christ had put him to the rout—and I feel persuaded that Satan had not gained any advantage over Him, even on the Cross, which could have made Him doubt whether He was the Son of God or not.

I think that our Savior was then speaking as Man and that this is the reason why He cried, "My God, My God," rather than, "My Father." I think He must have been speaking as Man, as I can scarcely bring my mind to the point of conceiving that God the Son could say to God the Father, "My God, My God." There is such a wonderful blending of the Human and the Divine in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ that, though it may not be absolutely accurate to ascribe to the Deity some things in the life of Christ, yet is He so completely God and Man that, often, Scripture does speak of things that must belong to the Humanity only as if they belonged to the Godhead. For instance, in his charge to the Ephesian elders, the Apostle Paul said, "Feed the Church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood"—an incorrect expression, if judged according to the rule of the logician—but accurate enough according to the Scriptural method of using words in their proper sense. Yet I do think that we must draw a distinction between the Divinity and the Humanity here. As the Lord Jesus said, "My God, My God," it was because it was His Humanity that was mainly to be considered just then.

And O my Brothers and Sisters, does it not show us *what a real Man the Christ of God was, that He could be forsaken of His God*? We might have supposed that Christ being Emmanuel—God With Us—the Godhead and the Manhood being indissolubly united in one Person, it would have been impossible for Him to be forsaken of God. We might also have inferred, for the same reason, that it would have been impossible for Him to have been scourged, spit upon and especially that it would not have

been possible for Him to die! Yet all these things were made not only possible, but also sacredly certain! In order to complete the redemption of His chosen people, it was necessary for Him to be both God's well-beloved Son and to be forsaken of His Father. He could truly say, as His saints also have sometimes had to say, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Persecuted and forsaken Believer, behold your Brother in adversity! Behold the One who has gone wherever you may have to go, who has suffered more than you can ever suffer and who has taken His part in the direst calamity that ever happened to human nature so that He had to cry out, in the agony of His soul, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

What was this forsaking? We are trying to come a little closer to this burning yet unconsumed bush—with our shoes off our feet, I hope, all the while—and in this spirit we ask, "What was this forsaking?" A devout writer says that it was *horror at the sight of human misery*. He affirms what is quite true, that our Lord Jesus Christ saw all that man had to suffer because of sin—that He perceived the total sum of the miseries brought by sin upon all the past, present and future generations of the human race—and that He must have had a holy horror as He thought of all the woes of man, caused by sin, in this life and in that which is to come—and being completely one with man, He spoke in the name of man and said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" That is all true, yet that explanation will not suffice, my Brothers and Sisters because our Savior did not say, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken MAN?" but, "Why have You forsaken Me?" This forsaking was something *personal* to Himself.

Others have said that it was *a dreadful shrinking in His soul on account of human sin*. I have read of a child who had done wrong and whose father had faithfully rebuked and punished him. But the boy remained callous and sullen. He sat in the same room with his father, yet he refused to confess that he had done wrong. At last the father, under a sense of his child's great wickedness, burst into tears and sobbed and sighed. Then the boy came to his father and asked him why he sorrowed so, and he answered, "Because of my child's hardness of heart." It is true that our Lord Jesus Christ did feel as that father felt—only far more acutely—but our text cannot be fully explained by any such illustration as that. That would be only explaining it away, for Christ did not say, "My God, My God, why has man forsaken You, and why have You so completely left men in their sin?" No, His cry was, "Why have You forsaken Me?" It was not so much the God of man to whom He appealed, but, "*My* God, *My* God." It was a *personal* grief that wrung from Him the *personal* cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken *Me*?" For this forsaking, by His Father in whom He trusted, related peculiarly to Himself.

What was this forsaking? *Was it physical weakness*? Some of you may know that when the body is in a low condition, the soul also sinks. Quite involuntarily, unhappiness of mind, depression of spirit and sorrow of heart will come upon you. You may be without any real reason for grief and yet may be among the most unhappy of men because, for the time,

your body has conquered your soul. But, my Brothers and Sisters, this explanation is not supposable in the case of Christ, for it was not many moments after this that He shouted, "with a loud voice," His conquering cry, "It is finished," and so passed from the conflict to His coronation! His brave spirit overcame His physical weakness and though He was brought into the dust of death," and plunged into the deepest depths of depression of spirit, yet, still, the cry, "My God, My God," which also was uttered, "with a loud voice," proves that there was still a considerable amount of mental strength, notwithstanding His physical weakness, so that mere depression of spirit caused by physical reasons could not account for this agonizing cry.

And, certainly, my Brothers and Sisters, *this cry was not occasioned by unbelief*. You know that, sometimes, a child of God in sore trial and with many inward struggles, cries out, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" when, all the while, the Lord has been remembering the tried soul and dealing graciously with it. As long ago as Isaiah's day, "Zion said, The Lord has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me." But the Lord's reply was, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you upon the palms of My hand." Unbelief often makes us talk about God forgetting us when He does nothing of the kind, but our Lord Jesus Christ was a stranger to unbelief. It was impossible for Him to cherish any doubt about the faithfulness and loving kindness of His Father—so His cry did not arise from that cause.

And, another thing, *it did not arise from a mistake*. I have known Believers, in sore trouble, make great blunders concerning what God was doing with them. They have thought that He had forsaken them, for they misinterpreted certain signs and dealings of God, and they said, "All these things are against us. The hand of God has gone out against us to destroy us." But Christ made no mistake about this matter, for God *had* forsaken Him. It was really so! When He said, "Why have You forsaken Me?" He spoke Infallible Truth of God and His mind was under no cloud whatever! He knew what He was saying and He was right in what He said, for His Father had forsaken Him for the time.

What, then, can this expression mean? *Does it mean that God did not love His Son*? O Beloved, let us, with the utmost detestation, fling away any suspicion of the kind that we may have harbored! God did forsake His Son but He loved Him as much when He forsook Him as at any other period. I even venture to say that if it had been possible for God's love towards His Son to be increased, He would have delighted in Him more when He was standing as the suffering Representative of His chosen people than He had ever delighted in Him before. We do not indulge, for a single moment, the thought that God was angry with Him personally, or looked upon Him as unworthy of His love, or regarded Him as one upon whom He could not smile because of anything displeasing in Himself. Yet the fact remains that God had forsaken Him, for Christ was under no mistake about that matter. He rightly felt that His Father had withdrawn

the comfortable Light of His Countenance, that He had, for the time being, lost the sense of His Father's favor—not the favor, itself, but the consciousness of that Divine aid and succor which He had formerly enjoyed—so He felt Himself like a Man left all alone—and He was not only left all alone by His friends, but also by His God.

Can we at all imagine the state of mind in which our Lord was when He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" No, that is not possible, yet I will try to help you to understand it. Can you imagine the misery of a lost soul in Hell—one who is forsaken of God and who cries, in bitterest agony, "God will never look upon me in mercy, or delight, or favor"—can you picture that sad state? Well, if you can, you will not, even then, have got anywhere near the position of Christ—because that soul in Hell does not want God's favor and does not seek it, or ask for it. That lost soul is so hardened in sin that it never troubles about whether God would receive it if it repented—the truth is that it does not want to repent! The misery that men will suffer in the world to come will be self-created misery arising out of the fact that they loved sin so much that they brought eternal sorrow upon themselves. It must be an awful thing for a soul, in the next world, to be without God, but, as far as its own consciousness is concerned, it will be so hardened that it will abide without God, yet not realizing all that it has lost because it is, itself, incapable of knowing the beauty of holiness and the perfection of the God from whom it is separated forever. Yet how different was the case of our Lord Jesus Christ when upon the Cross! He knew, as no mere man could ever know, what separation from God meant!

Think of a case of another kind. King Saul, when the witch of Endor brought up the spirit of Samuel, said to him, "God is departed from me, and answers me no more." You recollect the state of mind that he was in when the evil spirit was upon him and he needed David's harp to charm it away. But at last, even *that* failed, and I know of no more unhappy character than Saul when God had departed from him. But, somehow, there was not the anguish in the soul of Saul that there would have been if he had ever really known the Lord. I do not think that he ever really did, in his inmost soul, know the Lord. After Samuel anointed him, he was "turned into another man," but He never became a *new* man and the sense of God's Presence that he had was not, for a moment, comparable to that Presence of God which a true saint enjoys and which Christ always enjoyed, except when He was on the Cross. So, when Saul lost the consciousness of that Presence, he did not suffer so great a loss and, consequently, so great an anguish as afterwards happened to our Lord.

Coming nearer to our own circumstances, I remind you that there are some of God's people who do really love Him and who have walked in the Light of His Countenance, yet, for some reason or other, they have lost the comfortable enjoyment of God's love. If any of you, dear Friends, know what that sad experience is, you are getting a faint impression of the meaning of this cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me!" Oh, what an anguish it is—what heart-break—to think that one is forsaken of God! I have heard of people dying of broken hearts, but I believe

that the man who has been made to utter this cry has gone as near to dying of a broken heart as anyone might well do without actually dying. To be without God is to be without life. And we who love Him, can say with Dr. Watts—

"My God, my Life, my Love,
To You, to You I call!
I cannot live, if You remove,
For You are my All-in-All."

But, my dear Brothers and Sisters, you have not got the whole truth yet, *for no saint knows the Presence of God as Christ knew it*. No saint has, to the fullest, enjoyed the love of God as Christ enjoyed it and, consequently, if he does lose it, he only seems to lose the moonlight whereas Christ lost the sunlight when, for a time, the face of His Father was withdrawn from Him! Only think what must have been the anguish of the Savior, especially as contrasted with His former enjoyment. Never did any mere human being know so much and enjoy so much of the love of God as Christ had done. He had lived in it, basked in it—there had never been any interruption to it. "I do always those things that please Him," He said, concerning His Father. And His Father twice said, concerning Him, "This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Now, as our Lord Jesus Christ had enjoyed the love of God to the very fullest, think what it must have been for Him to lose the conscious enjoyment of it. You know that you may go into a room and blow out the candle, but the blind people will not miss it. They miss the light most who have enjoyed it most—and Christ missed the Light of God's Countenance most because He had enjoyed it most! Then, reflect upon His intense love to God. Jesus Christ—the Man Christ Jesus—loved God with all His heart, mind, soul and strength, as you and I have never yet been able to do. The love of Christ towards His Father was boundless. Well, then, for a frown to be upon His Father's face, or for the Light of that Father's face to be taken away from Him must have made it correspondingly dark and terrible to Him.

Remember, too, the absolute purity of Christ's Nature. In Him there was no taint of sin, nor anything approaching to it. Now, holiness delights in God. God is the very sea in which holiness swims—the air which holiness breathes! Only think, then, of the perfectly Holy One, fully agreed with His Father in everything, finding out that the Father had, for good and sufficient reasons, turned His face away from Him! O Brothers and Sisters, in proportion as you are holy, the absence of the Light of God's Countenance will be grief to you! And as Jesus was perfectly holy, it was the utmost anguish to Him to have to cry to His Father, "Why have You forsaken Me!"

After all, Beloved, the only solution of the mystery is this—*Jesus Christ was forsaken of God because we deserved to be forsaken of God*. He was there, on the Cross, in our place! And as the sinner, by reason of his sin deserves not to enjoy the favor of God, so Jesus Christ, standing in the place of the sinner and enduring that which would vindicate the justice of God, had to come under the cloud—as the sinner must have come if Christ had not taken his place. But, then, since He has come under it,

let us recollect that He was thus left of God that you and I, who believe in Him, might never be left of God. Since He, for a little while, was separated from His Father, we may boldly cry, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" And, with the Apostle Paul, we may confidently affirm that nothing in the whole universe "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Before I leave this point, let me say that *the Doctrine of Substitution is the key to all the sufferings of Christ.* I do not know how many theories have been invented to explain away the death of Christ. The modern doctrine of the apostles of "culture" is that Jesus Christ did something or other, which, in some way or other, was, in some degree or other, connected with our salvation. But it is my firm belief that every theory concerning the death of Christ which can only be understood by the highly-cultured, must be false. "That is strong language," says someone. Perhaps it is, but it is true. I am quite sure that the religion of Jesus Christ was never intended only for the highly-cultured, or even for them in particular. Christ's testimony concerning His own ministry was, "The poor have the Gospel preached to them," so if you bring me a Gospel which can only be understood by gentlemen who have passed through Oxford or Cambridge University, I know that it cannot be the Gospel of Christ! He meant the good news of salvation to be proclaimed to the poorest of the poor. In fact, the Gospel is intended for humanity in general, so, if you cannot make me understand it, or if, when I do understand it, it does not tell me how to deliver its message in such plain language that the poorest man can comprehend it, I tell you, Sirs, that your newfangled gospel is a lie! I will stick to the old one, which a man, only a little above an idiot in intellect, can understand! I cling to the old Gospel for this, among many other reasons, that all the modern gospels that leave out the great central Truth of Substitution, prevent the message from being of any use to the great mass of mankind.

If those other gospels which are not really gospels, please your taste and fancy, and suit the readers of Quarterly Reviews, and eloquent orators and lecturers, there are still the poor people in our streets and the millions of working men—the vast multitudes who cannot comprehend anything that is highly metaphysical—and you cannot convince me that our Lord Jesus Christ sent, as His message to the whole world, a metaphysical mystery that would need volume upon volume before it could even be stated! I am persuaded that He gave us a rough and ready Gospel like this—"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Or this, "With His stripes we are healed." Or this, "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him." Or this, "He died, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God." Do not try to go beyond this Gospel, Brothers and Sisters—you will get into the mud if you do! But it is safe standing here! And standing here, I can comprehend how our Lord Jesus took the sinner's place and, passing under the sentence which the sinner deserved, or under a sentence which was tantamount thereto, could cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

II. Now, in closing, I am going to draw A FEW LESSONS FROM THIS UTTERANCE OF CHRIST.

The first lesson is, *Behold how He loved us*! When Christ stood and wept at the grave of Lazarus, the Jews said, "Behold how He loved him!" But on the Cross He did not weep, He bled. And He not merely bled, He died and, before He died, His spirit sank within Him, for He was forsaken of His God. Was there ever any other love like this—that the Prince of Life and Glory should condescend to this shame and death?

Then, next, Brothers and Sisters, as He suffered so much for us, *let us be ready to suffer anything for His sake*. Let us be willing even to lose all the joy of religion if that would glorify God. I do not know that it would, but I think the Spirit of Christ ought to carry us even as far as Moses went when he pleaded for the guilty nation of Israel and was willing to have his own name blotted out of the Book of Life rather than that God's name should be dishonored. We have never had to go as far as that and we never shall—yet let us be *willing* to part with our last penny, for Christ's name's sake, if He requires it. Let us be willing to lose our reputation. Ah, it is a difficult timing to give that up! Some of us, when we first came into public notice and found our words picked to pieces—and our character slandered—felt it rather difficult. We have got used to it, now, but it was very trying at first. But, oh, if one had to be called a devil—if one had to go through this world and to be spat upon by every passer-by—still, if it were endured for Christ's sake, remembering how He was forsaken of God for us, we ought to take up even that cross with thankfulness that we were permitted to bear it!

Another lesson is that if ever you and I should feel that we are forsaken of God—*if we should get into this state in any way, remember that we are only where Christ has been before us*. If ever, in our direst extremity, we should be compelled to cry, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" we shall have gone down no deeper than Christ Himself went! He knows that feeling and that state of heart, for He has felt the same. This fact should tend greatly to cheer you. Your deep depression is not a proof of reprobation—that is evident, for Christ Himself endured even more! A man may say, "I cannot be a child of God, or else I should not feel as I do." Ah, you do not know what true children of God may feel! Strange thoughts pass through their minds in times of storm and doubt. A Puritan preacher was standing by the deathbed of one of his members who had been for 30 years in gloom of soul. The good old minister expected that the man would get peace at last, for he had been an eminent Christian and had greatly rejoiced in his Savior—but, for 30 years or more, he had fallen into deep gloom. The minister was trying to speak a word of comfort to him, but the man said, "Ah, Sir! What can you say to a man who is dying and yet who feels that God has forsaken him?" The pastor replied, "But what became of that Man who died, whom God really did forsake? Where is HE now?" The dying man caught at that, and said, "He is in Glory and I shall be with Him! I shall be with Him where He is!"

And so the Light of God came to the dying man who had been so long in the dark! He saw that Christ had been just where he was and that he

should be where Christ was, even at the right hand of the Father! I hope, Brothers and Sisters, that you will never get down so low as that, but I beseech you, if you ever meet with any others who are there, do not be rough with them. Some strong-minded people are very apt to be hard upon nervous folk and to say, "They should not get into that state." And we are liable to speak harshly to people who are very depressed in spirit and say to them, "Really, you ought to rouse yourself out of such a state." I hope none of you will ever have such an experience of this depression of spirit as I have had—yet I have learned from it to be very tender with all fellow sufferers. The Lord have mercy on them and help them out of the Slough of Despond, for, if He does not, they will sink in deep mire where there is no standing.

I pray God specially to bless this inference from our text. *There is hope for you, Brother, or Sister, if you are in this condition.* Christ came through it and He will be with you in it! And, after all, you are not forsaken as He was, you can be sure of that. With you, the forsaking is only in the apprehension—that is bad enough—but it is not a matter of *fact*, for, "the Lord will not forsake His people," nor cast away even one of those whom He has chosen!

I will tell you what is a much more awful thing even than crying out, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" If you are afraid that God has left you and the sweat stands on your brow in very terror—and if your soul seems to long for death rather than life—even in such a state as that, you are not in the worst possible condition! "Really," you ask, "is there anything worse than *that*?" Yes, I will tell you what is much worse than that—that is to be without God *and not to care about it*—to be living, like some whom I am now addressing, without God and without hope, yet that never concerns them at all! I can pity the agony of the man who cannot bear to be without his God, but, at the same time, I can bless the Lord that he feels such agony as that, for that proves to me that his soul will never perish!

But those, whom I look upon with fear and trembling are the men who make a profession of religion, yet who never have any communion with God and, all the while are quite happy about it. Or backsliders who have gone away from God and yet seem perfectly at ease. You worldlings who are quite satisfied with the things of this world and have no longings for the world that is to come—I wish you had got as far as to be unhappy. I wish you had got as far as to be in an agony, for that is the road to heavenly joy! It was thus that Christ won it for us and it is by such a path as this that many a soul is first led into the experience of His saving power. Brothers and Sisters, weep not for those of us who sometimes have to cry out in anguish of soul! Mourn not for us who are cast down because we cannot live without Christ. You see, our Lord has made us covet the highest blessings! Our heads have been so often on His bosom that if they are not always there, we keep on crying till we get back to that blessed position again! This is a sweet sorrow—may we have more and more of it! But, oh, I pray you, pity those who never ate the Bread of Heaven—never drank of the Water of Life—never knew the sweetness of

the kisses of Christ's mouth—and never knew what it was to have a Heaven begun below in the enjoyment of fellowship with Him! In such cases, your pity is indeed required.

I have finished when I have just said this—as you come to the Table of your Lord, come, Brothers and Sisters, with this cry of Christ ringing in your ears to make you love Him more than ever and, as you eat the bread and drink the wine, do it all out of fervent love to Him! And the Lord bless you, for His name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *MATTHEW 27:27-54.*

Verses 27-30. *Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall and gathered unto Him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped Him, and put on Him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand, and they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon Him, and took the reed, and smote Him on the head.* These soldiers were men to whom the taking of human life was mere amusement, or, at best, a duty to be performed. If the ordinary Roman citizen found his greatest delight in the amphitheater where men fiercely fought with each other, and shed each other's blood, or were devoured by wild beasts, you may imagine what Roman soldiers—the roughest part of the whole population—would be like! And now that One was given up into their hands, charged with making Himself a king, you can conceive what a subject for jest it was to them and how they determined to make all the mockery they could of this pretended king! They were not touched by the gentleness of His demeanor, nor by His sorrowful Countenance, but they proceeded to pour all possible scorn and insult upon His devoted head. Surely the world never saw a more horrible scene than this—the King of Kings derided and made nothing of—treated as a mimic monarch by the very vilest and most brutal of men!

31. *And after that they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him and put His own raiment on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.* Their action, in restoring to Him His own seamless robe, was ordained by God—whatever their motive may have been—so that nobody might say that some other person had been substituted for the Savior. He went forth wearing that well-known garment which was woven from the top throughout, which He had always worn. And all who looked upon Him said, "It is He—the Nazarene. We know His face, His dress, His Person." There was no possibility of mistaking Him for anybody else.

32. *And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear His Cross.* It was too heavy for Him to carry alone, so they bade Simon help Him and, truly, I think that Simon was thereby highly honored. If this was Simon, who is called Niger, then there may be some truth in the common belief that he was a black man and, assuredly, the Black race has long had to carry a very heavy Cross,

yet there may be a great destiny before it. All Christ's followers are called to be Cross-bearers—

"Shall Simon bear the Cross alone,
And all the rest go free?
No, there's a cross for everyone,
And there's a cross for me."

If we belong to Christ, we must be as willing to take up His Cross as He was to carry ours and die upon it.

33, 34. *And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say a place of a skull, they gave Him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when He had tasted thereof, He would not drink.* It was not because of its bitterness that our Lord refused it, for He did not decline to endure anything that would add to His grief. But this was a stupefying draught, a death potion, which was given to those who were executed, in order to somewhat mitigate their pains. But the Savior did not intend that His senses should be beclouded by any such draught as that, so, "when He had tasted thereof, He would not drink."

35. *And they crucified Him.* A short sentence, but what an awful depth of meaning there is in it! "They crucified Him"—driving their iron bolts through His hands and feet, and lifting Him up to hang upon the gallows which was reserved for felons and for slaves. "They crucified Him."

35. *And parted His garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophet, They parted My garments among them, and upon My vesture did you cast lots.* It was the executioners' perquisite to have the garments of the man they put to death, so, in order that no single portion of the shame of the Cross might be spared to the Savior, these soldiers divided His garments among them and raffled for His seamless robe. It must have taken a hard heart to gamble at the foot of the Cross, but I suppose that, of all sins under Heaven, there is none that does so harden the heart as gambling. Beware of it!

36. *And sitting down they watched Him there.* Some to gloat, in their fiendish malice, over His sufferings. Others to make sure that He did really die and, possibly, some few to pity Him in His agony. "Sitting down they watched Him there."

37-44. *And set up over His head the accusation written against Him, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then were there two thieves crucified with Him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. And they that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads, and saying, You that destroy the Temple, and build it in three days, save Yourself. If You are the Son of God, come down from the Cross. Likewise also the chief priest's mocking Him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the Cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God: let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth.* So that, as He looked all around, He met with nothing but ribaldry, jest and scorn. His disciples had all forsaken Him. One or two of them afterwards rallied a little and came and stood by the Cross, but, just then, He looked and

there was none to pity, and none to help Him, even as it had been foretold.

45. *Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.* From twelve o'clock at noon, according to the Roman and Jewish time, till three in the afternoon, there was a thick darkness—whether over all the world, or only over the land of Palestine, we cannot very well say. It was not an eclipse of the sun, it was a miracle especially worked by God. Some have supposed that dense clouds came rolling up obscuring everything, but, whatever it was, deep darkness came over all the land. Dore has, in his wonderful imagination, given us a sketch of Jerusalem during that darkness. The inhabitants are all trembling at what they had done and, as Judas goes down the street, they point at him as the man who sold his Master and brought all this evil upon the city. I should think that such darkness at mid-day must have made them fear that the last day had come, or that some great judgment would overtake them for their wicked slaughter of the innocent Jesus of Nazareth. Even the sun could no longer look upon its Maker surrounded by those who mocked Him—so it traveled on in tenfold night, as if in very shame that the great Sun of Righteousness should Himself be in such awful darkness.

46-48. *And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a load voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani, that is to say, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This Man calls for Elijah. And straightway one of them ran and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink.* For He had also said, "I thirst," which John records, specially mentioning that He said this, "that the Scripture might be fulfilled."

49-51. *The rest said, Let Him be, let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him. Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the Temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.* That rending of the great veil of the Temple was intended to symbolize the end of Judaism. The horror of the sanctuary that its Lord was put to death. The opening of the mysteries of Heaven. The clearing of the way of access between man and God.

51. *And the earth did quake, and the rocks rent. Well says our poet—*

"Of feeling, all things show some sign
But this unfeeling heart of mine."

52-54. *And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept, arose, and came out of the graves after His Resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. Now when the centurion, and they that were with Him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.*

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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

DISOBEDIENCE TO THE GOSPEL
NO. 2804

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 9, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 14, 1877.

"But they have not all obeyed the Gospel."
Romans 10:16.

EVEN concerning those who have heard the Gospel, it can still be said, "They have not all obeyed the Gospel." And this, dear Friends, is one of the plainest proofs of the deep depravity of human nature. We might have expected that if God, in the exercise of His marvelous mercy, should stay His hand and not at once execute the sentence of justice upon the guilty—if in His surprising Grace, He should devise a way by which He could be just and yet could justify the ungodly—I say, we might have supposed that the moment men heard that good news, they would immediately believe it! Seeing that they had offended God and so had brought themselves into a state of condemnation, we might have thought that as soon as ever the God of Grace mentioned the possibility of forgiveness, they would have sought it at His hand! It could never have been imagined—apart from the utter ruin of man's nature by the Fall—that we should have needed so many ministers, so much pleading, so many years of long-suffering on God's part and, above all, that we should have needed the display of the almighty power of the Spirit of God, Himself, before sinners would be willing to obey the Gospel! Yet so it is and nothing that I know of beneath high Heaven, so clearly proves that man's heart is absolutely estranged from all that is good—and that the sinner has really become demented through his sin—as that man rejects the Gospel of Grace, refuses Divine Mercy and often stops his ears to the voice of God's messengers and, in every case, except where the Holy Spirit graciously renews the nature—tramples underfoot the very blood of the Son of God! O Man, you who were at first like the sons of the morning—no, more than that, you who were made in the likeness of God—you whose place was in Eden, the garden of the Lord—how low have you fallen and into what a sad state of estrangement to your God have you come through your sin!

That, however, is not my subject at this time. I want, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to have a time of earnest pleading with those who have not obeyed the Gospel. It is true of many who meet with us, in this House of Prayer, as it is of those who assemble elsewhere, that though

they have often heard the Gospel, yet "they have not all obeyed the Gospel." Perhaps some of those who up to now have been disobedient, will now obey it. May the Spirit of God make it to be so!

I. My first observation upon the text will be this. THE GOSPEL COMES TO MEN WITH THE FORCE OF A COMMAND. "They have not all *obeyed* the Gospel." But you cannot speak of obeying anything which has not the authority of a command—it is clear, therefore, that the Gospel comes to men in the form of a command and that it has the force of a command!

I shall not stay to quote the large number of texts which I might easily bring to your recollection and all of which, unless they are wrested from their true meaning in order to suit a certain form of theological teaching, prove that the Gospel comes to men as a command. I will mention just one such passage—"The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now *commands* all men everywhere to repent." So it is not optional to you whether you will accept the Gospel or not—it is not said to you, "You may, if you will, accept it, or you may, if you please, reject it." You cannot reject it without incurring the guilt of disobedience to a Divine command! The Gospel does not come to you as an ordinary thing which is of little or no importance to you. It is true that you may reject it, but not without frightful peril to your soul. It does not humbly crave an entrance into your heart—it *demands* it—claims it as a right! It comes not as a message from one of your fellow men, but, with Divine authority, it comes to you from the mouth of God, Himself, directly through His Word, or indirectly through the faithful preaching of His servants. Therefore, if you reject it, you are disobedient to God, Himself, like those of old to whom He said, "All day long I have stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." To reject the Gospel of Christ is to incur great sin. He Himself said, concerning the Holy Spirit, "He will reprove (or convince) the world of sin." And then, almost immediately, He added, "of sin, because they believe not on Me"—as though it were the very head and front of sin—the flower and crown of sin—its virus—its quintessence of guilt—that men believe not on Christ!

And, further, the command to men to believe the Gospel has the death penalty attached to disobedience. Let me remind you of the words of our Lord Jesus Christ upon this point—"He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Remember, too, the solemn utterance of our Lord concerning the universal ministration of His Word—"Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." So, you see, the Gospel is given to us as a command—and disobedience to it involves a direful penalty.

Now, Beloved, possibly you will say to me, "How is it that the Gospel—God's glad tidings to guilty man, the Gospel which is full of Grace, which

is, indeed, all of Grace from top to bottom—comes in the shape of a *command*? Does it not tend to make your preaching *legal*?" My answer to that question is that if it did have that effect, I could not help it! I am bound to preach what I find in God's Word. Whatever may be the consequences, I must not alter the form of my Master's message!

But it strikes me that the Gospel is put in the form of a command, first of all, *to encourage poor seekers when they are coming to Christ*. Their question generally is, "May we come?" As a rule, they ask, "May we really believe in Jesus Christ? May we *dare* to do so?" Now, if there is a bare invitation, or if that invitation is limited to persons of a certain character, the eyes of the sinner would be fixed upon that character and he would look to see whether he was one of those invited. We do not want him to turn his eyes toward himself, yet that is exactly what he usually does—and this keeps him from fixing his eyes upon Christ, alone, where salvation is to be found. This, I think, is one reason why the Lord has put the Gospel message into the form of a command. You certainly may do what you are commanded by God to do! Even despair, itself, cannot raise a question about that matter. If I am *commanded* to keep the Sabbath holy, then I am, certainly, *permitted* to do so. And if I am *commanded* to worship God, I am, certainly, *permitted* to worship Him. So, then, if I, as a sinner, am commanded to put my trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, I need not stop to look at *what I am, or who I am*, or to search for any goodness or preparation in myself—and I may be assured that I may believe in Jesus because I am commanded to do so!

I have sometimes tried to illustrate this Truth of God by supposing that Queen Victoria were to send an order to some poor man, in the lowest slums of London, to go down to see her at Windsor Castle. Just imagine that this were possible, that the message ran somewhat to this effect—"that So-and-So, of such-and-such a place, is hereby commanded to come to the royal palace at Windsor, and he will stay away at his peril." Well, now, that man would probably feel that such a summons could hardly be true. He would turn it over and look at the signature and the seal—and if it proved to be genuine—I fancy I see him starting off to get to Windsor as quickly as possible! If he spoke about his errand and said, "I am going to see Her Majesty," everybody in the third-class carriage would laugh. "Ridiculous," they would say, "how can you be such a fool? It is absurd!" "But," he would say, "I am commanded by the Queen to go! Look, here are my orders in her own handwriting. What I am to do—such a poor, uneducated man as I am, I do not know, but, you see, it says, 'he will stay away at his peril,' so I dare not stay away."

You see, the very sternness of the expression—the strong form in which it was put—had in his eyes the force of law and so really became an *encouragement* to him to go—and gave strength to him in going. In a similar manner, when the Gospel commands the sinner to repent, it does, in effect, say to him, "Let your reasoning, your questions, your doubts and your fears all be put to death by this sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, the Lord's own command being quite a suffi-

cient warrant for you to come to Him." As He bids you come, you certainly may come. "Preach the Gospel to every creature," is our Lord's command—you are a creature, so we preach it to you and tell you, in Christ's name, that "he that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." It is put in that shape to encourage you, even by driving you to come to Christ and trust in Him to save you.

I have no doubt, also, that the Gospel is given to us in the form of a command, *in order to embolden the proclaimer of it.* I have often, when I have finished preaching, said to myself, "I have told the people the Gospel and I have pleaded with them to come to Christ, but I wonder whether I have done it as my Master would have me do it." You know that true preaching is done in the name of Jesus and with His authority. It is a sort of miracle-working for we have to tell the dead to live—a most absurd thing to do except that God having told us to do it, we do it, and the dead live! We say, "Hear, you deaf and see, you blind"—things which look, to human reason, out of all order. Yet, since we are bid to do so, we do it, and God blesses it—and the deaf hear and the blind see—and the dead are raised to life! Well, I have said to myself, "Have I, by Divine authority, spoken to my hearers like that? Having this treasure in an earthen vessel—has the excellency of the power of God really shone forth?" Now, Sinners, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, who is shortly to come again to judge the quick and the dead, I deliver to you these commands in His name—"Repent and be baptized, every one of you." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." These are no dogmas of the church—they are the plain Truths of God that I find in the Scriptures and, in the name of Jesus, I charge you to obey them! O Spirit of the living God, make the people obedient in this, the day of Your power! So this is another reason why the Gospel is put in this shape—that the minister of Christ may speak with confidence, commanding men, in his Master's name, to repent and believe in Jesus!

But, dear Friends, there is a further reason, and that is *to secure the honor of God.* The Gospel is not an offer from an equal to an equal. When the Gospel says, "Believe, and you shall live," it is not the voice of a man speaking to another man. I charge every sinner who is trifling with the Gospel, to beware what he is doing, for it is God, his Maker, who also will be the Judge of the ungodly, who sends out the invitations to the great Gospel wedding feast. If you refuse them, you are not refusing the invitations of a man, but the invitations of *God*, your Creator and your Judge! You are really rejecting Him who will shortly come, in the clouds of Heaven, with great power and Glory, to punish the disobedient by banishing them forever from His Presence! So it is most fitting that the Gospel should not come like a common invitation, but that it should come with all the force at its back which a Divine command can have!

Again, remember that although the blessings of the Gospel are all gifts of Divine Grace wherever they are found, they are, nevertheless—I think I may say every one of them—*things which the Law of God, itself, demands of men.* For instance, the Gospel comes to you in order that you may

have new hearts, yet the ancient Prophet proclaimed God's promise, "A new heart, also, will I *give* you." The Gospel comes to you in order that you may be pure, but you ought to be pure apart from any Gospel—you have no right to be impure. The Gospel comes to you in order that it may put away your sin, but you have no *right* to have any sin! That sin of yours, you have committed against God willfully and wickedly, and the guilt of it lies at your door. The Gospel comes to you in order that you may be reconciled to God, but you ought never to have been His enemies and, as long as you continue in enmity against God, you are sinning every moment! The Gospel truly brings you the gifts of God's Grace, but, at the same time, it brings you, to a large extent, that which should have been yours—and would have been yours if you had not sinned against the righteous God and broken His most holy Law.

Moreover, *the demands of the Gospel upon you are, after all, only the duties which rightly devolve upon you*, for, to believe God is the absolute duty of everyone of those whom He has created for His praise, since, not to believe Him is to make Him a liar! Sometimes, when I am talking to persons privately about their souls, I have peculiar power given to me by God the Holy Spirit in charging this great sin home upon their conscience. Very likely, the good Sister is here who, last week, came a second time and asked me to pray for her—and I told her that I would do nothing of the kind. And then I added, "I have set the Gospel plainly before you. I have told you that if you trust Christ, you shall be saved. What am I to pray for? Am I to ask God to make another Gospel to suit your fancy, or to save you in some way apart from faith in His Son? I cannot and I will not do it! If you say that you cannot trust Christ, you practically make God a liar—and if you are determined to commit that crowning act of guilt, your blood will be upon your own head." It startled her when I set the Truth of God before her in such a fashion as that—and then, when I again explained that this simple matter of trusting in Jesus Christ and Him crucified was the great stipulation of the Gospel, I was delighted to find that the Lord led her at once to do it! And while she confessed her faith in Christ, then and there, light and liberty came to her soul which had been so long in darkness and bondage!

It seems to me to be the most awful thing in the world for a man to say, "I cannot believe God." Many a time, when such a remark has been made to me, I have said, "Now, if you say to me, 'I cannot believe *you*,' I shall feel hurt by your lack of confidence—but you may say it a thousand times to me rather than say it once concerning God, who cannot lie." O dear Souls, you who are not yet believers in Christ, remember that it is nothing but God's right that He should be believed and nothing but Christ's right that He should be trusted—and that both in saint and in sinner, distrust of God is a sin that is not to be excused for a moment—and that if it is not repented of and forsaken, it will have to be dealt with by the great Judge of All at the last dread assize!

Then, with regard to repentance, when a man has done wrong, surely it is his bounden duty to repent of that wrong—and though he will never

do so until the Spirit of God leads him—and all true repentance is, in every case, a spiritual gift, yet is it equally true that in so far as a man is in the wrong, he ought at once, with all his heart and soul, to seek to get right—to make such recompense as he can, or, if none can be made, certainly to confess his fault and humbly to seek pardon for it! It seems to me that our own conscience tells us that this is true and so confirms what we find plainly recorded in the Word of God.

As you all know, the Gospel is set forth under the figure of a feast, and those who would not come to it were punished for not coming. It is also described as the prodigal's return to his father's house. The parable of the prodigal son does not mention everything connected with a sinner's repentance. For instance, there is nothing said in it about the Spirit of God leading the prodigal to resolve to go back. It looks as if he came of his own accord—but Christ did not attempt to teach all theology in that one parable. It must have been true that the prodigal was brought back by the secret working of the Spirit of God upon his heart. At the same time, it was always the prodigal's duty to come back, because he never ought to have gone away—and there never was a moment, from the time that he "took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living," that he was not wrong in so doing. There never was a moment, while he was feeding the swine, that he was not wrong in being there at all. And if he had acted rightly—only that sinful heart of his would not let him act rightly—he would long before have said, "I will arise and go to my father."

So I think I have plainly proved to you that the Gospel comes to men with the force of a command.

II. Now, in the second place, let us enquire—WHAT, THEN, ARE THE CLAIMS OF THE GOSPEL TO OBEDIENCE!

Any unconverted person here may say to me, "You tell me, Sir, that I cannot hear the Gospel preached and then go away and reject it, at my pleasure, without being guilty of a great sin." I *do* tell you that—and the reason is that there is *the authority of God, Himself, at the back of the Gospel message*. When we lift up Christ in our preaching, as Moses lifted up the bronze serpent upon the pole, and cry to our hearers, "Look and live," we are not speaking our own words—we are uttering the Words of God! To reject our words would be a small matter, but to reject the testimony of God is guilt of the deepest dye! My dear Friend, give me your hand and, as I press it, let me look you in the face and say, "When God Himself sets forth Christ as the only propitiation for sin, will you turn your back upon Him and reject so great salvation?" God grant that you may no longer do so if you have done so until now! The Gospel claims our obedience because it has the authority of God at the back of it!

Then, next, to disobey the Gospel is, evidently, *to slight the motive, the wonderful love of the God who sends it to us*. Oh, what wondrous love is displayed by God in the Gospel—the love which made Him give up His only-begotten Son to bleed and die—the love which allowed our Lord Jesus to be nailed to the Cross by His own voluntary act, that He might

suffer in our place! Oh, the amazing love of God, that He should proclaim a complete amnesty and oblivion for all our past transgressions—that He should say to us, "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"—that He should even entreat men to repent and send to them such a message as this through His servant, Isaiah, "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." That God should do all this and yet that man, with his proud heart, should throw it all aside as worthless, is to insult the love of God! And it seems to me to be a cruel thing—a monstrous thing—for sinful men and women to do!

And, further, not to obey the Gospel is to perpetrate a high affront to our Lord Jesus Christ. The Son of God Himself died upon the Cross at Calvary—for me to say that I do not need His death—that I regard it as a superfluity, for I am righteous enough without Him, or else that even if I *am* sinful, yet I care not that I am, and I will run the risk of Divine anger and I will not have this wondrous Christ to be my Savior—this would, indeed, be awful! If ever angels could shiver with horror and be astounded at the enormity of human guilt, it would be when they heard a man say, concerning Christ, by his actions, if not in so many words, "I will have nothing to do with Him! Neither do I care anything for Him." Dear Friends, again I wish I could get near to each one of you instead of addressing you in a crowd at this long distance—if you have not obeyed the Gospel, I should like to put to you this question, "Can you, will you still refuse to obey it when your disobedience is really a rejection of the dying Son of God and an insult to the almighty love of His Father?"

Disobedience to the Gospel is, also, *an act that contains the concentrated essence of rebellion against God*. Suppose a king promulgates a certain law and one of his subjects violates every command of that law. The king summons the law-breaker into his presence and says, "Friend, do you really mean not to obey my law? Do you regard it as harsh and severe?" The man replies that the law is harsh and severe, "but," he adds, "that is not the main matter. I do not acknowledge your authority over me and I hate you." I can suppose it to be just possible that this gracious king might say to his rebellious subject, "Listen, Friend. I am going to ask you to do something which is wholly for your own good—not for my benefit, but for yours. I hear that you are in debt to the amount of £10,000 and I am willing to give you that sum of money so that your debt may be discharged—will you accept it?" "No," he says, "I will not! I would rather go to prison and die there." Do you not see at once what is the venom of this man's animosity against the king? Yet, alas, his conduct is constantly being imitated by rebellious sinners. Here is a man who positively says, by his actions, "I would sooner be damned than obey God's Gospel! I would rather lie in Hell forever than accept His Son as my

Savior. I will not obey His Law, but, to show my desperate hatred to Him and everything that is His, I will not obey His Gospel either."

"Oh," you say, "I do not mean *that*." Perhaps you do not, but that is the meaning that lies in the very center of your disobedience—just as a worm is sometimes hidden in the center of certain fruit. You have not perceived it, yet, but it is there. "But," says another, "I have not definitely said that I would never obey the Gospel." No, but you have definitely continued to disobey it up to this very moment, for you are still an unbeliever! "Oh," you say, "but I am no skeptic! I believe that what all the Bible says is true." That admission only makes your case all the worse, for, if it is the truth, why do you not believe it? If Christ is, indeed, true, why do you not believe on Him? This is most monstrous conduct and it shows that you have made up your mind that you will not have the great King of Kings to reign over you! I wish, however, that you would look that fact clearly in the face, for I hope that when you have done so, the Spirit of God will convince you of the sin in which you are living—for that would go a long way towards leading you to seek cleansing from that sin through the precious blood of Jesus.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters, pray that God will bless the message I am trying to deliver, in deep solemnity of soul, to poor sinners. Ask Him to send it home to their hearts by the effectual working of His Holy Spirit. Do you know, my dear unsaved Hearer, what God's estimate of the Gospel is? Do you not know that it has been the chief subject of His thoughts and acts from all eternity? He looks upon it as the grandest of all His works—that marvelous scheme of redemption by the blood of His only-begotten Son—that wonderful way of salvation by the sinner ceasing to trust in himself and believing in Jesus Christ, God's Son! You cannot imagine that He has sent this Gospel into the world to be a football for you to play with—that you may give it a kick, as Felix did when he said to Paul, "Go your way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for you." You surely cannot believe that God sent His Gospel into the world for you to make a toy of it and to say, as Agrippa said to Paul, "You have almost persuaded me to be a Christian," and then put away all thought of it out of your souls! You cannot even speak of it irreverently without committing a great sin. In my own heart, I often feel that I dare not think of that wondrous monument of Infinite Love—the Gospel provided for guilty sinners—without, like Moses, taking off my shoes, because the place whereon I stand is holy ground. Do not, I pray you, make merry over the rejected Gospel, for its blood will be required at your hands!

I appeal to your own consciences, if they are not drugged. Do you feel right—you who have been my hearers for so many years? Do you feel right in remaining as you are—hearers only, and not doers of the Word? Do you feel that if Christ were to come at this moment, you could justify your position before Him? If, instead of this pulpit being before you, the Great White Throne were set, and the books were opened, do you suppose that you could stand up and say, "God, I am doing right in hearing

the Gospel, yet not believing it. I am doing right in sitting in this pew impenitent"? You know that you could not talk like that! You would then be speechless like the man without the wedding garment! You know, too, that there is nobody to blame but yourself for your impenitence. I am clear of your blood, for I have faithfully warned you. Your own conscience will confirm what I say. Suppose you turn to any of the people of God now present and ask them what they think of their unbelief in the days before they came to Christ. Ask them whether they consider that it was sinful—they will tell you that when God the Holy Spirit quickened and awakened them, and brought them to trust in Jesus, they felt as if they could never forgive themselves for having so long refused the invitations of the Gospel and rejected the Lord Jesus Christ! They wept, mourned and sighed as they remembered how they had resisted the Spirit of God and grieved Him in a thousand ways—checked conscience, stifled conviction, rushed into sin after sin in order to escape from the Gospel if they could. They feel that all this was gross sin and they are good judges in such matters, for the Lord has taught them, by His Spirit, and you may depend upon it that it is, indeed, sinful!

And God Himself still says, as He did of old, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!" If you do, think what the consequences must be. Does not everybody know that suicide is a terrible sin? Yet the suicide does, as it were, but kill his body—but what guilt must be his who sends his soul to Hell by disobeying the Gospel! To be a suicide, a man need not use a knife or a rope—he can starve himself to death if he pleases. And as for him who willfully refuses to eat the Bread of Heaven and damns his soul by a suicidal rejection of Christ—who shall pity him? Who among the angels, who among redeemed men in Glory can pity the man who chose his own delusions and follies and would rather eternally perish than obey the simple command of the Gospel, "Believe and live"? I pray you to lay these solemn Truths of God to heart.

III. I come now to my third point, which is this—WHAT IS THE OBEDIENCE WHICH IS SPOKEN OF IN OUR TEXT? "They have not all obeyed the Gospel."

Do you ask, "What must we do to obey the Gospel?" I will put the answer briefly and compactly. First, *you are to hear it.* God said of old, "Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live." And the reason for that command is that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." But, Beloved, you must take heed *how* you hear as well as *what* you hear. You must not listen to the Gospel as you would to a story or a song. "Hearken diligently unto Me," says the Lord, "and eat you that which is good." There must be, in your listening, a deep, earnest desire to know the Truth of God and to know the whole of the Truth of God, especially that part which condemns you and humbles you in the very dust! That is what you must especially seek to hear. O Sinner, do not wish to be flattered with lies! I have no doubt that you would like it, but that is the very worst thing possible for you to hear. Avoid a sugared Gospel as you would shun sugar of lead! Seek that Gospel which

rips up, tears, cuts, wounds, hacks and even kills—for that is the Gospel that makes alive again! And when you have found it, give good heed to it. Let it enter into your inmost being. As the rain soaks into the ground, so pray the Lord to let His Gospel soak into your soul. Open the windows of your heart—God help you to do so by devout attention and prayerful meditation—that the blessed, perfumed Gospel may come floating through and penetrate into the deepest recesses of your soul!

But hearing the Gospel is not enough; the plain command is, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved*." Now, to believe is to trust—it is the practical proof that we have rightly heard the Gospel if we believe it. This is the Gospel in brief. Christ died for sinners. He stood as the Substitute for all who trust Him. I trust Him and so I know Him to be my Substitute. God has punished Him instead of me and, therefore, He cannot also punish me, for that would be punishing the same offense twice, which the righteous God will never do. Christ has paid all the debts of all Believers. Whoever trusts Christ is a Believer, so his debts are paid, he is free from liability on account of them and, therefore, he may well rejoice. The essence of obedience to the Gospel lies in giving up all self-confidence, all attempts to save yourself by your own merit and a simple reliance upon Jesus Christ to save you. When you go to your banker, you take your gold and give it into his charge—and he takes care of it for you. You do not go to him, five minutes afterwards and say, "If you please, Sir, I should like to see my money, to make sure that it is safe." If you did so, the banker would advise you to take it away and not bother him anymore! But you do not act so foolishly, for you have confidence that the banker will keep your money safely. And so you must act in the same way with your soul. Come, now, may the Spirit of God help you to do so—and make Christ your Banker! Deposit your soul with Him and then say, with the Apostle Paul, "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." That act, which is a continuous one throughout the entire life, is the act that saves the soul!

"Ah," says one, "but then repentance is also required." Just so, and *he who trusts his soul with Christ is sure to repent*, for true repentance makes a man talk thus—"Has Christ really saved my soul? Has He been so loving and gracious to me as to make me His, forever? Oh, then, I am ashamed that I did not love Him before! My mind is changed towards Him now, yet, oh, how I wish that I had not acted as I have done! I grieve to think how I have sinned against God. And now He has forgiven me. I pray Him to help me henceforth to be His faithful servant, to do His will and not my own." Genuine repentance is a complete change of mind towards all things through knowing the love of God shed abroad in the heart by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Remember, next, that the Lord Jesus Christ requires that, henceforth, you should *acknowledge Him as your Master, your Teacher, your King, your Leader, your All-in-All*. You are to come forward and confess that you belong to Him and that you have given yourself up wholly to Him. You

are to declare He has ordained the way in which He would have you do it outwardly that others may see, namely, by being buried with Him in Baptism unto death—not that this will save you, for you have no right to observe this ordinance till you are saved—but when you have believed in Jesus, you are to make the Scriptural confession of your faith, avowing that you are Christ's by being dead, buried and then raised up again in the very significant type and symbol which our Lord has ordained. You are to be obedient to what Christ has commanded and to follow the example He has set before you. And I, for my part, will never, while this tongue can speak, leave out any part of my Master's Gospel, for, though I have sometimes almost wished that there were no outward ordinances, because, in these days, they are so grossly perverted, put out of their proper place and order, and exaggerated—yet, God forbid that we should ever attempt to alter His Word! It is written in the Scriptures, "With the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Our Lord Jesus said, as I have often reminded you, "Whoever, therefore, shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in Heaven." So, then, it seems to me that Christ requires of you a wholehearted faith which will make you give yourself up to Him to be His forever and to be obedient to each one of His commands as the Spirit of God shall enlighten you concerning them.

Now, young man, here I stand, as a recruiting sergeant, and I would to God that I could enlist you beneath the banner of the Lord Jesus Christ! I cannot come and ask you, each one, personally, whether you will enlist or not, but I trust that my Master's power is going with His Word and that He will compel you to enroll yourself among His followers. But again I remind you that it is not a matter of option with you—you are bound to do it—you ought to do it. "Well," says one, "I am willing to enlist. How am I to do it?" How does any soldier enlist? He takes the shilling, does he not? This is the way to become a Christian—take Christ! You have not to *give* anything, you have to *take*—and to take Christ as soon as ever—by that act of faith, you have received Christ, you are a soldier of the Cross! The soldiers of God, however, are not "short-service men." They are in for life and for eternity! When we take Christ, we take Him as the husband takes his wife, for better or worse, for richer or poorer, for life or for death. Yes, but our union to Christ goes further than that. Death comes in and breaks the marriage tie, but, with us—

"Once in Christ, in Christ forever!
Nothing from His love can sever."

"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."

I hope that there are some here who are saying, "I see what the Gospel commands and I am willing to obey—but I have not the strength that is required." My dear Friend, if you had any strength, it would be a hindrance to you! It is your *weakness* that Christ wants, not your strength! "But, Sir, I am not fit to come to Christ," cries another. You are the very

man He wants—your fitness would be in the way! It is your unfitness that Christ wants—not your fitness. "Oh, but I have nothing good about me!" You are another man whom Christ wants—your goodness would stand in His way! It is your sin He died to put away—that is what He wants you to believe. So, without any goodness, without any fitness, all unholy and vile as you are, I pray you to follow these lines which I will repeat, and see if you can truly say them to Christ from your heart—

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Your kind arms I fall;
Be You my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus, and my All."

Can you say that? Can you also say, "I trust myself wholly to Him and desire Him to save me from sin and make me holy. I wish to be His faithful servant and subject as long as I live. Only let Him save me and I will love Him forever and ever"? If your heart has really said that, you are a saved man, as surely as you live! Sister, if you also said that, go in peace—your sins, which are many, are all forgiven! If you did say that, my son, then, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you! Take up your bed and walk, you poor lame soul—this night have you found salvation! Free, full, irreversible, eternal salvation is yours, for you have obeyed the command of the Gospel which has come, I trust, with power into your heart!

O Brothers and Sisters, be true to Christ! Begin at once to confess Him and never be backward to acknowledge Him as your Lord! If He has saved you, tell it out! It is a shame for any Christian soldier not to wear his regimentals. Christ is such a Lord that He is worth living for, worth dying for—yes, if our whole lives could be spent in the fires of martyrdom, Christ deserves that none of us should flinch from such a trial for His dear sake! Be an out-and-out Christian, young man, young woman, if you are a Christian at all! God help you to do so, giving your whole self up to Christ to be His forever and ever! So may God grant it, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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

"LIFE FOR A LOOK"
NO. 2805

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 16, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 22, 1877.

"Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth:
for I am God, and there is none else."
Isaiah 45:22.

SINCE this text was blessed to my conversion many years ago, I have often preached from it, but, on this occasion I am not going to speak of it as a whole. There is only one thought that I shall endeavor to bring out of it and I intend to act as the gold-beaters do with the metal upon which they work, that is—beat it out very thin and, perhaps, when it covers a wide surface, some may be able to see it who have not previously perceived its preciousness and power.

The great sin of man ever since he has fallen, has been that of idolatry. He is always seeking to get away from God, who is real, but whom he cannot see, and to make for himself a god which can only be an idol, but which pleases him because he can gaze upon it. And thus it comes to pass that some with images of wood and stone—and others with carnal confidences and the like—put something else into the place which should be occupied by God alone. And they look to that something and expect good from it, instead of looking for all good to come from God, and from Him alone. This looking to anything which usurps the place of God cannot but be most offensive to Him and it must also be very disappointing to ourselves, for it is impossible for the false god to yield us any true comfort. When matters come to a pinch and we really need succor, we shall find that we have been leaning upon a broken reed if we have been trusting to anything except the Lord our God.

For a while the idolater may delight himself in the idol which he has so dexterously carved and which he has covered with silver plates and adorned with golden chains. But when he finds that he cries in vain to his god in the day of trouble—when he discovers that no answer comes to his earnest prayer—in his disappointment and vexation of spirit, he is ready to lie down in despair! It must be so, more or less, with all of us. If we trust in anything but God, we shall be disappointed. And if we are living for anything but the Unseen One, who created and still sustains us, we shall have to lie down in sorrow despite the sparks of the fire we have ourselves kindled.

Yet note the Lord's great patience even with those who are thus provoking Him by this idolatry of theirs. What do you think, Sirs? If you had made men, sustained them and provided for them, yet they did not worship you, or serve you, or fear you, or trust you, but, instead, transferred their fear, or love, or trust to mere idols that had eyes, but could not see, had hands, but could not help—would you not feel righteously angry? Would it not grieve you to have a dead thing, which these people had themselves made, put into your place? I am sure it would! And the Lord our God is a jealous God and He has been, generation after generation, provoked by the idolatries of men. Yes, and He has even been provoked by us who profess to be His people, but who have loved something else better than we have loved Him. Why, some of us have actually trusted ourselves more than we have trusted the lord and, sometimes, in the hour of trial, we have fled to a friend and relied upon an arm of flesh, instead of trusting in the Lord alone!

Yet how patient He has been under it all! And how blessedly this chapter teaches us of the loving kindness of the Lord! Here He admonishes His ancient people with great gentleness, while He also reasons with great force of argument. Tenderly He chides the wrongdoers and then earnestly He invites them to a better way. He seems to say to them, "Have done with these idols once and for all! You have come into trouble and difficulty through looking to them, yet they could not save you. Now turn away from them and look to Me. Though you are like the very ends of the earth and have gone as far away from Me as you could, as if you would escape from My Presence altogether if that were possible, yet, now, in the hour of your distress, turn your eyes to Me and see if I will not help you! Come and trust Me just this once. 'Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. "Listen to this Divine message, you who have forgotten your God, as, in these gracious terms, He bids you turn your eyes to Him and let your expectations be from Him!

Our text, as I read it, teaches me, first, that *for salvation out of any trouble, we should look to God alone*. When I have spoken briefly upon that point, I shall carry the principle into deeper spiritual matters by showing you, in the second place, that, *for eternal salvation, we must assuredly look to God alone*.

I. First, then, FOR SALVATION OUT OF ANY TROUBLE, WE SHOULD LOOK TO GOD ALONE.

You know, Brothers and Sisters, that there are some troubles in which men *do* look to God alone. I have known even the most profane, godless men turn to God, after a fashion, in the hour of supreme peril. It has often been observed that men in time of storm or shipwreck—those who had used blasphemous language and ridiculed all religion—when they have been caused to reel to and fro and stagger like drunken men, and have been at their wits' end, they have cried unto the Lord in their trouble. And in earthquakes, when the very globe, itself, rocks and reels, as though it were as unstable as the restless sea, and huge buildings are

torn in pieces, and strong towers come tumbling down, thousands of men have cried aloud to God to save them! Knees, unused to devotion, have been bent in abject terror while hearts that never felt the gracious Presence of God, have begun to tremble at the majestic display of His power. This kind of experience has often been witnessed in ungodly men at the approach of death. When, at last, the chill drops stand on their brow—when they know that life is almost over and their soul is melting in their dire distress and the dark gates of the grave stand wide open before them—then they also cry unto the Lord in their trouble.

Now, if men will act thus by the compulsion of great calamity, is there not sound reason why you should cheerfully and willingly do the same and resort to God in every trial, difficulty and dilemma? Why do not men also seek Divine help in other matters? It is evident that God's hand is in other things besides shipwrecks, earthquakes and death! And it has often been proved that He is able to help in the lesser troubles a well as the greater ones. It is the Lord that quickens the wheels of commerce, or that stops them and so causes distress. It is the Lord that permits the good and the evil which happen to men. "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord has not done it?" Is there a cry or a wail in war that God does not hear? Then why should we not go to Him in every time of peril and trouble—even in the minor trials and difficulties of life? Why must we have a severe sickness in order to drive us to God? Why is it that only the very peril of life brings us to our knees?

It ought not to be so—especially with the Lord's own children. Is anything too unimportant for the Lord to notice? Is any trial too slight for you to bring in prayer before Him? If you, fathers, listen to your children's little tales of sorrow. If you, mothers, with your needle, deftly take out the tiniest thorn from your child's hand, how much more will your Father, who is in Heaven, note all the little trials you have to bear in this life—and deliver you out of them all? Look unto Him, then, and be you saved out of all the trials that beset you! Brothers and Sisters, we ought to habitually look to God—in the morning, looking to Him for the mercies of the day. At night, looking to Him for the pardon that shall cover the day's offenses. In the morning, expecting strength for the day's burden and, in the evening, laying down the burden at the Master's feet and blessing Him for the Grace which has sustained us.

"But," says one, "may we not use means to help us out of our difficulties?" Of course you may! You would be wrong if you did not. He who bids you pray for harvest, would have you sow your seed! He who would have you ask to be guided all through your journey, would have you also follow industriously the track of the fiery-cloudy pillar. Yes, use the means, but mind that you trust in God while you use the means—and trust in God beyond all means! And when means utterly fail and you have come to the limit of the tether of your own wit and skill, then feel as if you were flung into the bare arms of God and confide all the more because there is nothing else that you can do! You are not to make faith in God an excuse for idleness. It would be equally wrong to make your in-

dustry a pretext for trusting to yourselves, instead of confiding only in God.

Let this be the rule of your whole life. For all things, trust in God. In all matters, submit to God and, in all ways, serve God. You may take this Divine command, "Look unto Me," as the motto which shall illuminate your pathway at all times. You can stand safely on the high hills of prosperity as long as you look to Him. And even in the chilly valley of adversity, your heart shall rejoice while you keep looking unto Him. You may go forth to battle against innumerable foes and conquer them all while you look to Him. You may lie upon the bed of sickness and be able to bear your pain with patience while you look to Him! And you shall come at last into the valley of death-shade—death's sullen stream shall begin to flow over your feet and chill your heart's blood—but, if you are still looking unto the Lord, the promise of our text shall be fulfilled to you and you shall be saved, for He is God and beside Him there is none else!

II. Now, secondly, while this is the principle which should guide all Believers, it is also the right principle for those who are beginning to be Believers, that is, those who are seeking the salvation of their souls. FOR ETERNAL SALVATION WE MUST LOOK TO GOD ALONE!

I want to keep you to this point if I can, so I ask you to remember, first, that *salvation is not to be found in any mere agent.* The idolatry which leads some men to make blocks of wood and stone into objects of worship has led others to make gods of what are called, "the means of Grace," selecting this or that matter—sometimes, that which is of Divine appointment and, sometimes, things which are the result of human invention. At one time you may find a man resting the whole weight of his soul on what he calls, "sacraments." Has he not been baptized and is he not, therefore, a member of Christ, a child of God and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven? He goes regularly to what he calls, "Holy Communion," and he supposes that he has received Grace by the eating of "consecrated" bread and the drinking of "consecrated" wine. But, Beloved, "sacraments" become mere idols as much as the false gods of the Hindu when we expect salvation from them! We have put the Christian ordinances altogether out of their place when we have allowed them to usurp the position which belongs only to the Savior.

I do not suppose that many of you will do this, yet I am sometimes afraid that you may fall into an equal error of much the same character. Some people seem to suppose that because God blesses the hearing of sermons, (and He does bless it, even as He blesses other means that He has ordained), therefore they shall surely be saved through the hearing of sermons. Or because good books are often exceedingly useful and lead men to Christ, they expect that by reading such books they shall be saved and, especially, because the Bible, itself, is the best of books—the Book of God, and the God of books—because it gives much Light to those who are in darkness, they suppose that if they search the Scriptures, they will have eternal life. Now, dear Friends, sermons, good books and even the Bible, itself, may be made into idols if you look to them for sal-

vation and expect that by hearing and by reading—and going no further—you will be saved! You must go beyond all these things and get to God, Himself, and say, with David, "My soul, wait you only upon God; for my expectation is from Him."

The two Christian ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are precious things. The ministry of the Word—and the Inspired Word as we have it recorded in this Book—these are precious things. But they are only like the porch through which we pass to get to God, Himself. If a man stays on the porch, instead of passing through it to the great Host of the house, he misses the design and end of the porch which is not intended to keep the man upon the threshold, but that he should pass through it and find the God who dwells within! It is very easy to look to mere agents for salvation, but salvation is not to be found there. "Salvation is of the Lord," and of the Lord alone! No man in the world can accomplish this great work. The Psalmist had learned that lesson when he wrote, "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him." Though a man should speak with the tongues of men and of angels, yet, if you are not led, by his speech, to *look to God for salvation*, you will not be saved! And though the ordinances of God's House are observed before you in all their sacred simplicity, yet they can yield you no profit if you do not pass beyond that which is seen by the eyes and look unto the great invisible God to whom your soul must draw near, in spirit and in truth, if you are ever to find salvation!

Does someone ask, "To what, then, are we to look?" I will try to tell you if you will listen. You are guilty, so, in order that you may be saved, you need to have your sins pardoned. And you also need that your heart should be renewed by God's almighty Grace. So, *the great thing that you need to know, look at and rely upon, is the mercy of God.* Especially should you think much of the greatness of that mercy. If your sin is great, remember that it is so and mourn over it. But also remember that God's mercy is a bottomless, boundless ocean which can swallow up and cover, forever, the great mountain of your guilt. The merciful God is able to put away all your sin. Think, too, of the freeness of that mercy, which asks nothing at your hand—no price, no bribe to move the heart of God to take pity upon you—for his heart burns with love of itself. It does not need you to bring anything to make Him love you, or to incline Him to be ready to forgive you. He is so already from the very force of His own Character! God's mercy is free, full, rich and abundant. To Moses, He, "proclaimed the name of the Lord" in that remarkable utterance, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression and sin." He clasps His lost child to His bosom and rejoices that he is found!

Yet also remember that God's mercy is Sovereign—He saves whom He will—and that there is no reason known to you why He should not save you as well as any other sinner, especially since that Sovereignty of His is generally displayed toward the most unlikely and undeserving! Well says

the Apostle, "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." Ponder this great Truth of God and then say to your soul, "I, a guilty sinner, needing salvation, must look for it to the rich, full, free, ever-flowing, over-flowing, Sovereign, everlasting mercy of God." O eyes that weep because of sin, behold this glorious attribute of the God of Mercy and of Grace—and let your tears be dry!

Then, since God says, "Look unto Me," let me ask you *whether you are looking unto Him as He has revealed Himself to us in His Word.* If you simply look to God as He reveals Himself in Nature, you will have but a very imperfect view of Him and you will derive but little comfort from Him. We cannot possibly understand Him, there, as well as we do when He speaks to us—not by the signs and hieroglyphics of Nature—but in the plain words that we can read in our own mother tongue in this blessed Book. Therefore, if you would be saved, look to God here where He looks at you from the pages of His Word—and hear what He tells you. He tells you, by almost innumerable promises, that He is ready to forgive your sin if you repent of it and trust His Son. Then, to His promises, He adds such gracious and cheering invitations as this, "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." And such loving exhortations as this, "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."

Read this blessed Book, search out its exceedingly great and precious promises, study its many invitations and also examine the examples that are given in its records of the multitudes of sinners God has saved by His Grace—the great sinners whom, in His abundant mercy, He has accepted and made to be His children! Keep your eyes fixed on God as He so graciously manifests Himself in the pages of His own Book, for then you will be able to cry with the Prophet Micah, "Who is a God like unto You, that pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retains not His anger forever, because He delights in mercy." O guilty Soul, if you would find salvation, you have not to look to any priest, nor to any book, nor to any ceremony, nor to any doings of your own! But look to God as He has revealed Himself in His Word!

And especially is it intended that *we should look unto God as He reveals Himself in the Person and work of His dear Son.* This is the very essence of the Gospel—that we should look to God in Jesus Christ and so find salvation. That is where salvation is to be found—and nowhere else—"for there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." And, "other foundation can no man lay than

that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Look, then, to the Lord Jesus Christ if you would find salvation! You say that you dare not come to God by reason of your great sin? You do well to regard your sin as great and to mourn over it, but you must not be content with doing that. Look away to Jesus, the great Sin-Bearer, on whom was laid the iniquity of all who believe in Him, even as the Prophet Isaiah says, "He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." Look away from your sin, Sinner! No, rather, follow your sin as it is laid by God on the Sin-Bearer's shoulders and, as you look there, you will find salvation!

"But," you say, "I have no merit to plead before God. I cannot hope to meet with acceptance in His sight." Then listen to my text. God says here, "Look unto Me, and be you saved." God, in the Person of His well-beloved Son, shows the only method by which you can be accepted by Him. The perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ is both imputed and imparted to all who believe in Him and, therefore, dream not of trusting in their own merits! Indeed, you have none to trust in—a spider's web is more substantial than the flimsy, fancied merits of the best man under Heaven! But if you look to what Christ was and is, to what He did and what He suffered, you will find the garment—the royal robe beyond all comparison for beauty—in which you may wrap yourself for time and for eternity! If you put on this robe, Friend, God will love you and bless you! No, I must reverse the order of my words and say that, because God *has loved you*, He has made it possible for you to take the righteousness of Christ to be your righteousness forever and ever!

"Ah," says another, "but if I am to find salvation, I must escape from the power of sin—and I have no strength to do that." I know you haven't—do not think of looking to yourself to find any, but listen again to our text, "Look unto Me, and be you saved." The sin that you cannot master, Christ can conquer! He can make the lust that now binds you as with fetters of iron, to have no more power over you! Have I not often seen this happen to a man who has been bound with chains that he could not break? But the Spirit of the Lord has come upon him and he has snapped them as easily as Samson, "broke the ropes, as a thread of straw is broken when it touches the fire." Poor manacled slave of sin, Christ can enable you to get your liberty! Look not to what you can do, for that is nothing! Look only to the Omnipotence that dwells in the eternal arms of the once-crucified Redeemer.

"But," you cry, "I could never hold on even if I did once look to Christ! If I were to begin to believe in Him, I would be tempted and would go back to the world." I know you would if the matter rested with you—but if the Lord Jesus Christ begins to work upon you, He will persevere with the task until He has fully accomplished it! Look to His faithfulness, for you have none apart from Him! Look to His Immutability, for you are as fickle as the wind that continually changes its course! Rest wholly in the Christ who says to you, "Look unto Me, and be you saved."

"Oh," you say, "but I have none of the gifts and graces that make up a Christian life." That is quite true, but Christ is ready to give them to you. He is a full-handed and a freehanded Savior—and when He begins to bless sinners, riches untold are lavished upon them so that they become rich as kings through the spiritual wealth which Christ bestows upon them! There is nothing that any one of us can need between here and Heaven, but is stored up for us in Christ—and we are to look to Him alone for it. Oh, that the Lord would teach all of us this simple and blessed art, for this is the way of salvation! "Look unto Me"—to God in Christ Jesus—"and be you saved."

Now I shall conclude by trying to strike this one nail on the head and urging you to give your most earnest heed to this one matter of looking to God in Christ. Dear Friend, you are seeking salvation, so the devil will make a dead set at you to try to keep you from looking unto Jesus. I cannot tell you exactly which way he will go to work, for he has many inventions, but I know that this will be one main point that he will drive at with you—*he will try to get you to not look to God, but to look somewhere else*. Now, if you are determined to look to yourself—if you feel that you cannot help doing so, mind that you never look to yourself without mourning, for every look at yourself ought to cost you a tear. Look to yourself that you may sorrow over your sinful state, but never look there with any hope of finding salvation! When a man is altogether bankrupt, will he go and look into his ledger for consolation? When a man's house has been stripped by creditors, will the poor penniless tenant go and gaze into the bare rooms to find comfort? When there is not a morsel of bread in the cupboard, will a man look into the empty dishes in order that he may appease the cravings of hunger? If the well is dry, what is the good of looking down to the bottom of it? So, dear Friend, if you do not understand your ruined condition, look at yourself! But if you know that you are lost and undone, you might as well look to the grave for life as to yourself for salvation! Do not let the devil persuade you that there is anything good in you by nature, or that there is any hope of salvation for you in yourself! If he tells you that you are utterly bad, ruined and lost, believe him, for that is true. But if he ever tries to persuade you that there is some good in you, tell him that he lies and you may also tell him that if there were any good in you, there would be no hope for you even in *that*, for your only hope lies in that utter hopelessness which drives you out of yourself to God!

You know how the high priest, under the old Jewish law, was commanded to treat the lepers who were brought before him. When there came a man who said, "I think that my case is a very hopeful one, for I have a large spot of perfectly sound flesh on my arm. And I have another place on my foot where my flesh is like that of a little child." When the high priest heard the man say that and he looked upon him, and saw that it was even so, he said to him, "Alas, you are a hopeless leper and must be shut outside the camp!" And there he remained till he died. But there came another leper who was quite covered with the signs of the

loathsome malady and he said to the high priest, "My disease has gone to the very extreme—there is not a sound place on me from the crown of my head to the sole of my feet, there is not a single spot that is not affected." "Ah, my Brother!" replied the high priest, "I am glad to hear you say that and to be able to tell you that now you are clean." It appears that when the leprosy threw itself out all over the body, the man would recover, but if it was only on a part of him, it was there forever.

And so is it with the sinner—when he cannot see any good in himself, he is the man whom God will save, but, as long as there is a spot of his own supposed goodness as big as a pin's head, or a pin's *point*—he is still suffering from the leprosy of sin and must be shut away from the people of the Lord. "That is strange talk," someone says. I hope it will be strangely comforting to some poor broken-hearted sinner who has been well-near in despair, but who will now hope, believe and live!

Do not let Satan take your eyes away from Christ by any other device. I have known him trouble poor souls with questions about difficult doctrines, or various forms of church government, or about the disputes that arise even between Christian people. The sinner's one business is to look to Christ and be saved—yet he will get to bothering his head with this and that and the other which he does not understand, and which he does not need to understand. Oh, what thousands of people there are who have some wonderful knot which they want to untie and which they cannot! It would not make the slightest difference to them if it were untied, yet it keeps them from looking to God in Christ Jesus that they may be saved. You may ask about church government afterwards! You may decide, further on, as to Calvinism or Arminianism—or as to the post-millennial or pre-millennial Advent of Christ—but those matters do not concern you now. When a man is drowning, he does not want to read "The Times" newspaper, or Adam Smith's, "Wealth of Nations." He needs someone to help him out of the water before he is quite dead! And that is what you need, my unsaved Friend—you need salvation—and you can only obtain it by looking to God in Christ Jesus!

I have known Satan also to take away a man's gaze from Christ by saying to him, "You do not know whether you are elect or not." Well, it is a very important question whether a man is one of the elect of God, but I beg you to remember that an unsaved sinner has nothing to do with his election and that it is not possible for him to know anything about that matter at present. When he has believed in Jesus Christ, then he will have the evidence that he is one of the Lord's chosen people. But until he has done so, he has no reason to think that he is elect. Divine Election is the eternal choice which God the Father has made—and there is no way of coming to the Father except by Christ, His Son. *Redemption* is the word with which you are first concerned—then, when you know the power of the precious blood of Jesus, you will have the proof of your election unto eternal life—and so you will begin to understand the "Everlasting Covenant ordered in all things and sure."

Sometimes—and this is a common trick of Satan's—he tries to make men look at their own faith instead of looking unto Jesus. "See," says he, "you have to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but have you the right kind of faith? Is yours the faith that saves?" Thus, he fixes your eyes on your *faith* instead of on Christ. And then he will ask you, "Is your state of mind what it ought to be?" So you begin looking into your state of mind and you enquire, "Have I a due sense of my need? Have I a proper realization of my dire necessities and of the hardness of my heart?" My dear Friend, whatever your question may be—whether it is holy or profane—it is out of place just now! The only questions that concern you now are such as these—What has God revealed to me in His Word? What has God done for me through His Son? What does He say to me? What does He require of me? What does He promise to give me? You can find the answer to all those questions in our text, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." The devil tells you that you have not got the right kind of eyes, or that you have a squint, or that you have a cataract in one of your eyes! He will say anything to keep you from looking to God in Christ! Yet that is where you are to look—and it is on Him, alone, that you are to rely. And you are not to rely upon your reliance, nor on your faith, nor on your looking—you are to place your complete dependence upon Jesus Christ and Him Crucified!

I pray you to let these simple yet important Truths of God sink into your mind and heart. Endeavor every day to know more of Jesus and, to that end, search the Scriptures that you may learn more and more of God in Christ as He is there revealed. Try to think more about Him, you who are seeking the salvation of your souls. Get as much time as you can, alone, that you may think of Jesus on the Cross and of all that God reveals to you in His dear bleeding wounds, for, the more you know of Him and the more you think of Him, the more you will be able to rely upon Him. Our confidence usually increases in proportion to our knowledge, if the thing known is really worthy of our trust. It is emphatically so with Christ. The more we know Him, the more we shall trust and love Him!

Settle this matter in your mind as an absolute certainty that *whoever and whatever you are, you may look to God in Christ and be saved*. Do not let any doubt upon that point ever cross your mind. Our text says, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." And there are many other passages which are quite as wide in the sweep of their invitation—such as these—"Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." And, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." And the very Gospel commission itself, "Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Whoever you may be, you have a perfect right to look to God, for He invites you to do so! No, more than that, you are bound to do so, for you are *commanded* to do it! And there is this dreadful threat against all who disobey the command, "He that believes not shall be damned." Look,

then, to God in Christ, without fear, for, looking unto Him, you shall be saved!

With this last point, I close. *Let no feeling of yours beat you off from looking to Christ.* If, when you look to God, your sins seem to rise and howl at you and say, "Who are *you* that you should trust in God?" keep on looking all the same! And if it appears to you that a thousand texts thunder against you, look all the same! Look to God even if He appears to look angrily at you. Run to His arms, for it is your only place of shelter! If He takes His rod to chastise you, still run to His arms. He cannot smite you half so heavily as if His arms get full swings at a distance from you! Lay hold on God's strength. Just as the child, when his father is going to flog him, lays hold of his father's hands and, with his tears melts His father's heart, you do the same! Lay hold on the strength of God and tell Him that you will trust in Him. Even if He shall still seem to threaten you, tell Him that you know that He delights in mercy—that you have heard of great sinners, like yourself, being saved by Him—and that you believe that Christ's precious blood will make you clean and that you will continue to believe it, come what may.

Will He reject you if you come to Him thus? That is impossible! He never did shake off a soul that thus clung to His arms. He never drove from the door of His mercy one who was resolved to die upon the threshold of His house rather than trust to anyone else! So let nothing turn you from looking to Jesus. Even if you walk without a ray of the Light of God—if you should be tried in circumstances and so afflicted in body as to be at death's door—remember that the Lord has said, "Look unto Me, and be you saved." Hang upon that blessed word and this, also, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Carry out both parts of that text and when you have done so, claim the fulfillment of the promise, feeling sure that the mountains shall melt away and the seas lifted up with flaming tongues of fire sooner than God shall be false to the promise He has made to you, unworthy though you are, if you believe in Jesus Christ and are baptized after His own example! May God the Holy Spirit enable you thus to look to Christ for, looking to Him, as surely as He lives, you, too, shall live! And, as surely as God is true, you shall be saved, for you are saved the moment you believe in God through Christ Jesus His Son!

I have not attempted to set these great Truths before you in fine language, for I want them to come home to the heart of everyone here present who is not yet saved. I recollect when I used to go to various places of worship meaning business—and my business was to try to find a Savior—if there really was one for me. I am sure that if anybody in the whole place used to listen with both ears and all his heart, I did. I did not care anything about the preacher's elocution—the one thing that I wanted to know was what I must do to be saved. Am I addressing anyone in a similar case? If so, O you poor Soul, convinced of sin, I assure you that if you believe in Christ Jesus, you shall be saved! Understand clearly, however, what the salvation is that He will give you. It is not salvation from the *consequences* of your sin while you continue to indulge in it. *He*

will save you from being the sinner that you now are. The ancient Covenant promise runs thus, "From all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." I can see some people sitting before me, now, who, if they had been told, a few years ago, that they would be what they now are, would have laughed such a notion to scorn—they would have poured the utmost contempt upon the speaker! "What?" such a man would have said, "I—the man of pleasure—ever be found among canting hypocritical professors of religion? It is not likely."

Many a man has said, "I know how to look after myself. I need none of the Grace of God of which you think so much." Yet there are many such persons here at this moment and they are rejoicing in the very thing they once despised! And their lives are now so altered that no two persons could be more different than their present self is from their old self. I am afraid their old self still occasionally visits them, but I am sure that they never show him indoors. They try, if they can, to push him into the back yard and they get rid of him as quickly as possible. I have known many an one of this sort cry out, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this old enemy of mine? I never want to see him again." The change is marvelous between what he was and what he is—and such a change as that must be worked in secret.

Our Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Except a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Read that 3rd chapter of John's Gospel—and, before you get to the end of it you will find that the very same chapter in which the new birth is insisted upon by our Lord, also has these verses in it—"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Both doctrines are true, and perfectly consistent with each other—the free Grace of God and the necessity of a change of heart and life. May you prove them consistent in your own experience and then we will glorify God together forever and ever! Amen and Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—267, 535, 538.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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

"JESUS OUR LORD"
NO. 2806

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 23, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 1, 1877.

"Jesus our Lord."
Romans 4:24.

"JESUS our Lord" is a somewhat unusual form of expression to be used in the Scriptures. We have many references to, "Jesus Christ," and to, "our Lord Jesus Christ," but there is only one other passage in which this occurs. Yet, to me, it seems to be inexpressibly sweet. I shall be devoutly grateful to God if, in my sermon, I am able to convey to you even a tithe of the sweetness which I have drawn from this expression for my own enjoyment.

It is part of faith to accept very great contrasts and if we look, for a moment, at the words of our text, "Jesus our Lord," and especially if we look at the connection in which they are found, we shall see a great contrast. Jesus, the "Man of Sorrows," and yet, "our Lord" Jesus! Thoughts of sorrow, rejection and shame cluster around that blessed and ever-musical name, yet He is "our Lord" in the highest and Divine sense—our Lord and our God! Faith has learned to think of Him, even before His birth, as the Christ of God, and to give heed to the angel's message to Joseph, "You shall call His name, Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." Faith also bows at the manger with the worshipping shepherds and with the wise men from the East presenting gifts, realizing that the Infant is the Infinite and that the Babe of Bethlehem is the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Faith sees Jesus in the humble garb of a Galilean peasant, moving about in the company of a band of fishermen. She sees that He is a friend of publicans and sinners, yet she believes Him to be the Son of the Highest, though flesh and blood have not revealed that great Truth of God to her. Even in His humiliation, she knows Him as Lord of the sea who made the stormy waves lie still at His command, and as the Master of diseases, before whom all manner of sicknesses, and even devils, themselves, fled apace. She knows Him to have been a suffering Man, yet she calls Him, "Lord." Yes, even though, on the Cross, she beholds, with tearful eyes, His agony and death—yet even there she salutes Him as Lord! She did so in the dying thief's prayer, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." And she has done it thousands of times

since. And now, today, though the name of Jesus of Nazareth is bandied about and to many it is only a byword and the despised Galilean has, as yet, only a partial sway over the sons of men, yet Faith sees Him exalted to the highest heavens and she acknowledges Him as both Lord and God!

And these things which I said were contrasts which it was the part of Faith to accept, have ceased to be contrasts with her now, for now Faith sees but little contrast between Christ's death and His reigning in Glory! In fact, she understands that the one is the outgrowth of the other, especially as she reads such a passage as this, "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a Servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a Man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Faith delights to think that Christ's being Lord is the actual fruit of His having died and having risen again from the dead, for she comprehends the meaning of the Apostle Peter, at Pentecost, when he said to the Jews, "This Jesus has God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses...Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made that same Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ." Faith has quick ears and she has heard Jehovah speaking in the same language as that which saluted David's ears, "Jehovah said unto My Lord, Sit You at My right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool." Even when Faith sees Jesus Christ under the most humiliating circumstances, she perceives how, out of that very humiliation, His mediatorial Kingdom has grown and she delights to acknowledge that glorious fact—and with adoring reverence she calls Him, "Jesus our Lord."

Before I finish this introduction to my discourse, I want to remind you, Beloved, that notwithstanding all the sweetness with which the name of Jesus is associated, and the blessed condescension by which He has brought Himself so near to us, yet our faith never takes liberties with Him, or forgets that He is, "Jesus our Lord." He is, "Jesus." Oh, the ineffable sweetness of that dear, precious and consoling name! But He is also, "Jesus our Lord." And you will always find that in proportion as faith grows, reverence grows. Unbelief is presumptuous, but faith is always humble. The more you know of Jesus as your Savior, saving you from sin, the more you will also recognize Him as your Lord. No one rebels against Christ because he believes in Him, but, because we believe in Him, He becomes our Lord and we learn to obey Him. That is the spirit I long to have reigning in all our hearts—the spirit of devout, worshipful reverence towards "Jesus our Lord."

First, I shall try to show you that *Christ's tender condescensions endear this title to us.* Secondly, *that our loving hearts read that title with*

peculiar emphasis. And, thirdly, *that we find special sweetness in that word "our"*—"Jesus *our* Lord."

I. First, then, I want to show you that CHRIST'S TENDER CONDESCENSIONS ENDEAR THIS TITLE TO US—"Jesus our Lord."

First, dear Friends, we claim to give Him this title specially because He is Man. "Jesus our Lord," says the Apostle, "who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification." We worship Him all the more reverently and affectionately because He is Man as well as God. We call Him, "Jesus our Lord," as if we thereby meant to appropriate Him especially to ourselves. We can even say to the angels, "He is your Lord, for He created you and He sustains you. And you delight to do Him homage, yet He is not an angel. He took not upon Him the nature of angels. He never redeemed you with His precious blood, neither is He so near akin to you as He is to us. He never called you His brethren, but He is Jesus our Lord, for He was born of a woman and made under the Law, and became a partaker of our human nature and, therefore, He is not ashamed to call us brethren—and He is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh."

It is a delightful thought to us that the Kingdom of "Jesus our Lord" has no bounds to it. Indeed, we can hardly imagine how wide is His dominion or how numerous are His subjects! It may be that there are innumerable beings in yonder starry worlds—as countless as the sands on the seashore—and that Jesus is Lord over all these. Yet He bears such a special relationship towards this little planet and this poor race of fallen men and women, that this round earth calls Him hers as no other world can call Him! And we, His people, call Him ours as no other creatures can, for, just as truly as He is God, so is He also Man. Behold, on the very Throne of God above, there sits a Man like ourselves! The men of Israel said that they had 10 parts in the king and more right to David than Judah had—and we have 10 parts in the Son of David and more right to Him than all the rest of His creatures have! His tender condescension, in becoming Man, endears to us the title, "Jesus our Lord." We call Him Lord with all the greater willingness and delight because He loved us and gave Himself for us. You remember the argument of the Apostle Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, "You are not your own, for you are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." He who bought us with such a price claims us as His own and none of us, I trust, will dispute His claim. We rightly sing—

"To Him that loved the souls of men
And washed us in His blood.
To royal honors raised our head
And made us priests to God.
To Him let every tongue praise
And every heart love!
All grateful honors paid on earth,
And nobler songs above!"

We call Him Lord because He has made us to be new creatures in Him and because, as our Shepherd, He has not only led us and fed us, but because He has laid down His life for us who are the sheep of His flock. Now that He has done this for us, He must be our Lord and He shall be our Lord! Every drop of His blood shall be a jewel in the crown which He shall wear as He exercises His rightful Sovereignty over us. Every scar on His blessed body shall be to us a token of His true royalty and all that He has endured and suffered—even the wormwood and the gall—all this shall be but another token of the gracious Sovereignty to which we most cheerfully submit ourselves! Brothers and Sisters in Christ, do you not feel that because He died for us, we do all the more, and certainly none the less, call Him "Jesus our Lord"? Thus again His tender condescension endears the title to us.

Further, *in all the privileges that are accorded to us in Him, He is our Lord*. They, all of them, remind us of His lordship and sweetly, yet effectually, enforce that lordship over us. Are we not His Church and is He not the Head of the Church? We acknowledge no other head! The Church of Christ finds supreme delight and satisfaction in His headship. Are we the members of His mystical body? Then let us remember that He is never called an arm or an eye—He is always the Head, controlling the whole body. Are we the flock which He has purchased with His own blood? Then He is the Shepherd of that flock. Does He make some of us to be the under shepherds of His flock? Then He is the Chief Shepherd and when He shall appear, we "shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away." Does He make us to be a spiritual house? Then He will dwell in that house as its Lord and Master. Are we, through His Infinite Love, united to Him in the bonds of sacred marriage? Then He is our Husband and it becomes our delight to bow to His will and yield ourselves absolutely to His control. Are we dead and buried with Him and do we expect to rise from the dead? He "is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things He might have the preeminence." Do we expect to enter into Glory? When we do, we shall see the Lamb in the midst of the Throne of God and we shall bow before Him as Lord of all. Are we looking for the splendors of the millennial age and expecting to share in them? We shall then behold Him reigning here as King and breaking His enemies into pieces like potters' vessels. You cannot draw near to Jesus without being impressed with the thought of His Lordship over you as well as His Divine condescension toward you. In fact, it is in His condescension that His Divine Lordship comes out more than anywhere else!

Once more, in our dearest fellowship at the Communion Table He is, "Jesus our Lord." Some of us are coming, presently, to the Table where Jesus deigns to sit and eat with us, and there is no fellowship closer than that which this memorial supper so sweetly yields us. Yet you must have noticed, I think, how Paul, in his account of the institution of this ordinance, constantly uses the expression, "the Lord." "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." Why did He not simp-

ly say, "Jesus"? Further on, he says, "You do show the Lord's death till He comes." And that those who, "drink this cup of the Lord, unworthy, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, not discerning the Lord's body." All through, the Apostle speaks of Christ as the Lord who sits at the head of the table as the king presides in his palace. He is our dearly-beloved Spouse, of whom we may truly say, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His." Yet is He still the King and we feel that even in all the nearness of communion that He permits us to enjoy with Him, there is still a distance as to quality and rank between Him and ourselves—and so we call Him Master and Lord—and we do well in speaking thus. We probably never feel how much He is our Lord till we come to the Communion Table. His very condescension makes this blessed title to become more bright to us and to be better understood by us.

II. I think I have said enough upon that first head to make it clear, so I will turn to the second one, which is this, OUR LOVING HEARTS READ THE TITLE WITH PECULIAR EMPHASIS. Oh, that we might suck the sweetness out of these words, "Jesus our Lord!" George Herbert wrote—

"How sweetly does 'My Master' sound! 'My Master!'"

I may alter the words a little and say—

"How sweetly does 'Jesus our Lord' sound! 'Jesus our Lord!'
As ambergris leaves a rich scent unto the taster,
So do these words a sweet content,
An oriental fragrance, 'Jesus our Lord.'"

So, our loving hearts read this title with peculiar emphasis, for, first of all, *we never yield this title to anybody but to Him*—"Jesus our Lord." We say, with the Prophet, "O Lord our God, other lords beside You have had dominion over us: but by You only will we make mention of Your name." Moses was once lord over us—we put the Lord out of His rightful place and sought to serve the Law—but now we know that while "Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant"...Christ is "a Son over His own house." Beloved, I charge you to let the Lord Jesus be the only Lord of your conscience! Obey none beside Him for He, alone, has the right to rule over you. I fear that there are some who take a thing for granted because some one of my Master's servants said that it was so. He was an eminent servant and highly favored by his Master and, therefore, they take what he says for law. But we, who also are our Master's servants, beseech you never to look to us as though we were masters, for, "one is your Master, even Christ, and all you are brethren." It is a blessed day for any man when he is able to cast off every yoke except the yoke of Jesus Christ! Blessed shall we be if, henceforth, "Jesus our Lord" and He, alone, shall receive our complete obedience and the loyal homage of our hearts. Thus, we emphasize this title by reserving it for our Master.

We also render it to Him with the emphasis that arises from *great willingness*. We are not only willing, but anxious that Jesus should be our sole Lord and Master. And we feel angry with ourselves that we did not let Him be our Master years ago. We are so glad that He is our Lord that we wish never again to grieve Him—never to have a will of our own—never to do anything but what would perfectly accord with His rule over

us. I know that every saved one feels just like that and says, " O Lord, rule over me! Be You my only Lord! I wish it with intense desire and most cheerfully acknowledge that this is Your rightful title."

And every true Christian pronounces this phrase, "Jesus our Lord," with the emphasis of *unreservedness*. We desire that Christ Jesus should be our Lord in everything—and Lord over every part of our being. Each one of us has said to Him, "My Lord, do just what You will with me. If I can the better glorify You by patient endurance or by active service, only give me the necessary Grace and I will not fail to acknowledge You as my Lord." Have you not, Beloved, given up to the Lord Jesus everything that you have? Have you not felt that you love Him better than husband, or wife, or child? Do you not feel that your spirit, soul and body all belong to Him and that you desire to consecrate to Him all your goods, all your hours and all your powers? Are you keeping back from Him any of your substance? Do you reckon that anything you have is your own? If so, you are not true to Jesus your Lord, for he who truly loves Jesus and who knows that he is one of those who are redeemed by Him, says with all his heart that Jesus is his Lord, his absolute Sovereign, His Despot, if that word may be used in the sense of Christ having unlimited monarchy and supreme sway over the soul! Yes, O, "Jesus our Lord," You shall be the autocratic, imperial Master of our heart and of the whole dominion of our manhood!

The Church of God, in a very special manner, calls Jesus "our Lord," for *there is not, and there cannot be any Head of the Church except the Lord Jesus Christ*. It is awful blasphemy for any man on earth to call himself Christ's "vicar and the head of the church." And it is an usurpation of the crown rights of King Jesus for any king or queen to be called the head of the church, for the true Church of Jesus Christ can have no Head but Jesus Christ Himself! I am thankful that there is no head to the Church of which I am a member save Jesus Christ, Himself, nor dare I be a member of any church which would content to any headship but His. You may put some other interpretation upon the title, but if it means what is meant, in Scripture, by the term, "the Head of the Church," it is an infringement of the crown rights of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords! The true Church of Christ keeps that title only for her Lord and will not acknowledge another head. Nobody can make new laws for the true Church of Christ. You know that parliament makes laws which tell which way you shall turn when you say your prayers and what clothes you shall put on, and I know not what besides, but that is a poor parody of the true Church which submits to such lordship as that!

If I were a member of a church whose laws were made by a parliament that might consist of Jews and Gentiles, atheists and skeptics, I would be out of it as quickly as I could! There is no lawmaker for the Church of God but Jesus Christ, Himself, and no one can take His place! And no one will be allowed to take it when the Lord wakes up His people to be loyal to what is written in this blessed Bible. This is our Statute-Book and we acknowledge no other but that which King Jesus has given us.

"To the Law and to the Testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no Light of God in them."

Do you say that these are matters of little importance! Ah, Sirs, the Covenanters of Scotland bled and died for this which you call an unimportant matter—that Christ alone is Lord of His Church! You may call it a small thing if you like, but that teaching which is contrary to it is the mother of a thousand mischiefs to this, our beloved land, and is doing it inconceivable damage. I pray that there may come to all sections of the Church of Christ—Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, Episcopalian—this one resolve, "We will get back to Holy Scripture and to the sole Headship of Christ, cost whatever it may." If all of us should ever get to that point, we should get closer to one another than we now are, for we should be all one in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Once more, dear Friends, *we call "Jesus our Lord" forever*. When the true Church takes Jesus Christ to be her Lord, it is in a marriage bond that shall never be dissolved. And when any individual soul takes Jesus Christ to be her Lord, she takes Him to have and to hold, in life and in death, in time and throughout eternity! Is it not so? Then a very precious thought which arises out of this Truth of God is that however poorly we do our duty as His servants, He will carry out to the fullest, His Character as our Lord! A lord, you know, takes care of his servants. He sees that they do not die of starvation and he protects them and, as far as he can, sees that they do not need any good thing. I always feel quite certain that if we faithfully serve our Lord, He will keep us in our needs and, having food and clothes, we ought to be content. His promise to the upright is, "Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." If you get anything over and above bread and water, you may know that He has given you more than He promised—and He will keep you in your needs till you need them no more—and then He will give you those spotless garments of light and joy in which you shall serve Him forever and ever!

"Jesus our Lord" is not like that Amalekite who, when his Egyptian servant was sick, left him to die. He is not like some masters whom we have known, who, the moment a servant is taken ill sends him off, caring not whether he dies or lives. Our Lord and Master never discharges His old servants—He never turns them adrift. Remember the Psalmist's testimony and petition—"O God, You have taught me from my youth: and up to now have I declared Your wondrous works. Now also when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not." Nor will He. He is a good Master whom we serve—the best of all masters—"Jesus our Lord!"

III. Now I come to the third point, which is that WE FIND MUCH SWEETNESS IN THAT LITTLE WORD IN THE MIDDLE OR OUR TEXT, "Jesus *our* Lord."

It is very sweet because it *helps us to remember our personal interest in Christ*. My Brothers and Sisters, let me remind you that you can never truly say, "Our Lord," till you have first said, "My Lord." It is blessed to be able to say it as David did, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit You at My right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool." David claimed

this blessed Son of his as his Lord, and he did well in doing so. And it is a very sweet thing when any of us is also able to say, "Jesus Christ, the Son of David, and the Son of God, is my Lord." It is truly blessed to be able to say, as Thomas did, "My Lord and my God." Each one of you needs to have the personal conviction that Jesus Christ is Lord to you. I would even like to say this if I only said it as tremblingly as Mary Magdalene did when she supposed that she was talking to the gardener, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." It is still better if we can say this as Paul once said it, "Yes doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him." This title, "Jesus our Lord," reminds me, and I hope it also reminds you of the time when you first said—

"'Tis done! The great transaction's done!
I am my Lord's and He is mine—
He drew me and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice Divine."

There is, however, even more sweetness than this in the expression, "Jesus our Lord," for *it brings us into fellowship with all the saints*. "Our Lord"—then, David, Thomas, Mary Magdalene and Paul—we have the same Lord that you had! Yes, and we seem to join with all the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, the whole company of the Apostles and the noble army of martyrs as we say, "Jesus our Lord." Yes, and all the great company who served their Master here with patience, labored for Him with diligence and have now gone to their reward—we are one with all of them—we have "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." This term, "Jesus our Lord," seems to draw a circle around all the elect of God, the whole host of the redeemed out of every nation, kindred, tribe, tongue and people in every land and every age! It seems to remind me of a kind of clanship which exists among all Believers. Just as the old Highland clansmen, when they saw the head of the clan, all felt intense enthusiasm at the very sight of him—for he was the great center and meeting place for all the divers families in the clan—and with him leading them they rushed forward to victory or death with the utmost enthusiasm, so, when I look you in the face, Beloved, we may differ very greatly in station, in ability and in a thousand things, but *your* Lord is *my* Lord, so we are Brothers and Sisters in Him and we clasp hands around Him and say, "Jesus our Lord." This one peerless name wakes us all to enthusiasm and holy daring—

"Jesus, the name high over all,
In Hell, or earth, or sky"—

stirs our very blood as nothing else can and we feel a closer tie than ever to all the saints. This one touch of Grace has made us all akin. The blessed name of "Jesus our Lord" has banded us all together in one holy brotherhood and we join in singing—

"One family we dwell in Him,
One Church above, beneath."

And, further, the *example of "Jesus our Lord" will foster practical love to one another*. It will if it works rightly, for we shall remember what our Lord did and seek to follow His example. Do you remember what He did on the night when He was betrayed? "He rose from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself. After that He poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciple's feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded." After He had done so, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Master and Lord: and you say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you." After such an example as that, we ought to be willing to do *anything* for one another! We should feel as if " Jesus our Lord" constrained us to make any sacrifice and to take the humblest and lowliest place, so long as we might be of service to anyone else who also calls Him Lord!

And, Brothers and Sisters, what *a death-blow this title ought to deal to all pride*! Diotrephes still loves to have the pre-eminence but would he love it if he really knew "Jesus our Lord" as He has revealed Himself in His Word? This Brother wants more respect shown to him. That Brother must have some office given to him and that Sister must be held in high esteem or she will not be happy. Ah, yes, and you remember that there were two Apostles whose mother asked for them that they might sit, one at the right hand and the other at the left hand of Christ in His Kingdom! And when the other Apostles were moved with indignation against the two brothers, our Lord said to them, "You know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great, exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever will be great among you, let him be your minister (that is, your servant), and whoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." As we recall this act and these words, we cry, "Down, pride! You are not lord! Down, ambition! You must not wish to rule! Down, every proud thought, that only 'Jesus our Lord' may rule absolutely over us!"

Now, dear Friends, are you enjoying the sweetness of this title? Do you feel as if you wish to roll it under your tongue as a sweet morsel? Then I will not detain you longer except to say just these two things. First, this title, *" Jesus our Lord," gives us great confidence in our common service*. As a Christian Church, we are all working for Jesus. I hope I may say that the members of this Church are all seeking the Glory of God. Then, let us remember what our Lord said to His disciples before He went back to His Father, "All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth. Go you, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." March on, then, you armies of the living God, for Christ is your Lord and He has given you your commis-

sion—and it is His power which will make your march to be victorious! Does any man think of turning his back in the day of battle when he has such a Captain as this to lead him? Does anyone dream of defeat, or talk in a half-hearted way of what the issue of the conflict is certain to be? "Jesus our Lord" is the world's Creator—He that can shake Heaven, and earth, and Hell with His word! So, in His name let us set up our banners and march onward, confident of victory!

The thought with which I close is one that ought to yield considerable comfort to many of you. *Our common joy in "Jesus our Lord" becomes an evidence of Grace*. Have you felt a gracious sweetness stealing over your soul because Jesus Christ is your Lord? Then listen to these words of the Apostle Paul—"Therefore I give you to understand that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit." Anyone can repeat these words, but you cannot say them aright—as I hope you have been saying them—with an ineffable sweetness stealing over your soul as you said them—"but by the Holy Spirit." Go your way, therefore, you whose heart has leaped at the very sound of those three words, and say, "I have the witness of the Holy Spirit within my spirit that I am a saved soul, or else I would never have said, in my inmost heart, 'Jesus our Lord.'" O Brother or Sister, here is a sign that cannot lead you wrong, for you have the Holy Spirit, through the Apostle Paul, to tell you that you could not say that in your inmost soul but by the Holy Spirit! Come, then, Beloved, and worship "Jesus our Lord." Continue to worship Him! Continue to love Him! Continue to trust Him! Continue to serve Him! Continue to magnify Him among the sons of men!

But to you who love Him not and who have not accepted Him as your Lord, I can only say, in God's own words, "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." And this other verse which is, to my mind, the most awful in the whole Book of God, yet it was uttered by one who loved the souls of men beyond all conception, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha," that is, "let him be accursed at Christ's coming." God save you from that terrible doom, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALMS 2; 110.

Psalm 2:1-3. *Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD, and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.* This was what they did when they took the Lord of Life and Glory, dragged Him to the judgment seat and then nailed Him to the accursed tree. "This is the heir," they said, "let us kill Him and the inheritance shall be ours." They

thought that they had destroyed the power of Christ, the appointed and Anointed King, and that He would never reign among the sons of men.

4. *He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.* God might well laugh at their folly, for they were really executing His will all the while they were rebelling against Him! They were really laying the foundation stones of His mediatorial throne in fair colors and cementing them with His own most precious blood, for it was by His Cross that He climbed to His crown! Well did Peter say to the Jews, on the day of Pentecost, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."

5, 6. *Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure. Yet have I set My king upon My holy hill of Zion.* In the Resurrection, God lifted up the head of Christ above all the sons of men and made them see that all their craft and cruelty had been displayed in vain.

7, 8. *I will declare the decree: the LORD has said unto Me, You are My Son; this day have I begotten You. Ask of Me, and I shall give You the heathen for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession.* The risen Christ is pleading, and pleading successfully, before the Throne of God on high. And His plea is that the heathen may be given to Him for His inheritance—and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession.

9. *You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.* He does this even now in the working of His Providence, but He will do it still more manifestly at the Second Advent, when Christ will not allow the kings of the earth to any longer set themselves against Him, but He will finally destroy their power and prove Himself to be the King of Kings and Lord of Lords even here below.

10-12. *Be wise now therefore, O you kings: be instructed, you judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son.* That is the Lord Jesus Christ—"Kiss the Son."

12. *Lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.*

Psalm 110:1. *The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool.* Here we see the Christ—whom we just now saw as risen from the dead and acknowledged as the Son of God—seated upon the Throne of God. "Jehovah said unto my Adonai, Sit You at My right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool."

2. *The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion: rule You in the midst of Your enemies.* No sooner was Christ ascended into Heaven than, out of the midst of His Church—the earthly Zion—the scepter of His power was stretched forth and its might was displayed among the sons of men! Witness what happened on the day of Pentecost, which was but the beginning of Christ's ruling in the very midst of His enemies, who then became His friends and yielded their hearts and lives to Him so that Jerusalem, where He had been crucified, became the very center of His

Kingdom on earth, from which His servants went forth to evangelize the world!

3. *Your people shall be willing.* They shall be willingness itself.

3. *In the day of Your power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: You have the dew of Your youth.* That is, as soon as the ascended Christ began His reign in Heaven, and the power of His Church begin to be felt on earth, there was a willing people coming forward in the beauty of holiness, like priests clad in their sacred robes. Such the early Christians truly were—and they were as numerous, as refreshing and as bright to the world as the sparkling dew of the morning. Then, indeed, had Christ the dew of His youth most clearly manifested! Multitudes of young hearts yielded to Him and His Church on earth seemed to have had a new birthday when He ascended up on high and led captivity captive!

4. *The LORD has sworn, and will not relent, You are a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.* That is, a Priest without predecessor or successor—a Priest who was at the same time a king—a Priest of the Most High God who was greater, even, than Abraham, the friend of God. Jesus our Lord is not a priest after the order of Aaron, for He came not of that line, but He was "a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."

5. *The Lord at Your right hand shall strike through kings in the day of His wrath.* When that Last Great Day shall come, Christ shall no longer patiently wait for the overthrow of His enemies—He shall win a complete victory over them!

6. *He shall judge among the heathen, He shall fill the places with the dead bodies; He shall wound the heads over many countries.* Thus will You, O Lord, cut down all evil principles and everything that is opposed to You!

7. *He shall drink of the brook in the way.* That is, He shall not be wearied with thirst, as Samson was, but He shall hasten on in His mighty achievements, without pausing to rest, until He has fully accomplished the whole of His great task.

8. *Therefore shall He lift up the head.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—317, 382.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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

SPARED!
NO. 2807

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 30, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DURING THE WINTER OF 1860-61.

"I was left."
Ezekiel 9:8.

THE vision of Ezekiel which is recorded in the previous chapter brought to light the abominations of the house of Judah. The vision which follows in this chapter shows the terrible retribution that the Lord God brought upon the guilty nation, beginning at Jerusalem.

He beheld the men of slaughter who come forth with their weapons. He marked them begin the destroying work at the gate of the Temple. He saw them proceed through the main streets and not omit a single lane—they utterly slew all those who were not marked with the mark of the writer's inkhorn on their brow. He stood alone—that Prophet of the Lord—himself spared in the midst of universal carnage and, as the carcasses fell at his feet, and the bodies stained with gore lay all around him, he said, "I was left." He stood alive among the dead because he was found faithful among the faithless—he survived in the midst of universal destruction because he had served his God in the midst of universal depravity.

We shall now take the sentence altogether apart from Ezekiel's vision and appropriate it to ourselves. And I think, when we read it over, and repeat it, "I was left," it very naturally invites us to take a *review of the past.* It also very readily suggests *a prospect of the future* and, I think, it also permits a *terrible contrast in reserve for the impenitent.*

I. First of all, then, my Brothers and Sisters, we have here a pathetic reflection which seems to invite us to take A SOLEMN REVIEW—"I was left."

You remember, many of you, times of sickness, when cholera was in your streets. You may forget that season of pestilence, but I never can—when the duties of my pastorate called me to continually walk among your terror-stricken households and to see the dying and the dead. Impressed upon my young heart must ever remain some of those sad scenes I witnessed when I first came to this metropolis and was, really, employed at that time to bury the dead rather than to bless the living. Some of you have passed through not only one season of cholera, but many, and you have been present, too, perhaps, in climates where fever has prostrated its hundreds and where the plague and other dire diseas-

es have emptied out their quivers and every arrow has found its mark in the heart of some one of your companions. Yet you have been left.

You walked among the graves, but you did not stumble into them. Fierce and fatal maladies lurked in your path, but they were not allowed to devour you. The bullets of Death whistled by your ears and yet you stood alive, for his bullet had no billet for your heart. You can look back, some of you, through fifty, sixty, 70 years. Your bald and gray heads tell the story that you are no more raw recruits in the warfare of life. You have become veterans, if not *invalids*, in the army. You are ready to retire, to put off your armor and give place to others. Look back, Brothers and Sisters, I say, you who have come into the sere and yellow leaf—remember the many seasons in which you have seen death hailing multitudes about you—and think, "I was left."

And we, too, who are younger, in whose veins our blood still leaps in vigor, can remember times of peril when thousands fell about us, yet we can say, in God's house, with great emphasis, "I was left"—reserved, great God, when many others perished. Sustained, standing on the rock of life when the waves of death dashed about me, the spray fell heavily upon me and my body was saturated with disease and pain—yet am I still alive— still permitted to mingle with the busy tribes of men!

Now, then, what does such a review as this suggest? Ought we not, each one of us, to ask the question, Why was I spared? Why was I left? Many of you were, at that time—and some of you are even now dead in trespasses and sins! You were not spared because of your fruitfulness, for you brought forth nothing but the grapes of Gomorrah! Certainly God did not stay His sword because of anything good in you. A multitude of clamorous evils in your disposition, if not in your conduct, might well have demanded your summary execution. But you were spared. Let me ask you why? Was it that mercy might yet visit you—that Grace might yet renew your soul? Have you found it so? Has Sovereign Grace overcome you, beaten down your prejudices, thawed your icy heart, broken your stony will in pieces? Say, Sinner, in looking back upon the times when you have been left, were you spared in order that you might be saved with a great salvation?

And if you cannot say, "Yes," to that question, let me ask you whether it may not yet be so? Soul, why has God spared you so long, while you are yet His enemy, a stranger to Him and far off from Him by wicked works? Or, on the contrary, has He spared you—I tremble at the bare mention of the possibility—has He prolonged your days to develop your propensities, that you may grow riper for damnation—that you may fill up your measure of crying iniquity and then go down to the Pit a seared and dry sinner, like wood that is ready for the fire? Can it be so? Shall these spared moments be spoiled by more misdemeanors, or shall they be given up to repentance and to prayer? Will you now, before the last of your sins shall set in everlasting darkness, will you now look to Him? If so, you will have reason to bless God through all eternity, that you were left—because you were left that you might yet seek and might yet find Him who is the Savior of sinners!

Do I speak to many of you who are Christians, who, too, have been left? When better saints than you were snatched away from earthly ties and creature kindred—when brighter stars than you were enclouded in night—were you still permitted to shine with your poor flickering ray? Why was it, great God? Why am I now left? Let me ask myself that question. In sparing me so long, my Lord, have You not something more for me to do? Is there not some purpose, not conceived in my soul, which You will yet suggest to me—and to carry out which You will yet give me Grace and strength and spare me a little while longer? Am I yet immortal or shielded at least from every arrow of death because my work is incomplete? Is the tale of my years prolonged because the full tale of the bricks has not yet been made up? Then show me what You would have me do! Since thus I have been left, help me to feel myself a specially-consecrated man, left for a purpose, reserved for some end, otherwise I had been worms many years ago and my body had crumbled back to its mother earth! Christian, I say, always be asking yourself this question, but especially be asking it when you are preserved in times of more than ordinary sickness and mortality. If I am left, why am I left? Why am I not taken home to Heaven? Why do I not enter into my rest? Great Lord and Master, show me what You would have me do and give me Grace and strength to do it!

Let us change the review for a moment and look upon the sparing mercy of God in another light. "I was left." Some of you now present, whose history I well know, can say, "I was left," and say it with peculiar emphasis. You were born of ungodly parents. The earliest words you can remember were base and blasphemous—too bad to repeat. You can remember how the first breath your infant lungs received was tainted air—the air of vice, of sin and iniquity. You grew up, you and your brothers and your sisters, side by side. You filled the home with sin. You went on together in your youthful crimes and encouraged each other in evil habits. Thus you grew up to manhood and then you were banded together in ties of immorality as well as in ties of blood. You added to your number—you took in fresh associates. As your family circle increased, so did the flagrancy of your conduct. You all conspired to break the Sabbath. You devised the same schemes and perpetrated the same improprieties. You recollect how one and another of your old comrades died—you followed them to their graves and your merriment was checked a little while—but it soon broke out again. Then a sister died, steeped to the mouth in infidelity. After that, a brother was taken—he had no hope in his death—all was darkness and despair before him. And so, Sinner, you have outlived all your friends! If you are inclined to go to Hell, you must go there along a beaten track—a path which, as you look back upon the way you have trodden, is stained with blood, for you can remember how all who have been before you have gone to the long home in dismal gloom, without a glimpse or ray of joy.

And now you are left, Sinner, and, blessed be God, it may be you can say, "Yes, and I am not only left, but I am here in the House of Prayer! And if I know my own heart—there is nothing I should hate so much as

to live my old life over again. Here I am and I never believed I would ever be here! I look back with mournfulness, indeed, upon those who have departed, but, though mourning them, I express my gratitude to God that I am not in torments—not in Hell—but still here! Yes, not only here, but having a hope that I shall one day see the face of Christ and stand amidst blazing worlds robed in His righteousness and preserved by His love."

You have been left, then—and what ought you to say? Ought you to boast? Oh, no! Be doubly humble! Should you take the glory to yourself? No! Put the crown upon the head of free, rich, undeserved Grace! And what should you do above all other men? Why, you should be doubly pledged to serve Christ! As you served the devil through thick and thin until you came to serve him, alone, and your company had all departed, so, by Divine Grace, may you be pledged to Christ—to follow Him, though all the world should despise Him—and to hold on to the end, until, if every professor should be an apostate, it might yet be said of you at the last, "He was left. He stood alone in sin while his comrades died and then he stood alone in Christ when his companions deserted him." Thus of you it shall always be said, "He was left."

This suggests also one more form of the same review. What a special Providence has watched over some of us and guarded our feeble frames! There are some of you, in particular, who have been left to such an age that, as you look back upon your youthful days, you recall far more of kinsfolk in the tomb than remain in the world, more under the earth than above it! In your dreams you are the associates of the dead. Still you are left! Preserved amidst a thousand dangers of infancy, then kept in youth, steered safely over the shoals and quicksands of an immature age and over the rocks and reefs of manhood, you have been brought past the ordinary period of mortal life—and yet you are still here. Seventy years exposed to perpetual death and yet preserved till you have come almost, perhaps, to your fourscore years! You have been left, my dear Brother or Sister—and why are you left? Why is it that brothers and sisters are all gone? Why is it that the ranks of your old schoolmates have gradually thinned? You cannot remember one, now alive, who was your companion in youth. How is it that now, you, who have lived in a certain quarter so long, see new names there on all the shop doors, new faces in the street and everything new to what you once saw in your young days? Why are you spared? Are you an unconverted man? Are you an unconverted woman? To what end are you spared? Is it that you may, at the 11th hour be saved? God grant it may be so! Or are you spared till you shall have sinned yourself into the lowest depths of Hell, that you may go there the most aggravated sinner because of the oft-repeated warnings so often neglected—are you spared for this, or is it that you may yet be saved?

But are you a Christian? Then it is not hard for you to answer the question, "Why are you spared?" I do not believe there is an old woman on earth, living in the most obscure cottage in England and sitting this very night in a dark attic, with her candle gone out, without means to

buy another—I do not believe that old woman would be kept out of Heaven five minutes unless God had something for her to do on earth! And I do not think that yon gray-headed man would still be preserved unless there was something for him to do. Tell it out, tell it out, you aged man! Tell the story of that preserving Grace which has kept you up till now! Tell to your children and to your children's children what a God He is whom you have trusted! Stand up as a hoary patriarch and tell how He delivered you in six troubles and in seven suffered no evil to touch you! Bear to coming generations your faithful witness that His Word is true and that His promise cannot fail! Lean on your staff and say, before you die in the midst of your family, "Not one good thing has failed of all that the Lord God has promised." Let your ripe days bring forth a mellow testimony to His love and, as you become more and more advanced in years, so be you more and more advanced in knowledge and in confirmed assurance of the Immutability of His counsel, the truthfulness of His oath, the preciousness of His blood and the sureness of the salvation of all those who put their trust in Him! Then shall we know that you are spared for a high and noble purpose, indeed! You shall say it with tears of gratitude and we will listen with smiles of joy—"I was left."

II. I must rather suggest these reviews than follow them up, though, did time permit, we might well enlarge abundantly and, therefore, I must hurry on to invite you to A PROSPECT.

You and I shall soon pass out of this world into another. This life is, as it were, but the ferry—we are being carried across and we shall soon come to the true shore, the real terra firma—for here there is nothing that is substantial. When we shall come into that next world, we have to expect, by-and-by, a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust. And in that solemn day we are to expect that all that dwell upon the face of the earth shall be gathered together in one place. And He shall come, who came once to suffer—He shall come to judge the world in righteousness and the people in equity! He who came as an Infant shall come as the Infinite! He who lay wrapped in swaddling bands shall come girt about the waist with a golden girdle, with a rainbow wreath and robes of storm! There shall we all stand, a vast, innumerable company—earth shall be crowned from her valley's deepest base to the mountain's summit—and the sea's waves shall become the solid standing-place of men and women who have slept beneath its torrents. Then shall every eye be fixed on Him, every ear shall be open to Him and every heart shall watch with solemn awe and dread suspense for the transactions of that greatest of all days, that Day of Days, that sealing up of the ages, that completing of the dispensation!

In solemn pomp the Savior comes and His angels with Him. You hear His voice as He cries, "Gather together the tares in bundles to burn them." Behold the reapers, how they come with wings of fire! See how they grasp their sharp sickles which have long been grinding upon the millstone of God's long-suffering, but have become sharpened at the last. Do you see them as they approach? There they are, mowing down a nation with their sickles! The vile idolaters have just now fallen and yonder

a family of blasphemers has been crushed beneath the feet of the reapers! See there a bundle of drunkards being carried away upon the reapers shoulders to the great blazing fire. See again, in another place, the whoremonger, the adulterer, the unchaste and such like, tied up in vast bundles—bundles the ropes of which shall never be cut—and see them cast into the fire and see how they blaze in the unutterable torments of that Pit! And shall I be left? Great God, shall I stand there wrapped in His righteousness, alone, the righteousness of Him who sits as my Judge, erect upon the Judgment Seat? Shall I, when the wicked shall cry, "Rocks, hide us; mountains, on us fall," gaze upon Him? Shall these eyes look up, shall this face dare to turn itself to the face of Him that sits upon the Throne? Shall I stand calm and unmoved amidst universal terror and dismay? Shall I be numbered with the goodly company, who, clothed with the white linen which is the righteousness of the saints, shall await the shock, shall see the wicked hurled to destruction and feel and know themselves secure?

Shall it be so or shall I be bound up in a bundle to burn and swept away forever by the breath of God's nostrils, like the chaff driven before the wind? It must be one or the other! Which shall it be? Can I answer that question? Can I tell? I can tell it—tell it now—for I have in this very Chapter of God's Word, that which teaches me how to judge myself! They who are preserved have the mark on their foreheads! And they have a character as well as a mark—and their character is that they sigh and cry for all the abominations of the wicked. Then, if I hate sin, and if I sigh because others love it—if I cry because I, myself, through infirmity fall into it—if the sin of myself and the sin of others is a constant source of grief and vexation of spirit to me—then I have that mark and evidence of those who shall neither sigh nor cry in the world to come, for sorrow and sighing shall flee away!

Have I the blood-mark on my brow today? Say, my Soul, have you put your trust in Jesus Christ, alone, and as the fruit of that faith, has your faith learned how to love, not only Him that saved you, but others, too, who as yet are unsaved? And do I sigh and cry within while I bear the blood-mark without! Come Brother, Sister, answer this for yourself, I charge you! I charge you do so by the tottering earth and by the ruined pillars of Heaven that shall surely shake! I pray you, by the cherubim and seraphim that shall be before the Throne of the Great Judge by the blazing lightning that shall then illumine the thick darkness and make the sun amazed, and turn the moon into blood—by Him whose tongue is like a flame, like a sword of fire! I charge you by Him who shall judge you, and try you, and read your heart, and declare your ways, and divide unto you your eternal portion! I charge you by the certainties of death, by the sureness of judgment, by the glories of Heaven, by the solemnities of Hell—I beseech, implore, command, entreat you—ask yourself, now, "Shall I be left? Do I believe in Christ? Have I been born-again? Have I a new heart and a right spirit? Or am I still what I always was—God's enemy, Christ's despiser, cursed by the Law of God, cast out from the

Gospel, without God and without hope—a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel?"

I cannot speak to you as earnestly as I would to God that I could. I want to thrust this question into your very loins and stir up your heart's deepest thoughts with it. Sinner, what will become of you when God shall winnow the chaff from the wheat? What will be your portion? You that stand in the aisle, yonder, what will be your portion? You who are crowded over there—what will your portion be when He shall come and nothing shall escape His eyes? Say, shall you hear Him? Say, and shall your heart-strings crack while He utters the thundering sound, "Depart, you cursed"? Or shall it be your happy lot—your soul transported all the while with unutterable bliss—to hear Him say, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"? Our text reveals a prospect, I pray you to look at it, gaze across the narrow stream of death, and say. "Shall I be left?"—

"When you, my righteous Judge, shall come
To fetch Your ransomed people home,
Shall I among them stand?
Shall such a worthless worm as I,
Who sometimes am afraid to die
Be found at Your right hand?
I love to meet among them now,
Before Your gracious feet to bow,
Though vilest of them all!
But can I bear the piercing thought—
What if my name should be left out
When You for them shall call?
Prevent, prevent it by Your Grace!
Be You, dear Lord, my hiding place
In this the accepted day—
Your pardoning voice, oh let me hear
To still my unbelieving fear
Nor let me fall, I pray."

III. But now we come to A TERRIBLE CONTRAST which I think is suggested in the text, "I was left."

Then there will be some that will not be left in the sense we have been speaking of—and yet who will be left after another and more dreadful manner. They will be left by mercy, forsaken by hope, given up by friends and become a prey to the implacable fury, to the sudden, infinite and unmitigated severity and justice of an angry God! But they will not be left or exempted from judgment, for the sword shall find them out, the vials of Jehovah shall reach even to their heart! And that flame, the pile whereof is wood and much smoke, shall suddenly devour them and that without remedy. Sinner, you shall be left! I say, you will be left of all those fond joys that you now hug—left of that pride which now steels your heart—you will be low enough, then! You will be left of that iron constitution which now seems to repel the darts of death. You shall be left of those companions of yours that entice you on to sin and harden you in iniquity. You shall be left by those who promise to be your helpers at the last. They shall need helpers, themselves, and the strong man shall fail. You shall be left, then, of that pleasing fancy of yours and of

that merry wit which can make sport of Bible Truths and mock at Divine solemnities!

You shall be left, then, of all your buoyant hopes and of all your imaginary delights. You shall be left of that sweet angel, Hope, who never forsakes any but those who are condemned to Hell! You shall be left of God's Spirit, who sometimes now pleads with you. You shall be left of Jesus Christ, whose Gospel has been so often preached in your ear. You shall be left of God the Father—He shall shut His eyes of pity against you—His heart of compassion shall no more yearn over you, nor shall He regard your cries. You shall be left but, oh, again I tell you, you shall not be left as one who has escaped, for, when the earth shall open to swallow up the wicked, it shall open at your feet and swallow you up! When the fiery thunderbolt shall pursue the spirit that falls into the Pit that is bottomless, it shall pursue you, reach you and find you! When God tears the wicked in pieces and there shall be none to deliver, He shall tear you in pieces! He shall be unto you as a consuming fire, your conscience shall be full of gall, your heart shall be drunk with bitterness, your teeth shall be broken, even as with gravel, your hopes melted with His hot thunderbolts and all your joys withered and blasted by His breath!

O careless Sinner, mad Sinner, you who are now dashing yourself downward to destruction, why will you play the fool at this rate? There are cheaper ways of making sport for yourself than this! Dash your head against the wall. Go there and, like David, let your spittle fall upon your beard, but let not your sin fall upon your conscience—and let not your despite of Christ be like a millstone hung about your neck with which you shall be cast into the sea forever. Be wise, I pray you. O Lord, make the sinner wise! Hush his madness for a while. Let him be sober and hear the voice of reason! Let him be still and hear the voice of conscience! Let him be obedient and hear the voice of Scripture! "Thus says the Lord, because I will do this, consider your ways." "Prepare to meet your God, O Israel." "Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved."

I do feel that I have a message for someone tonight. Though there may be some who think the sermon not appropriate to a congregation where there is so large a proportion of converted men and women, yet what a large proportion of ungodly ones there is here, too! I know that you come here, many of you, to hear some funny tale, or to catch at some strange, extravagant speech of one whom you repute to be an eccentric man. Ah, well, he is eccentric and hopes to be so till he dies! But it is simply eccentric in being in earnest and wanting to win souls! O poor Sinners, there is no odd tale I would not tell if I thought it would be blessed to you! There is no grotesque language which I would not use, however it might be thrown back at me, if I thought it might but be serviceable to you! I set not my account to be thought a fine speaker—they that use fine language may dwell in the king's palaces. I speak to you as one who knows he is accountable to no man, but only to his God—as one who shall have to render his account at the Last Great Day.

And I pray you will not go away to talk of this and that which you have marked in my language. Think of this one thing, "Shall I be left"? Shall I be saved? Shall I be caught up and dwell with Christ in Heaven, or shall I be cast down to Hell forever and ever?" Turn over these things! Think seriously of them. Hear that voice which says, "Him that comes to Me I will in nowise cast out." Give heed to the voice which expostulates, "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."

How else shall your life be spared when the wicked are judged? How else shall you find shelter when the tempest of Divine wrath rages? How else shall you stand in the lot of the righteous at the end of the days?

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
EPHESIANS 1.

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, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.* The Apostle desires the same blessing for us who are "the faithful in Christ Jesus," as he did for the saints at Ephesus. He longs that we, also, may be filled with Grace and peace "from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." And the wish of the Apostle is according to the will of God who would have us abound in Grace and in peace. Some of you Christian people are troubled in mind, yet your Lord said to His disciples and through them to you, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you…Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Jesus knew that in the world you would have tribulation, but He willed that in Him you would have peace. And the way to get that peace is by getting Divine Grace. "Grace be to you, and peace." The more gracious you are, the more easily will you bear the trying circumstances which surround you. Look not for peace apart from Grace—when you have Grace, you have a right to peace.

3. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.* I notice how, often, in the Epistles, benedictions are followed by doxologies. This is because the true heart loves to bless the Lord. What a rich treasure we have who are blessed "with all spiritual blessings!" There is nothing we can need but what is provided for us by our gracious God. Why are you poor, then, when God "has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ"? Is it not because you often forget to go to the heavenly in Christ, and begin looking to the earthly in yourselves? There is nothing but starvation there—all true riches are found in the heavenly in Christ.

4. *According as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should he holy and without blame before Him in love.* The Apostle did not ignore the glorious and blessed doctrine of Divine Election. He delighted to meditate upon it and to speak of it. I wish that some

Christians, nowadays, were not so much afraid of it. All spiritual blessings come to us in this way—this is the fountainhead of all favor and Grace—"According as He has chosen us in Him, before the foundation of the world." The objective of our election—that to which God has chosen us in Christ is—"that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." Unless you are holy, how can you talk of being chosen of God, for the elect are chosen unto holiness, chosen to be delivered from all blame through the love and Grace of God?

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.* It is well said, by an old writer, that there is no book which is written with such brevity as the Bible. It seems to give us the condensed essence of the Truth of God in the smallest possible space. What a mass of thought there is in those few lines which I have just read to you! We see here that we become the children of God by adoption, whatever the Universal Fatherhood people may say—"Having predestinated us unto the *adoption* of children by Jesus Christ to Himself"—and that this adoption is the result of predestination and is not because of our own merits, but, "according to the good pleasure of His will." Some systems of theology have much of logic, but little of God. But in Paul's teaching, it is God first, and last, and in the middle and all over. "To the praise of the glory of His Grace." What a wonderful expression this is—not only "the glory of His Grace," but the praise of that glory! God has done all things with a view to magnifying His Grace in the hearts of the sons and daughters of men—"Wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved." There seems to me to be a sacred poem in these words, "accepted in the Beloved." To my heart there is more heavenly music in those four words than in any oratorio I ever heard! "Accepted in the Beloved." Oh, what honey this is in the mouth, what cheer this is in the heart! Are all of you, dear Friends, "accepted in the Beloved"?

7, 8. *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.* Wisdom and prudence are two of the handmaids of Grace. Grace reigns through righteousness and the wisdom and prudence of God are set to work so to conduct the whole of the arrangements that "the glory of His Grace" may be all the more conspicuous!

9. *Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He has purposed in Himself.* Even our knowledge of God's will is the result of "His good pleasure." If your eyes have been divinely opened, you see the will of God coming in everywhere—and ordering all things according to His gracious and unerring purpose!

10. *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.* All the things that are in Christ shall be gathered together. None of them shall be left out. His great Covenant work shall be, in all respects, fully accomplished. There shall be no failure in any

point. Whether in Heaven, or on earth, the things which are in Christ shall be gathered together in One, "even in Him."

11. *In Him 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.* How the Apostle delights to harp upon this theme! The Holy Spirit knew that a time would come when men would put a slur upon this glorious Truth of God, so He inspired His servant to set it forth as the very brightness of the sun in the spiritual firmament—"being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will."

12-14. *That we should be to the praise of His glory, whom 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 that Holy Spirit of promise, who is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory.* Twice more, in these three verses you have this expression, "to the praise of His glory," making a third time with that which he said before, "to the praise of the glory of His Grace." The true Gospel glorifies God! False gospels may have what is called "the enthusiasm of humanity" about them, but the true Gospel has an enthusiasm for the living God and it magnifies and glorifies Him. Note, O Believers, that you first trust in Christ and after that you have the seal of the Spirit. There are some who look for the sealing of the Spirit before believing in Jesus—but neither God nor man will set a seal to a blank paper—there must be the writing of faith upon the heart and *then* the Spirit of God comes in, with His blessed seal, and sets it at the bottom as His Divine and gracious token of acceptance. The Holy Spirit is "the earnest of our inheritance." Now, an earnest is a part of the possession, itself—it is not simply a pledge, it is more than that—so the Holy Spirit in our heart is Heaven begun below—it is the young dawn of the everlasting day! Blessed be God, we have His Spirit within us, and we rejoice in His indwelling!

15-17. *Therefore I, also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, 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.* You know Him, for He has saved you—now go on to know a great deal more of Him. You can scarcely have a better gift than this, "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him." The knowledge of Christ Crucified is the most excellent of all the sciences! It is better to be well acquainted with Christ than to be a very Solomon concerning all other things, yet not to know Him.

18. *The eyes of your understanding being enlightened.* You have eyes—God's Grace has given them to you—but they are capable of additional power and force and there is the telescope of faith, which you are allowed to use, which will enable you to see much more than you have ever seen as yet!

18. *That you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.* First, you are to know

what your inheritance is. That is "the hope of His calling." And, next, you are to know what Christ's inheritance in you is, which is another thing. It is a most blessed subject for meditation that you are Christ's, altogether Christ's, and that all you are to be, will be Christ's, and that in you, poor creatures though you are, He will yet have a rich inheritance. Paul would have you know what are "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,"

19. *And what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe.* It takes a great deal of Divine Grace to make a Believer, and to keep a Believer—nothing but the almighty power of God can do it.

19, 20. *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.* Not only raising Him from the dead, but lifting Him up to His own right hand and setting Him there, "in the heavenly places."

21. *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.* The power of God which works in a Believer is the same power with which He raised Christ from the dead and set Him in this preeminent place.

22. *And has put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church.* This power is also to be seen working in you who believe in Jesus. What wonders of Grace we shall be when God has exerted that stupendous and amazing energy in each one of us, even as in His own Son! What an inheritance Christ will have in us then!

23. *Which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.* Said I not truly to you that this blessed Book is full of Truth put into as few words as possible? Verily, there is none like it! Other books, at the best, are like gold hammered out very thin, but here you have ingots of solid spiritual wealth, priceless in value! God help us all to make them our own treasure, for Christ's sake! Amen.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, 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 DISOWNED
NO. 2808

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 7, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 22, 1877.

"Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of Heaven; but he who does the will of My Father in Heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name? And in Your name have cast out devils? And in Your name done many wonderful works? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you: depart from Me, you that work iniquity." Matthew 7:21-23.

ONE of the best tests by which we may try many things is to ask, "How will they appear at the Day of Judgment?" Our Lord here says, "Many will say to Me in that day." He used no other words to describe that memorable period because that terse, brief expression suggests so much—"in that day"—that terrible day—that Last Great Day—that day for which all other days were made—that day by which all other days must be measured and judged. I pray, dear Friends, that we may, each one of us, begin to set in the light of "that day" the things that we most prize. The riches upon which you have set your heart—how will their value be reckoned "in that day"—and how much of comfort will they then afford you? As for the way in which you have been spending your wealth—will that be such as you will remember "in that day" with satisfaction and comfort? Value your broad acres and your noble mansions, or your more moderate possessions according to this gauge of their real worth—how will they be valued "in that day"? And as to the pursuits which you so eagerly follow and which now appear so important to you that they engross the whole of your thoughts and arouse all your faculties and energies—are they worthy of all this effort? Will they seem to be so "in that day"?

What is the chief objective of your life? Will you think as much of it "in that day" as you do now? Will you then count yourself wise to have so earnestly pursued it? You fancy that you can defend it, now, but will you be able to defend it *then*—when all things of earth and time will have melted into nothingness? You value the esteem in which you are held among men and you do rightly, for, "a good name is better than precious ointment." But are you really worthy of the good name that has been given to you? Is that favorable judgment of your fellow creatures the verdict of the Infallible Truth of God? Will you be as highly honored "in that day" as you are now? Will as much credit be given to you for honesty and vir-

tue, then, as is given to you now? Is there no tinsel, no veneer, no deception, no counterfeit coin about you? O my Brothers and Sisters, who among us can submit his position and his fellow men to such a test as this without the most solemn questioning and searching of heart?

You young men are, perhaps, rejoicing in your youth and letting your heart take full liberty in the enjoyment of earthly pleasure. God forbid that I should deprive you of any real pleasure, but let me ask, concerning those enjoyments, how will they appear "in that day"? Will they bear serious reflection even now? Then, how are they likely to endure the more sober judgment that will be exercised then? "In that day," when the glare of this world's lamps shall have died out and the glitter of its pomp shall forever have passed into the eternal darkness, how will your pleasures look then? Especially if you have sold yourself for those pleasures—if you have bartered your peace of mind for them—if you have disobeyed your God in order that you might enjoy them! How will they then appear when, at the end of the feast, the cost of it has to be met and you have to give in your last account? It is truly wise for a man to be familiar with his last hours. It is well for him to often rehearse that grand act when he must gather up his feet in the bed and die—and meet his father's God.

But it is still wiser for him to leap over the chasm which divides him from the realities of eternity and, by the force of faith rather than by imagination, picture himself standing in that mighty throng of the risen dead from every part of land and sea—the innumerable population of this great globe—every eye turned in one direction, all looking to Him who shall sit upon the Great White Throne, that Christ who was once crucified in weakness, but who shall come in power and great Glory, appointed Judge of all mankind! I know that I am inviting you to think of something that you do not wish to have brought to your mind. The world plucks you by the sleeve and says, "Come away," but I would gladly detain you for a little while as the ancient mariner held the wedding guest—yet not to tell you a quaint story of far-off seas and strange adventures, but to solemnly talk to you about your immortal soul—and to stir you up to see to its future destiny, lest Christ should come and you should be as unprepared for His coming as the men in the days of Noah were for the flood which swept them all away!

Well, then, as everything is to be regarded as it will appear "in that day," we will try to judge our profession of religion by that test, for it will mainly be to those who think themselves Christ's people that I shall speak. And I pray that a strong North wind may blow through us and if there is any chaff in this great heap, may it be speedily discovered and be driven out from amidst the wheat!

We shall, first of all, notice that the persons mentioned in our text, whom Christ "never knew" in a saving sense, *went a long way in religion.* Secondly, *they kept it up a long while.* Thirdly, *they were fatally mistaken* and, fourthly, *they found it out in a very terrible way*.

I. First, then, there are some to whom Christ will say, at the last, "I never knew you," yet who WENT A LONG WAY IN RELIGION. Who were they and what did they do?

Well, first, *they were persons who made an open profession*. Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of Heaven." They called Christ, "Lord," so they virtually declared that they were His disciples. They said this plainly, as though they were not at all ashamed of it and were, indeed, even proud of it. They said it twice over, zealously, frequently, "Lord, Lord." They said it as if the saying of it were so sweet to them that they could not say it often enough. They said it in all sorts of company. They sometimes said it when wiser men would not have said it. We know many persons who have never made any profession of being Christ's followers. They that are outside of Christ, God judges. But let those who are within, those who have come into the fellowship of the Church and have said, "Lord, Lord," judge themselves lest they should be deceived into a false security! It is not everyone who has been called by the name of Christ whom He will acknowledge "in that day." There has been many a loud profession that will count for nothing in that heart-searching time. O my Brothers and Sisters, I am speaking to myself as I speak to every member of this Church and every member of any other Christian Church—I beseech you to see to it that you have something more than a mere profession, for these condemned ones had made an open profession of religion, yet Christ will say to them—"I never knew you."

Note, next, that they *had undertaken religious service, and that of a high class*, for Christ says of them, "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name?" They had not served in any mean capacity, for they had prophesied or preached in the name of Christ! This is one of the things to which false professors are very prone—they love to take the chief places in the synagogue. There is many a true servant of Christ who prefers to be a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord, while many a hypocrite, who would not keep the door on any account, would very cheerfully occupy the Prophet's chair and prophesy in Christ's name! Ah, my Brothers, this thought comes home to those of us who hold any office in the Church, and especially to those of us who are preachers of the Gospel! If preaching could save a man, Judas would not have been damned! If prophesying could save a man, Balaam would not have been a castaway. We may preach with the tongues of men and of angels, yet, if we have not love, it profits us nothing. We may be even leaders of the Church in the noblest and highest enterprises and yet, for all that, Christ may say to us, at the last, "I never knew you." "But, Lord, the world blazed with my fame!" "I never knew you." "I gathered thousands round about me." "I never knew you." "Wherever I went, they flocked to listen to my words." "I never knew you." Some of you may say, "Lord, I was a deacon of the Church," or, "I was an elder. I was accustomed to visit the sick and to speak to enquirers. Everybody in the Church knew me and I was held in high repute." Yet He may say, "I never knew you. I am an utter stranger to you. Your name was never familiar to Me. I never knew you. Depart from Me." This Truth of God comes close to home and it ought to, to everyone of us who has ever professed to be engaged in Christ's service!

These people, too, *had obtained remarkable success*, for they went on to say, "Have we not, in Your name, cast out devils?" It is grand success to cast out devils and they might well rejoice in it. But, dear Friends, if you and I should be able to cast devils out of others, yet the devil would not be cast out of ourselves and we will be in a woeful plight at the last! If you knew a man who had the power to cast out a devil, you would probably say to yourself, "I wish I were as sure of salvation as he is. Did I not see Satan, as lightning, fall from Heaven while he spoke in the name of the Lord?" Suppose that did happen—it would not prove that his name was written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Rejoice in your success, my dear Friend, as I may rejoice in mine, but let us both rejoice with trembling, for, although we may have brought ten thousand souls to Christ, yet, after all, we may never have come to Him, ourselves! And if so, He will say to us, at the last, "I never knew you."

And, once more, these people were not merely professors, and doers of great works, and very successful, but *they were exceedingly zealous and were noted for their practical energy*, for they said, "Have we not, in Your name, done many wonderful works?" They had done many works in Christ's name. They were busy night and day—they had a great many irons in the fire. They seemed as if they could never do too much and what they did was really very wonderful! In fact, they did not like to do anything unless it was wonderful. A great part of the charm of it, to them, was that people wondered at them, and it kept them diligently at their work because they were so much wondered at. Yet is it possible that a wonderful life should, after all, be a lost life—that a doer of many wonderful works should, at the last, be found wanting? Can it be? Yes, for so the Lord Jesus puts it in our text and, therefore, I invite each professed Believer here, however highly favored he may have been in his Master's service, to put away from him everything that might tend to false security and to ask himself, "Shall I, in that Last Great Day of account be proved to be right?"

I can imagine what some of you have been saying to yourselves while I have been speaking. You have said, "Well, I am not a professor of religion. I am not a prophesier. I never thought of attempting to cast out devils! I never did any wonderful works." And you have comforted yourselves with the thought that my message did not concern you. But immediately after my text there is something that relates to you—"Whoever hears these sayings of Mine." Now, you are, at least, all *hearers*—and if the Gospel that you hear shall be so perfectly pure that it may be truly called the sayings of Christ, yet remember that there are multitudes of hearers who, through not being doers of the Word, will find at last that Christ never knew them, either! "But, Lord, I always sat in my seat. I was never absent from the services—I used to be there whenever the doors were opened. I was there as regularly as the minister, himself." Yes, that may all be true, yet the Lord Jesus will not know you unless your heart has truly known Him!

If you remain without repentance and without faith, you may go to the House of Prayer till you totter on your staff and you may never once have

been an inattentive hearer—but, unless faith comes to you by the hearing of the Word—and that faith makes you a doer of it, verily, verily, I say unto you, when the winds shall blow, the floods shall rise and the rain shall descend, your house shall be proved to have been founded on the sand and shall be swept away forever! So take our text with that which goes before it—and that which follows after it—and you will find that there is something here for each of you! These people went a long way in religion, but they did not go far enough.

II. Now, secondly, THEY KEPT IT UP A LONG WHILE.

Have you ever noticed how long some people will manage to keep a business going even after the capital has been spent for years? The whole concern is thoroughly rotten, but, somehow or other, in divers ways they succeed in keeping up the appearance of prosperity. There gets to be, at last, a little suspicion abroad that things are not quite as they seem, yet the clever people avoid the crash that appears to be inevitable. I expect there is many a firm in the city that is just like tinder, yet, for all that, it does not catch on fire for a time. There are certain artful ways by which men can prop up a thing which, otherwise, would soon tumble down. It is so with religion. You can very easily patch up a profession when a nasty, ugly hole comes in it—you can daub it over and if a sudden temptation comes like the blast of a tempest and takes off a piece of the roof, there are plenty of roofers to be had who will soon put on a few new slates and make the broken place look neat and sound. And even when the old hovel is only fit to be taken down and burned, you can still get some ivy and a few flowers to grow over it and make quite a picturesque thing of it. And there are people who do just that with their old rickety religion. It never was worth having, yet they managed to keep it up for a very long while!

It was so with the people mentioned in our text, for, first, *they were not silenced by men*. They prophesied in Christ's name, yet nobody said to them, "You shall not prophesy again, for you are living such inconsistent lives that we will not listen to you." This does not appear to have happened with any of these people. The man who went about casting out devils was not stopped and he kept on doing so and he even declared to Christ that he had done it, and done it continually. Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, some of us have seen ministers whose characters have been ruined so that they will never be likely to preach again! We have known some church members whose hypocrisy has been found out, so that they will never come to the Communion Table again unless the Lord shall, in His Grace, grant them repentance. Yet, what may be the difference between them and some of us except that they have been found out and we have not? Or it may be that had we been exposed to the temptations to which they yielded, or had we been tested as they were, we would have fallen with as great a crash as they did, for it is quite possible that we are no more sound at heart than they were! May the Lord give us the Grace to lay this matter to heart, for, if a man is conscious of being right, it will not hurt him to search himself—and there is not one among us to whom

it will be an injury to have it suggested that we should try and test ourselves in the sight of God.

Further, *it does not appear that Christ Himself openly disowned these people during their lifetime*. He held His tongue concerning them until "that day." There they were, preaching, teaching a Sunday school class, distributing the bread and wine at the Communion Table, going about among their fellow members, actively engaged in Christian service and everybody saying of them, "What good people they are! "Yet the Lord Jesus Christ knew that they were not! Why, then, did He not, in His righteous wrath, at once expose them? He did not, for such is His gentleness that He will bear long—even with a Judas—so He let these hypocrites alone throughout their whole lives. And they died "in the odor of sanctity," and somebody preached a funeral sermon upon them and wrote their memoirs and it was only at the Last Great Day that the lie was discovered and then, for the first time, Christ said publicly to them, "I never knew you. I had nothing to do with you. How came you to be professedly in My Church? What right had you to preach in My name? What authority had you to speak to devils in My name? I never knew you. You were always an impostor from the first day until now." He knew all about them all the while, yet He did not expose them until the last.

And note, once more, that *they clung to their false hopes right to the end*. They did not really know of the deception themselves. "What?" you ask, "did they never think that they were deceived?" Perhaps they did, now and then, but they always said to themselves. "We must not get into a doubting frame of mind. This looking within and searching our hearts will not do—it will only disturb and distress us." So they went on daubing themselves with untempered mortar. They were as wrong as wrong could be, yet everybody treated them as though they were right, so they thought at last that they *were* right. For a man may, in time, make himself believe what he knows to be a lie. I have heard persons tell stories about themselves which had not any foundation in fact, but they have told them so often that I am sure they believe that they are really speaking the truth, though if they would only think seriously, they would perceive that their tale is all invention. A man may go in and out among Christians, join in their prayers, and praises, communions and even preach their Gospel or hear it, till, at last, without any reason for his belief, he may persuade himself that it is all right. He may even pass through the portals of death undeceived! The righteous are often troubled when they come to die, but it is with these self-deceived people as the Psalmist said, "There are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men." Take heed, I beseech you, of self-deception. I say it first to myself and next to you, lest, not until "that day" should we hear the Lord Jesus say to us, "I never knew you," and lest, even "in that day," we should say to Him, "Lord, Lord," and begin to argue that we were all right—but Christ should put an end to it all by saying, "Depart from Me, you that work iniquity."

III. I must be brief upon my third division. These people went a long way in religion and they kept it up a long while, but THEY WERE FATALLY MISTAKEN.

They were mistaken, first, *because their tongues belied their hands*. They said, "Lord, Lord," but they did not do the will of the Lord. They were very glib of tongue when they took to prophesying, but the message never came out of their *hearts*. They never did the things they told others to do—they were earnest to exhort, but not diligent to set a good example to their hearers. They cast out devils, but, at the same time, they did not, themselves, escape from the power of the devil by giving up sin and following after righteousness. They failed in the matter of practical holiness. They had not the Grace of God in their souls, displaying itself in their ordinary, everyday actions. They could talk. They could sing. They could prophesy, but they were not obedient to the Divine commands and they did not walk in the ways of God.

Then, next, *they used the name which is dear to the disciples of Christ, but they did not possess the nature of disciples*. They used Christ's name, for they said to Him, "Have we not prophesied in Your name? And in Your name have cast out devils? And in Your name done many wonderful works?" They knew Christ's name, but they had not His Nature! They quoted His name, but they never copied His example. They had never come to Him and trusted and loved Him. They knew His name, but they did not know Him. And, alas, He knew their names, but He did not know them. There was no communion—no intimacy between them.

Next, *they prophesied, but they did not pray*. Prayer is a vital evidence of Christianity, but prophecy is not. A thousand sermons would not prove a man to be a Christian, but one genuine prayer would. It is easy enough to speak to men, but quite another thing, from our inmost soul, *to speak to God*. They failed in that point and, therefore, their failure was fatal.

Further, *they attended to marvels, but not to essentials*. They neglected the important things which should have been done in secret. They did much that could be seen in public, but they failed in the plainer, simpler things that nobody saw. Let me just say to you, Brothers and Sisters, that herein lies a great part of our danger—the risk of getting a religious character without having a renewed heart—doing religious actions without really being born-again—learning the brogue of the New Jerusalem without having been born as a citizen of the heavenly city—becoming fluent talkers and earnest workers, but not having confessed sin, or repented of it, or laid hold on Jesus Christ by living faith. I beseech you, young professors, to *covet most of all secret holiness*—the holiness that does not wish to be seen—plain, honest dealing with God in private—much secret prayer and meditation upon the Word—in brief, a life of true consecration to God. You may prophesy if God calls you to do so. Perhaps you will cast out devils, I hope you may and, in Christ's name you may do many wonderful works, but, first of all, "you must be born-again." You must become as little children to sit at the feet of Jesus and to learn of Him. You must be obedient to His commands and yield your-

selves up to Him, or else you will be fatally mistaken, whatever profession you may make.

IV. Now, last of all, I want to remind you that THESE PEOPLE FOUND OUT THEIR MISTAKE IN A MOST TERRIBLE WAY.

Oh, if they could only have found it out before! Possibly, they attended a ministry that was very soothing. Or, if they heard a sermon that seemed to plow them up, they said, "The preacher is very rough, he has not enough love"—as if it were not the truest love to bid men search, test and try themselves, lest they should be mistaken and so be lost! There are some whose preaching is all sweetness—it would do very well for catching flies—but it is no use in winning souls. It would be more than my soul is worth for me to come here and cajole you into a lying confidence and, as long as these lips can speak, there shall be no man self-deceived here for lack of warning and earnest exhortation to lay himself before God and ask God to search him and try him, and see if there are any wicked ways in him—and lead him in the way everlasting! It is not sufficient to feel quite sure of Heaven, and to begin singing—

"Happy day! Happy day!"

Suppose that, after all, you are not saved? "Ah," says one, "I cannot endure that supposition." No, dear Friend, but perhaps it may be true. And if it is true, what a mercy it would be for you to find it out *now*, when, in a moment, you may look away to Jesus and find eternal life! Whereas, if you do not find it out till the time when the unhappy men and women, mentioned in our text, found it out, that is to say, "in that day," you will then find it out too late! Once become a bankrupt in the great business of life and you are bankrupts forever! Once lose the battle of life and your defeat is eternal! Imagine not—dream not—conjure not up to yourselves any false notion of a larger hope lest you sink at last into a still deeper disappointment. "The Holy Spirit says, Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." But He tells none of us to hold out to you any hope but that which hangs upon the winged moment in which you are now existing! "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." This is part of the great commission that Christ gave to all His disciples and he that dares to fall short of it, or to go beyond it, is a traitor to his Lord and a murderer of the souls of men! And this we pray that we may never be.

Notice how these people found out their fatal mistake. *They found it out from what Christ said.* He said to them, "I never knew you." Not passionately, or angrily, but in stern, sad, solemn tones He said, "I never knew you." "But we used Your name, good Lord." "I know you did, but I never knew you, and you never truly knew Me." I can almost imagine someone turning around, "in that day," and saying to some Christians who used to sit in the same pew, "You knew me." "Yes," they will reply, "we knew you, but that is of no use, for the Master did not know you." I can picture some of you crying out to your minister, "Pastor, did you not know us? Surely you recollect what we used to do." What can he reply? "Ah, yes, sorrowfully do I acknowledge that I know you, but I cannot help you. It is only Christ's knowing you that can be of any use to you."

Note, also, *the terror that is implied in what Christ did not say*. He says, "Depart from Me, you that work iniquity." But who can tell all that those words mean? What happened to these people after that sentence was pronounced upon them by Christ? It was that "nameless woe" of which we sang a little while ago. There is no name that can ever fully describe your state of woe if Christ does not know you—and says that He never did know you. If you have no acquaintance with the Redeemer—if in His loving heart there is no recognition of you—if He says, "I never knew you," ah, then, woe! Woe! Woe a thousand times! Woe without hope for you, for, to be unknown of Him is to be devoid of hope forever and forever!

Perhaps the worst thing of all was, *the solemn truth of what Christ did say*. He never tells a lie, so, if He ever says to a man, "I never knew you," His words are true. Just think a minute about that short sentence. I wonder whether it is true concerning any of you here? Christ knows all who have ever sought His face with repentance and faith—but these people, though they had prophesied in His name, cast out devils and done many wonderful works, had never repented, or believed in Jesus. You remember those verses by John Newton—

"Do you ask me who I am?
Ah, my Lord, You know My name!
Yet the question gives a plea
To support my suit with Thee.
Once a sinner near despair
Sought Your Mercy Seat by prayer—
Mercy heard and set him free—
Lord, that mercy came to me!"

If that is true of any of you, you can say to the Lord, "You know me, Lord, for I came to You and said, God be merciful to me a sinner." But, "in that day," these pretenders will have to recollect that they never did that! David said to the Lord, "You have known my soul in adversities." Beloved, some of you know what it is to go to God with every trouble that ever comes upon you, but these pretenders did not—and they had to remember, "in that day," that they had never resorted to God—never had fellowship with Christ—never, indeed, became acquainted with Him. "No," says Christ, "I never saw you come as a beggar to My door. I never saw you sit as a disciple at My feet. I never saw you as a humble follower treading in My footsteps. I never saw you as a sheep that knew My voice and followed Me. I never knew you. You were a stranger to Me—you and I never exchanged a word with one another. We were not friends. You never leaned your head on My bosom. You had nothing to do with Me and now I have nothing to do with you."

If Christ ever thus shakes you off and says to you, "I never knew you," you will, indeed, be shaken off! It may be that my words upon this solemn theme distress you, but how much more will His words distress you when His own dear lips shall say, "I never knew you!" O Christ of God, never say those words to any of us! O blessed Lamb of God, You who are all our salvation, and all our desire, we know that You can never say such words as those to some of us, for you have known us even from eternity and we have long known You! You know whom You have cho-

sen—You know whom You have redeemed with Your precious blood—you know whom You have called by Your Grace. You know whom You have quickened, preserved and kept even to this day, but, oh, never let us be among the self-deceived who shall, "in that day," hear You say, "I never knew you!"

There is more thunder in those four words than you ever heard in the most terrible tempest that has rolled over your heads! There is no stamp of the foot or fire-glance of the eye to accompany them—they are spoken calmly and deliberately, yet they are terrible and overwhelming! "I never knew you."

Judge, dear Friends, whether you know Christ or not, and whether Christ knows you and, as you judge yourselves, whatever your verdict may be, take this last word of advice—whether He knows you or not, come to Him! Trust Him! Rest in Him! I felt, as I was thinking over this subject, "Well, perhaps my Lord does not know *Me*." So I made sure that He should, for I sought Him, then and there, and I exhort you to do the same. If you fear whether you know Him, trust Him this very moment! Then if you have made a mistake up to now, and have not really known Him, you will begin to know Him, now. And if you have known Him, you will blessedly renew your acquaintance with Him and the question that has troubled you will disappear! And you will say, "Yes, Lord, blessed be Your name, I do know You, by Your Grace, and You know me, and You will know me forever and ever." May the Lord give each one of us this blessing, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 7.

Verses 1, 2. *Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged: and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.* Some people are of a censorious disposition. They see nothing in others to praise, but everything to blame—and such people generally find that they are condemned according to their own wicked rule. Other people begin to judge those who are so fond of judging. If they are so wise and so discriminating, others expect more from them and, not finding it, they are not slow to condemn them. It is an old proverb that chickens come home to roost, and so they do. If you judge ill of others, that judgment will, sooner or later, come home to yourself.

3-5. *And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but consider not the plank that is in your own eye? Or how will you say to your brother, Let me pull out the speck in your eye; and, behold, a plank is in your own eye? You hypocrite! First cast out the plank in your eye, and then shall you see clearly to cast out the speck in your brother's eye.* At the bottom of all censoriousness lies hypocrisy. An honest man would apply to himself the judgment which he exercises upon others, but it usually happens that those who are so busy spying out other people's faults have no time to see their own! And what is that but insincerity and hypocrisy?

6. *Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and tear you in pieces.* Zeal should always be tempered by prudence. There are times when it would be treason to the Truth of God to introduce it as a topic of conversation—when men are in such a frame of mind that they will be sure to quibble at it rather than to believe it. Not only speak well, but speak at the right time, for silence is sometimes golden. See that you have your measure of golden silence as well as of silver speech.

7. *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.* Here is a three-fold encouragement to us to pray! When we cannot use one style of prayer, let us use another, for each shall be successful at the right time. O child of God, let nothing keep you from prayer! It has been well said that a Christian may be hedged in, but he cannot be roofed in—there is always a passage upwards to the Throne of the great Father and asking, knocking, seeking, he shall be sure to be successful with his suit!

8. *For everyone that asks, receives; and he that seeks, finds, and to him that knocks it shall be opened.* Ask the people of God whether it is not so! Go among them and question them upon this matter. They know the power of prayer, so let them tell you whether they have been deceived or not. Well, then, as it has been so with them, let this encourage you to expect that it shall be the same with you!

9-12. *Or what man is there of you whom if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in Heaven give good things to them that ask Him? Therefore all things whatever you would that men should do to you, do you even so to them for this is the Law and the Prophets.* Is there a connection between this conduct on our part and answers to our prayer? Undoubtedly it is so from the position of the text. If we will never grant the requests of those who need our help—in cases where we should expect to be ourselves helped, how can we go to God with any confidence and ask Him to help us? I doubt not that many a man has received no answer to his prayer because that prayer has come out of a heart hard and rocky, which would not permit him to grant the requests of others. O child of God, do you to others as you would that they should do to you—*then* can you go to your God in prayer with the confidence that He will hear and answer you!

13. *Enter you in at the strait gate.* Do not be ashamed of being called a Puritan, precise and particular—"Enter you in at the narrow gate."

13. *For wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to destruction.* Do not choose that way.

13-21. *And many there are who go in there because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads unto life, and few there are that find it. Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. You shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? Even so every good tree brings forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. A good*

tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you shall know them. Not everyone who says unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of Heaven; but he who does the will of My Father in Heaven. That still remains as the great test of the true heir of Heaven—the doing of the Divine will. All the talking, thinking and posturing in the world will not save a man. There must be in him such a faith as produces holiness.

22-25. *Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name? And in Your name have cast out devils? And in Your name done many wonderful works? And then I will declare to them. I never knew you: depart from Me, you that work iniquity. Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house.* Whoever you are, and whatever you build, it will be tried. No matter how firm is the rock beneath you, the winds will blow and the rains will pour down upon your building. Whether you are in a palace or in a hovel, trial and testing must and will come to you! "The floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house."

25. *And it fell not.* There is the mercy—"it fell not."

25-27. *For it was founded upon a rock. And everyone that hears these sayings of Mine, and does them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house.* Even if you live to the world, or live to Satan, you will not live without trial. The ungodly, who have their portion in this life, have to eat some bitter herbs with it and have to dip their morsel in vinegar quite as much as Believers do. "The floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house."

27. *And it fell.* Just when the tenant most needed shelter, it fell! He did not need it so much till the floods came and the winds blew. But now, when he would gladly have crouched down beneath his roof-tree, and have been at peace from the howling hurricane, then, "it fell."

27. *And great was the fall of it.* The fall was so great because he could never build again.

28, 29. *And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine: for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.* Not quoting Rabbi So-and-So, to show how well He was acquainted with his writings, but speaking as one who knew what He had to say, and who spoke out of the fullness of His heart, truth that was evidently Inspired! And His hearers felt the force of the solemn message which He thus delivered.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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

FAITH—LIFE
NO. 2809

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 14, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 10, 1877.

"The just shall live by his faith."
Habakkuk 2:4.

"The just shall live by faith."
Romans 1:17.

"The just shall live by faith"
Galatians 3:11.

"Now the just shall live by faith."
Hebrews 10:38.

THE fact that these words are so frequently found in the Word of God is a sufficient justification for often preaching from them. There seems to be, among certain preachers and hearers, some sort of question about preaching more than once from the same text, yet it would appear that this is by no means a wrong practice, but a most proper one. Indeed, our Lord Jesus Christ may be thought to have preached the same sermon more than once, for the Sermon on the Mount contains many passages similar to those uttered by Him on other occasions. The Apostle Paul imitated his Master's example when he wrote to the Philippians, "To write the same things to you, to me, indeed, is not grievous, but for you it is safe." We need not hesitate to follow such leaders as these!

As the Truth of God contained in our texts is so often brought before us in the Scriptures—and is revealed at least four times in almost the same words—we ought to regard it as of the greatest imaginable importance, as indeed it is. A mistake upon this subject would be a mistake concerning life—for we are told, again and again, "The just shall live by faith"—and a mistake concerning life is a vital mistake and will be a fatal mistake to those who make it unless it is corrected and rectified by a power higher than their own. Therefore, we ought to give most earnest heed to that which lies near to the very heart of true religion and which is, indeed, its very life. To the Believer, faith is of the utmost importance. He should endeavor not to lose any of his Divine Graces—he should seek, by the power of the blessed Spirit, neither to lose patience, nor hope, nor love, nor any other Grace or virtue. But still, the root of true religion is faith, so he must first of all see to that. If we fail in faith, we shall fail everywhere. I might almost say of faith, with regard to religion, that it is like the heart, out of which are the issues of life. If faith is weak, we are weak all over—for service, for suffering, for everything! But when faith is strong, it imparts strength to all the members of the spiritual body and the whole spiritual manhood is full of vigor. So, my Brother, or Sister, see first and foremost to your faith! May God the Holy Spirit graciously

strengthen it and may our consideration of these four texts tend to the same end!

First, *in the great change from condemnation to justification*, these words are true—"The just shall live by faith." And, secondly, using a very wide term to take in *all the rest of our daily life*—in reference to what we have been accustomed to call sanctification—these words are also true—"The just shall live by faith." It is the same life all the way through, and the same method of living that life, namely, "by faith."

I. First, then, IN THE GREAT CHANGE FROM CONDEMNATION TO JUSTIFICATION, these words are true—"The just shall live by faith."

We all need to be delivered from the condemnation which is our due because of sin. When a man's conscience is awakened to see the fearful penalty which he has incurred by his transgressions, he cries out for someone to rescue him from the death which looms before him as the result of his condemnation. He begins to seek a way of escape and he tries all sorts of ways and runs in them with great perseverance, earnestness and self-denial—but he makes a mistake as to every way of escape until he comes to this way—"The just shall live by faith."

This is the famous text which was the means of the emancipation of the soul of Martin Luther. I have stood at the bottom of the Santa Scala, or Holy Staircase, at Rome, which is superstitiously believed to be the very one down which the Savior came from Pilate's Hall. I have never gone up those stairs because no one may go up them except upon his knees and I would not do that. But I have walked up and down the steps by the side of them. There are certain holes cut in the wooden floor which encases the marble staircase and that wooden floor has been worn away many times by the pilgrims' knees. There are places cut—where the priests say that the blood of Jesus fell—in order to enable the poor votaries of superstition to kiss the spot where the blood drops fell. I have seen scores of men and women going up that staircase on their bended knees, for they are told that there are great indulgences to be obtained by crawling up those stairs! Luther was doing this, for he had gone to Rome determined to get rid of his sins, if possible, and while he was in the middle of that slavish toil, seeking to gain everlasting life by his penances, this text came into his mind—he had read it in the Bible in the monastery—"The just shall live by faith"—and, to the astonishment of those who looked on, he rose from his knees, never to go up the Santa Scala any more in that fashion!

He had discovered that which he was looking for—the true way of living—and you know that it was not long before he needed to tell others of the life and peace that he had discovered. An old monk who knew something about these Truths of God, but who did not want to have any noise made concerning them, said to him, "Go back to your cell and live near to God, but do not make a stir." But God did not mean him to go back to his cell and he began to speak, and very soon the world knew that a mighty change had been worked, but it all came, instrumentally, through Luther learning this great Truth of God—"The just shall live by faith."

If I am addressing any who are *trying to procure eternal life by their own works*—if you have mended your ways a good deal, it was time you

did so! If you have obtained a great many virtues to which you were strangers, before, I am very glad to hear it, for it was your duty to do so! But, if you are hoping, by any such means, to put away your sin, oh that some voice more potent than mine, would speak not only to your ear, but to your heart and say, "The just shall live by faith!" It is well that you have forsaken the ale-bench. It is right that you have abstained from profane language. It is good that you are honest. It is most commendable that you are seeking to be a comfort to your friends at home and to observe all the laws of domestic and social life! But if you are seeking, in this way, to obtain eternal life, you will miss the object of your search. It is not so that you can be made just in the sight of God, or that you can secure true spiritual life, for, "the just shall live by faith," that is, by faith in Jesus Christ.

You know "the old, old story," but I will tell it to you once again. To obtain life, you must believe in that dear Son of God who came to earth, took our nature, took our sin and was made a curse for us that we might be no more a curse, and died, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." Your faith must be fixed on what He did, not on what you can do. And on what He suffered, not on what you can suffer by way of repentance, despondency and distress of soul. You must look right away from anything there is within or about you, or anything you can possibly perform or achieve, to the ransom price paid by Christ upon the Cross of Calvary, for you must live—you can only live—by faith in Jesus Christ, for, "by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight."

Some, however, place a great deal of reliance *in various forms of religious observances*, as Luther himself did until his eyes were opened by the Holy Spirit. If that is your case, my dear Friend, let me say that it is well that you should attend the House of God and I am glad that you do. But if you get the idea that you are to be saved because you go so many times a week to the assembly of the saints, you are making a fatal mistake! It is well to search the Scriptures, but if you imagine that the searching of them will save you—if you think that in them there is eternal life—you will find that there is something else to be done before you can get that great blessing, namely, coming to Christ that you may have eternal life, for you will search the Scriptures in vain if you regard that exercise as one which merits salvation! It is well that you have begun to pray, but all the praying in the world, if it is relied on as a ground of salvation, is like a sandy foundation for a man to build on. You may weep over your sinful state—your tears may flow until, like Niobe, you are transformed into a perpetual fountain—but salvation comes not so. "The just shall live by faith." All the devotional exercises in which you can possibly engage in public or in private, with all the so called, "sacraments," thrown in, and all the priestly efficacy of which men dream—even if there were such a thing in reality—all this could not save you! "The just shall live by faith." This is the only way of living that God has ordained for sinners dead in trespasses and sins.

There is a notion more common, perhaps, than either of these two—of salvation by works or ceremonies—and that is the idea of a certain

amount of terror of conscience, which is often confused with true conviction of sin. According to the ideas of some people, this state must be passed through before you can be saved. You must dream about dreadful things at night, wake in the morning full of horror and confusion and go about your business in the utmost conceivable despair! So some say, and it is true that there are many who come to God in that way. I do not doubt that there are thousands who reach the Celestial City by way of the Slough of Despond. No, how can I doubt it, when I went that way myself? Yet that is not the best way—it is our wandering and blundering that leads us to go that way, for the just shall not live by despondency, but by faith! The just shall not find eternal life through terror and despair, but they shall find it through believing in the Lord Jesus Christ! The Prophets of Baal were under a gross delusion when "they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them"—but they are equally deluded who think that by lacerating their conscience and by endeavoring to make themselves miserable, they shall, thereby, obtain the favor of God! That is not true! You may even be put into the mortar of conviction and brayed there with the pestle of the Law until you are ground to atoms and there is no hope left in you—but that is not the way of salvation! "Believe and live" is the Gospel precept! "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "The just shall live by faith." Do not, therefore, try and set up another mode of salvation, "for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." And salvation comes by building upon that foundation, resting and relying only upon Him.

There are, no doubt, others who are looking in various directions for salvation, but we may say to them all that it is of no use which way they look—this way or that, up, down, to the right, or to the left—until they look by faith to Jesus Christ. But, oh, what life comes streaming into the soul as soon as the eye is fixed upon Jesus! In the case of some of us, the thrill that went through our heart, when we looked to Jesus, was like a little Heaven! It seemed to us as if we were suddenly brought into a new world. To me, believing in Jesus brought such a change in me, at once, that I can only compare it to the experience of a blind man, who, having never seen a ray of light, should be suddenly taken out in the night, set under the sky studded with stars—and then should have an instantaneous operation performed upon his eyes so that in a moment he could see clearly! Oh, how ravished he would be, how astonished, how delighted! How every little star would seem to twinkle for him! How every beam of light would seem to make him glad! He would clap his hands, he would leap for joy in the new sense of sight and the newly discovered pleasure which it had brought into his life! This is the kind of bliss that comes through believing in Jesus. It is like the discovery of buried treasure—there comes such a flood of delight upon the soul as must be experienced to be understood, for it cannot be described! It does not come to all so suddenly, for some eyes are opened gradually—first they see men, as trees, walking and, by-and-by, they see more fully. But, however it is

manifested, the change that faith works in the soul is truly marvelous. Beloved, he that believes in Jesus is "justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the Law of Moses."

He relies upon a perfect Atonement that puts away the whole sin of the man's earthly existence and he rejoices with unspeakable joy and full of glory. Man, you will die—the sentence already passed upon you will be executed before long unless you believe in Jesus, for, "he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." But, Man, if you believe in Jesus, you can never be executed for your sin! For you, there is no Hell! For you, there is no undying worm, no Tophet, no Gehenna—there cannot be any of these things, for you now have no sin. "Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you." "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this Grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Faith brings life, liberty, love and everlasting joy into the heart—nothing else will do this!

This then, is the first sense of the expression, "The just shall live by faith," and many of us have realized it and bless God that we have. I wish that all in this place did not only know about faith, but really *had* faith. Oh, that some might have it now and that, before this congregation shall break up, each of them might be able to say, "I believe in Jesus. I repose myself upon Him. Sink or swim, I fall into His arms. Come what may, Christ shall be to me, from this time forward, all my salvation and all my desire!" O blessed Spirit, work this faith in every heart here present, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

II. Now comes the second part of the subject, namely, that THE WHOLE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN, AFTER HE IS MADE TO LIVE, IS STILL BY FAITH.

Note, first, that *the Believer, after his conversion, lives in no other way but by faith*. No Christian remains a Christian except by still believing. Where we began, there we continue—we looked unto Jesus at the first and we are still looking unto Jesus. We came to Him at the first, and we are still coming unto Him "as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious." We know of no future ground of hope that can be any stronger or better than this, no, we know of no other than believing in Jesus Christ! I beg you, Beloved Christian people, try to avoid all attempts to live in any other way.

There are some professing Christians who live upon their devotions. Now, no Christian can live without prayer—without praise—without feeding upon the Word of God. Nobody ought to attempt to do that, but if any man should begin to say, "Now I can do without faith in Jesus because I read so many chapters each morning, and I spend so much time in prayer and I also attend so many public services." Ah, my Brother, you have wandered out of the right track, for you are not living by faith! If you pray in faith, praise in faith and read the Word of God in faith, then all these things shall become helpful to your spiritual life—but if faith is

left out, all these things shall be but as mere husks which contain no wheat in them whatever! I fear that there are some professors of religion who feel perfectly satisfied if they have gone through the regular routine of the day. I admire habits of devotion—they should be maintained—but if the mere habit is mistaken for living power and if it takes the place of coming continually to Jesus by living personal faith, you will soon find yourselves in a very strange case. "The just shall live by faith" and not by these things apart from faith. Faith puts power into them, but they have no living force apart from faith.

There are some other Christians who try to live by their works. They are Believers in Jesus, but they have got into such a state of heart that they are happy, restful and comfortable only when they can have a certain amount of activity in the service of God. But if, through illness, or any other cause, they are hindered from active service, they are full of doubts and begin to think that they are not saved—which proves that they were at least somewhat resting upon their *activities*. Now by all means, let us be active in the service of our Savior! Let us be zealous in good works, for to this end were we called, and this is for the Glory of God. But, Beloved, if I were to begin to draw comfort as to my soul's salvation from the fact of my diligence in preaching the Gospel, I would be making a great mistake! Or if you began to draw comfort from your earnestness in the Sunday school class, or if you should rest upon your devotion to various benevolent societies, or upon anything that you do—you would be upon the wrong track altogether. You would be feeding where God would not have you feed! Do all you can do, but live by faith. Serve God with all your might, but never make your service into a prop or pillow of confidence, for, even when we have done all that we ought to do, we are still unprofitable servants and we must bring our best works and ask forgiveness for their imperfections, even as there was a sacrifice appointed for the sins of Israel's holy things. There is sin, even in our holy things, so that they might sooner damn us than save us! Let us put no confidence in them, nor try to live by them as some do.

There are other Christians who live by feeling. Indeed, I have heard some advocate that we *ought* to live by feeling. Now, a true Christian cannot be without feeling. God forbid that he should! Feelings of sorrow, feelings of joy, feelings of spiritual depression and feelings of holy elation—these are all necessary in their time and place—but to live by feeling and to gauge our security by our state of feeling would be truly dreadful work because our feelings are more fickle than the weather! It is fine just now, but in another half-hour, it may rain. In such a variable climate as ours, we can never reckon for long upon any sort of weather. And as to our hearts and our feelings, so dependent upon our bodily health, or upon the kindness or the unkindness of our friends—so dependent upon a thousand little things almost too minute to be observed—if we begin estimating our safety by our ups and downs, we shall feel lost and then feel saved a hundred times a day! That plan will not do. "The just shall live by faith." I like to believe in Jesus when I have the worst feelings, just as firmly as when I have the best of them—and to trust in God just the same when my full assurance in Him brims with

delight as I did when my soul was emptied by sorrow. Do you think I put that sentence the wrong way? I did not, for it is easier, I believe, to trust Christ in the depths of sorrow than it is when you are high up in your stirrups and feel yourself to be somebody—for then, almost insensibly—you get away from the sole foundation of your standing by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are some, too, who live very much, even in religious matters, upon their outward circumstances. There are some who, if they become poor, almost give up all profession of religion. They say that they have not proper clothes in which to come to God's House and that they do not like to be seen by people who knew them when they were in better circumstances. And so that religion depends upon how many shillings a week they can earn! That is a very poor concern. But, if we have learned to live by faith, we shall follow the Lord in rags if He gives us nothing better to wear. And if we have not shoes for your feet, we shall follow Him all the same. Let us be in whatever condition we may, we shall never be worse off than He was! So, come poverty, or come wealth. Come the lowest possible ebb of outward fortunes or the highest, yet, still, if we live by faith, we shall keep close to the heels of the Crucified. God grant us Grace to live above our outward circumstances! Remember that Inspired message, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." Thus, you see that the Christian lives in no other manner than by faith.

And, Beloved Friend, *he lives in all forms of his life by faith*. I can only speak, for a minute or two, upon this thought. In one form of his life, the Christian is a child at home with his Father. Well, as a child, he lives by faith, for "as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name. Our sonship and adoption remain to us matters of faith and we continually look up to God our Father by faith. As His children, we receive teaching, supplies, food, clothing and everything—and we receive all by faith. To the child of God, faith is the hand that takes everything from God. I am His child, and I know that He will supply my every need, but faith prompts me to tell Him my needs—yes, makes me feel that He knows what I need before I ask Him and so I take from Him what He freely gives by believing in Him.

The Christian is described in the Word of God, next, as a pilgrim. He is journeying to "a city that has foundations," but, all the way there, he goes by faith—he never takes a step heavenward except by faith. An unbelieving step is not a step towards Heaven. All the progress that is made by any child of God is due to faith.

The Christian is also described as a warrior and there is no fighting except by faith and no weapon of defense like the great shield of faith. No victory is won by doubting! No devil is ever overthrown by desponding. Mistrust of God never yet put to flight the armies of the aliens. Unbelief never stopped the mouths of lions, or quenched the violence of fire, or divided the sea, or conquered the land! Point to the wonders worked by unbelief if you can. All it can show is ruin and desolation, for unbelief is powerless except for mischief. The just, when he fights, must fight by faith, and faith is the victory that overcomes the world!

The Christian is also continually described in the Word of God as a servant. Now, all service done for God must be done by faith. One of the first objectives of our service must be to please God, but "without faith it is impossible to please Him." O Brothers and Sisters, if we always go to our work as Christians saying, "I am going to do it by faith," how differently we would act from what we do now! We sit down and think of our many infirmities and we say, "We shall never accomplish that task." But, Sirs, have you forgotten the everlasting arms and the Omnipotent might of Jehovah? We observe how difficult the duty is and how strong the opposition, and so we go to work very mistrustfully, but if, instead thereof, we were to say, "Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain," we would be sure to conquer! Service rendered in unbelief is like a vessel marred on the potter's wheel, but as long as faith can turn it round upon the wheel and fashion it, it will come to something that the Master can use. You must believe, for so will you be able to serve! "Trust in the Lord and do good," but be sure to do the first thing. The *trusting* must come before the doing—and be mingled with all the doing—or else it will be a very poor piece of doing, indeed!

Well, then, in any capacity in which a Christian is found, he must always be believing. If you have to go home and go to bed, and lie there for a month and suffer, go upstairs believing that the Lord will make your bed in all your sickness. If you have to go back to a business where everything seems to be going wrong with you, go in faith and know that He has said, "Bread shall be given you, your waters shall be sure." Or if you are going, next Sunday, to teach a class in the Sunday school, or going round with your tracts in a district where you have to call upon some ugly-minded people, go in faith. Has not the Lord said, "Certainly I will be with you. I will bless you, and help you"? Then, go in faith! It will change the whole color and tenor of your life if you remember that "the just shall live by faith," whatever form his life takes.

Very rapidly, let me also say to you that *this is the way the just are to live in every case and every condition*. The Prophet Habakkuk is the one who first uttered these words, "The just shall live by his faith." I wonder whether he fully understood them, himself? It is always pleasant to see whether a doctor takes his own medicine and whether a preacher practices his own precepts. I think this is how Habakkuk understood these words—here is his practical exposition of them, in the last verses of his prophecy—"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be on the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and He will make me to walk upon my high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments." Why, it is a hymn, is it not?—the hymn of a man who saw his bread going, the meat going, the oil going and everything going, and yet he rejoiced in the Lord! This is what he meant by living by faith—faith, you see, about fruit—faith about flocks—faith about cattle—faith about fig trees—faith about everything—yes, a faith that does without anything—a faith that can take nothing and be

content with it because it finds everything in God—faith under the worst conceivable conditions! This is how the just are to live.

And as they are to live thus at their worst, so should they live at their best—still by faith. I was told of a friend who walked with that blessed man of God, Mr. George Muller of Bristol, and who made the remark to him that he thought he had a £5,000 balance one year. "Yes," said Mr. Muller, "God had been very gracious and we had a large balance." "And I think," said the friend, "for some years you have always had a large balance." "Yes," he replied, "we have." "Well," asked the other, "do you now, my Brother, trust in God just as simply as you did when you had to call the children together to pray because there was no bread to give them for dinner—and God graciously sent you the dinner just at the right time? Is your faith just as simple? Do you walk by faith as you did then?" And that good man said, "Yes, my dear Brother, I live by faith now as I did then, only a great deal more so, for I find I have more need of faith now to prevent me beginning to trust in what I have in store." It is just so—if you are getting on in life, you need more faith to keep you from making a god of what you have and trusting in it! Instead of less faith in time of prosperity, you will need even more! There are some people, you know, who lean upon God because they have no one else to lean upon. They are like that famous rider of whom Cowper sang, who was—

"Stooping down as needs he must
Who cannot sit upright."

That is how it is with the faith of these people, and very good faith it is, too! But that faith is even nobler that has some apparent means of sitting upright, that seems to have something to confide in, yet will not do it because it disdains to have even things visible, of the best and most powerful kind, to rest upon, but will rest on nothing but God. Why, you props and buttresses, if I trust you today, I may need you tomorrow, and where shall I be then? No, as Abraham said to the king of Sodom, "I will not take from a thread even to a shoe lace, I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, I have made Abraham rich." Often we have to cast aside what is offered to us and say, "I cannot and will not have it, lest my heart should, at any time, rely upon those gifts rather than upon my God." You know how the devil spoke to God concerning Job, "Have You not made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Your hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse You to Your face." That is what the devil said, but it was not true. Yet, in some cases, there is a danger of it getting to be true. We are getting on so well and the hedge is all around us. Ah, but we must not get to love the hedge, or it will be taken from us! If you love the fields, the gold, the silver and begin to confide in them, you will lose them.

"The just shall live by faith"—faith as much in the summer weather as in the winter cold. See to that matter, O you who are the children of God! "The just shall live by faith" in every condition. When he comes to die, he shall live by faith. I recollect what a Negro said about his master who was a Christian. The minister said to the Negro, "Sam, is your master dying?" "Yes, Sir," he said, "he be dying." "And how is he dying, Sam?" "Sir," said

the Negro, "he be dying full of life." That is how a Christian should die—"full of life." The life of God is within him even to the last! Till he gets into Glory, "the just shall live by faith." Yes, and before he gets there, he shall taste some of the joys of Heaven, for, living by faith means living in the heavenly! It means getting to anticipate the Glory that is yet to be revealed. Living by faith makes us live the life of God and he that lives the life of God must, in some degree, live the life of Heaven! Oh, to have it so developed, strengthened and full-grown that, from this time forth, we may live by faith even to the end! The Lord bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 22:1-14.

Verses 1-3. *And Jesus answered and spoke unto them again by parables, and said, The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bid to the wedding: and they would not come.* Observe that it was a king who made this wedding feast. Therefore, to refuse to come to it when the command implied great honor to those who were bid, was as distinct an insult as could very well be perpetrated against both the king and his son! "They would not come." Had the one who invited them been only an ordinary person, it might not have been their duty to come and they might even have been justified in their refusal. But this was a king who sent his servants to summon the guests to the marriage of his son. And I bid you to take notice that the Gospel marriage feast, to which you are invited, is the feast, not only of a king, but of the King of Kings, your Creator and your God! And in refusing to come in obedience to His command, you commit an overt act of rebellion against His Divine Majesty. The king "sent forth his servants to call them that were bid to the wedding: and they would not come." They were bid, yet they would not come—from which I gather that those who think the invitations of the Gospel are to be restricted to certain characters, because they say it is useless to invite others, "do err, not knowing the Scriptures." What have we to do with the apparent uselessness of what we are commanded to do? It is our duty to give the invitation according as our King directs us! It is not our business to decide whether that invitation will be accepted or rejected. In this case, we know what happened—"They would not come."

4. *Again he sent forth other servants.* Perhaps, in the kindness of his heart, he thought that the first servants, whom he sent, were somewhat offensive in their manner and that, therefore, the guests would not come. Just as it may be that some of you will never receive the Gospel from one minister, for you have a prejudice against his way of putting it. So the Lord may, in the greatness of His mercy, send you His Word by the mouth of another. I am quite sure that any of us who are the King's servants would be very glad for somebody else to take our place if he could succeed better with you than we can. This king, in his wisdom and kindness, "sent forth other servants."

4-6. *Saying, Tell them, which are bid, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: and the remnant took his servants, and treated them spitefully, and slew them.* The great majority of those who heard the invitation, "made light of it." And this is still the habit of the bulk of mankind, and even of many whom I am now addressing. Any day will do for you to think about Christ, so you seem to fancy! He may have your leftovers—when it shall come to the last, you think that you can send for a minister to come and pray with you and then all will be well. You make light of it—you make light of present mercy, of immediate reconciliation to God—you make light of the love and Grace of God and of the precious blood of Jesus. Take heed what you are doing, for the great King in Heaven regards this as high treason against Himself! He looks upon it as a presumptuous attempt to lower His Infinite Majesty in the eyes of men! When a king has killed his oxen and fatlings for his son's wedding feast and there is nobody to eat the provision, then is it a dishonor to him—and if it were possible for the Gospel provisions to be universally rejected, God would be dishonored. There are some, however, who go further than merely making light of the invitation—"the remnant" who would, if they could, maltreat and slay the messengers of mercy and, as they cannot, nowadays, kill their bodies, they try to slay their reputations! Any slander which they have heard, or any lie which they have invented, will do to tell in order to make the minister of Christ of less repute than he deserves to be.

7-10. *But when the king heard thereof, he was angry: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then he said to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bid were not worthy. Go you therefore into the highways and as many as you shall find, bid come to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.* This is still the glorious rule of the Gospel! Those who were first bid to the great wedding feast were the Jews. They would not come and, therefore, Jerusalem was destroyed. Now the Gospel is preached to all nations and all sorts of people in all nations—yet the same sinful rejection of the invitation is constantly being repeated. You who hear the Gospel from Sunday to Sunday are bid by it to come to the great supper and, as some of you will not come, God, in His Infinite Mercy, is sending His Gospel to the poorest and the vilest of mankind. Many of them do come and thus the Lord provokes you to jealousy by a people who were not a people—and astonishes you as you find that many come from the East, and from the West, and from the North, and from the South and sit down in the Kingdom of God, while you, who reckoned yourselves to be the children of the Kingdom because you have long been privileged to hear the Gospel, shall be cast out! The king's servants "gathered together as many as they found, both bad and good." The best gathering into the visible Church is sure to be a mixture—there will be some coming into it who should not be there.

11. *And when the king came in to see the guests.* For whom he had provided sumptuous garments suitable for the wedding—for, as we provide what is supposed to be appropriate array for mourners at a funeral, so, in the East, they provide, on a much larger scale, suitable apparel for wedding guests.

11. *He saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment.* He might have had one, for it was provided. The fact that he had not one was as great an insult to the king as a refusal of his invitation would have been. He was not bound to provide himself with a wedding garment—he could not have done it, for he was probably one of those swept up out of the highways. But there it hung and he was requested to put it on. But he refused and he had the impertinence to sit there without the indispensable wedding garment. If he could not show his contempt for the king in one way, he would do so in another, and he dared, in the midst of the wedding feasters, to defy the authority of the king and to refuse to do honor to the newly-married prince.

12. *And he said unto him, Friend, how came you in here not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.* He could give no reply—the king's presence awed him into silence.

13. *Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* You may manage to get into the Church even though you are not converted, but if you are not trusting in Christ, you are not saved, and your false profession will only make your destruction the more terrible! Woe unto us unless we are found wearing the righteousness of Christ—unless our lives are made holy by the gracious influence of His blessed Spirit! These are the wedding garments which we are to wear. If we have them not, our presence at the festival will not avail us in the great testing time that is coming.

14. *For many are called, but few are chosen.* All who hear the Gospel are called, but the call does not come with equal power to every heart. And with some, the power with which it comes is not that which saves—it only convinces the intellect so that an outward homage is paid to the Word of God and the inward obedience of the soul is not rendered to the Lord. God grant that each of us may have on the wedding garment when the King comes in to see the guests!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—571, 519.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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

"NEVERTHELESS AT YOUR WORD"
NO. 2810

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 21, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 3, 1877.

"Nevertheless at Your word."
Luke 5:5.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ had preached a sermon to the multitude while He was sitting down in Peter's boat. And after the people had gone, He had a private message for Simon. He said to him, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." Christ's discourses to the general public were all full of most blessed teaching, but His little private talks to His intimate acquaintances were even more helpful and precious. They were important Truths of God which He proclaimed to the many, but the choicest things He reserved for the few. Many a parable which He addressed to the crowd, He explained only to His own disciples—and many a thing which He never said to the crowd at all, because they could not understand it, and it would have been like casting pearls before swine, He whispered in the ears of His disciples. So it was with Simon Peter at this time. First there was the sermon to the many and after the sermon, this word to Peter about launching out into the deep. Mind that you, who love the Lord, always look for the private piece after the public sermon. Watch for the sweet Word which your Master is always willing to utter—and do not be satisfied unless you hear it.

Then, if the message that He gives you shall be a precept, or a command, like that addressed to Simon, bidding him let down his nets, be careful that you obey it at once. Be not negligent of the special voice of God in your own heart and conscience, for God intends thereby to bestow a great blessing upon you, even as He did upon Simon whose boat was filled with fish almost to sinking! If you give heed to that special private word of your Lord to your own heart and soul, you shall have many a boatful of fish, or rather, many a heart-full of untold blessing which otherwise you might never have received.

Peter, being exhorted to launch out into the deep and to let down his nets for a catch, reasoned that, according to the ordinary course of events, it would be of very little use to do so, for he and his comrades had been toiling hard with their great nets all through the night, yet they had caught nothing and it did not, therefore, seem probable that they would catch anything now. However, feeling that Christ was his Master and Lord, and that it did not become him to raise any question about the

matter, he just stated the facts of the case and then added, cheerfully, "Nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net."

Those four words, "Nevertheless at Your word," seem to furnish me with a topic upon which I shall try to speak thus—First, *the word of Christ is our supreme rule.* "At Your word." Secondly, *the word of Christ is our sufficient warrant.* If we have that at our back, we may well say, "Nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net." And, thirdly, *to keep that word will always ensure a reward.*

I. First, then, THE WORD OF CHRIST IS THE SUPREME RULE OF THE CHRISTIAN.

Time out of mind have we spoken to you about the precious blood of Christ that cleanses all sin and about the blessings that Jesus brings to you when He becomes your Savior. But we are also bound to remind all of you who profess to have believed on Him, and to have become His disciples, that you must not only acknowledge Him as your Master and Lord, but that you must do whatever He bids you—

"Faith must obey the Savior's will,
As well as trust His Grace."

The moment we become Christians, who are saved by Christ, we become His servants to obey all His commandments. Hence, it is incumbent upon us to search the Scriptures, that we may know what our Master's will is. There He has written it out for us in plain letters and it is an act of disobedience to neglect this search. By refusing to learn what the will of our Lord is, the *sin of ignorance becomes willful* because we do not use the means by which we might receive instruction. Every servant of Christ is bound to know what he or she is to do and then, when he knows it, he should at once do it. The Christian's business is, first, to learn Christ's will and, secondly, to do it! Once learned, that will is the supreme law of the Christian whatever may seem to oppose it.

Let me just mention a few of the times when it seems difficult to conform to that will, but when we must say, "Nevertheless at Your word."

And, first, we must do this with regard to great Gospel Truths *when our own reason is staggered.* No thoughtful person can seriously consider the Doctrines of Grace without often crying out, "They are high! I cannot attain to them." There are many things revealed to us in the Scriptures which we cannot understand—no, not even though we give all our mind to endeavor to comprehend them. There are difficulties in theology. This doctrine does not appear to square with that, or that one with the next. One Truth, perhaps, appears inconsistent with the love of God, or we may, sometimes, wonder how certain events in God's Providential dealings can be consistent with His goodness or justice. Well, my Brothers and Sisters, whenever you put your hand to your brow and say, concerning anything revealed in the Scriptures, "I cannot comprehend it," lay your other hand upon your heart and say, "Nevertheless I believe it. It is clearly taught in the Bible and although my reason may find it difficult to explain it, and I may not be able to discover any arguments to prove the truth of it, yet I lay my reason down at my Infallible Master's feet and trust where I cannot see." For a man to take his creed blindly from a pope or a priest is to degrade himself because he receives that teaching

from his fellow man—but for him to lay his whole mind down at the feet of Jesus Christ is no degradation since Christ is the Wisdom of God, and all wisdom is Infallibly gathered up in Him. I do not expect to fully understand my Lord's will—I only ask to be informed what that will is. I do not suppose that I can comprehend it, but I say, "What is Your will, my Master? If You will reveal it to me, I will believe it."

We must adopt a similar course *when we are exposed to the quibbles of our fellow men*. Many young persons, especially, find themselves unable to answer all the objections that are raised by those who oppose the Gospel. It would be a marvel if they could, for the old proverb says, "One fool can ask more questions than 50 wise men can answer." It is not likely that those who are just beginning to learn Divine Truths could be able to overcome all its opponents. When a question has sometimes staggered me, I have felt, "Well, I cannot answer that, but I believe that it can be answered. I thank God that I have heard it asked, for it has taught me my ignorance upon that point—and I will sit down and study God's Word till I *can* answer it—but even if I cannot answer it, it does not matter. Somebody can do so and, above all, God Himself can! Be it mine, sometimes, to leave the arrows of the adversary sticking in my shield—they will do no harm there. If he likes to see them there, let him be amused by it, but as long as I cling to Christ's Infallible teaching, they will not hurt me. So let him shoot and shoot again." You will find, Beloved, that this will be good exercise for your humility and good exercise for your loyalty to Christ. It will be shown that you are, after all, a follower of Christ—not a believer in your own infallibility, or relying upon that reason of yours which, at best, is but a dim candle. It will be shown, I say—that you have really yielded up your mind to the lordship of your Savior.

Sometimes we shall have to say, "Nevertheless at Your word," *when the command of Christ seems contrary to our own experience*. It would become a dangerous thing if we were always to follow the experience even of Christians, for the experience of one man might teach us one thing, but the experience of another might teach us the very reverse. And to make experience the basis of theology—though it is often a helpful illustration of it, would lead to great mistake. I must never say, "I did such-and-such a thing—I know it was not right, yet good came of it and, therefore, I feel that I may do the same thing again." Neither ought I to say, "I did such-and-such, which I knew was right, but I suffered great trouble as the result of it and, therefore, I ought not to do it again." No, no! Whatever happens to us, our only course is to pursue the right path and to avoid all that is wrong. Let each of us say, "My Master, if any act of obedience to You were to cost me many a privilege—cost me my liberty—cause me to be put into prison" (and it has done so to many of the saints of old) "yet I will do as You command me, whatever the consequences may be."

What said Master John Bunyan, after he had lain in prison many years simply for preaching the Gospel? The magistrates said to him, "John, we will let you out, but you must promise not to preach again. There are the regular divines of the country—what have you, as a tinker, to do with preaching?" John Bunyan did not say, "Well, now, I can see

that this preaching is a bad thing. It has got me into prison and I have had hard work to tag enough laces to keep my wife and that poor blind child of mine. I had better get out of this place and stick to my tinkering." No, he did not talk like that. He said to the magistrates, "If you let me out of prison today, I will preach again tomorrow, by the Grace of God." And when they told him that they would not let him out unless he promised not to preach, he bravely answered, "If I lie in jail till the moss grows on my eyelids, I will never conceal the Truth which God has taught me."

We are, therefore, not to put our own past experience in the way of obedience to our Lord's will, but to say to Him, "Nevertheless, however costly this duty may prove to be, at Your command I will let down the net, or do whatever You bid me do." But, sometimes, people get remarkably wise through experience, or they think that they do. Old sailors, for instance, fancy that they "know a thing or two." And Simon Peter, who had been fishing in that lake for a long while, thought he knew all that could be known about fishing. And Christ interfered with Peter just in Peter's own line and gave him a command about fishing! The fisherman might have said, "What is the good of casting the net? We have been fishing all night long and have taken nothing! What is the good of our fishing anymore?" Peter did not talk so, though he may have thought like that, but he said, "Nevertheless at Your word, since You know far more about fish than I do—since You did make them and can make them come wherever You will. Since, Lord, You command it—I would not do it at anybody else's bidding, but I will do it at Yours—I will let down the net." So, sometimes, there may be something in God's Word, or some path of duty clearly indicated to you which does not seem, to carnal judgment, to be very wise, but you are to say, "Nevertheless at Your word—no other authority could make me do it—but Your Law is the supreme rule for my conduct and I will do whatever You bid me."

This great principle ought also to prevail *when self-love is in the way*. Sometimes the command of Christ runs completely contrary to what we would like and obedience to it involves self-denial. It threatens to take away from us much that was very pleasurable to us and then, very likely, something within us says, "Do not obey it. It will go very hard with you if you do." Nevertheless, Brothers and Sisters, may the Holy Spirit so mightily work upon you that you will do anything and everything that Christ commands, however galling to the flesh it may be! We are not our own, so let us never act as if we were. The mark of the precious blood of Jesus is upon us—we have been bought with it—so it is not right for us to make provision for the flesh, or to be looking out for our own ease or aggrandizement. It is our duty to do whatever our Lord bids us do and to take the consequences, whatever they may be. So let us, each one, say, "I know that it will cost me much, my Master, but, nevertheless, I will do whatever You command me."

Sometimes, there is a still more powerful opposition to the will of the Lord—that is, *when love of others would hinder us from obeying it*. "If I do such-and-such, which I know I ought to do, I shall grieve my parents. If I carry out that command of Christ, the dearest friend I have will be very angry with me. He has threatened to cast me off if I am baptized. My old

companions, who have been very kind to me, will all consider that I have gone out of my mind and will no longer wish to have me in their company." If a person has a genial heart and a loving spirit, this kind of treatment is very trying and there is a strong temptation to say, "Well, now, how far can I go in religion and yet manage to save these fond connections? I do not wish to set myself up in opposition to everybody else—can't I, somehow or other, please God and yet please these people too?" But, Brothers and Sisters, if we are indeed Christians, the supreme rule of our Lord's will drives us to say to Him, "Nevertheless, I will do whatever You command." Farewell, our best-beloved, if they stand in the way of Christ our Lord, for He said, "He that loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." Everyone else and everything else must go that we may keep company with Christ!

It sometimes happens that we have God's Word pointing us to a certain course of action, but we do not follow it because of *the faintness of our own heart*. Do you ever feel faint-hearted? There are some people who seem as if they were born without nerves, or feelings, for they never appear to be downcast. But some of us, at times, shrink away and seem to be dried up, as if the marrow were gone from our bones and the strength from our hearts. At such a time as that we know what Christ would have us do, but we hesitate to do it. We feel as if we could not—not that we *would* not, but that we really *could* not. There is a lack of courage—a lack of confidence. We are timid and cannot dash into the fray. Then is the time—when heart and flesh fail—for us to take God to be the strength of our soul by resolving, let our weakness be what it may, that we will obey the command of Christ! When your heart is faint, dear Brother or Sister, still follow Christ. When you feel as if you must die at your next step, still keep close at His heels and if your soul is almost in despair, yet hold on to Him and keep your feet in His ways. If anyone who fears the Lord still walks in darkness and has no Light of God, let him trust in the name of the Lord and stay upon his God, for so shall His Light break forth as the morning and his heart shall be once more glad in the Lord.

So you see, whatever obstacle there may be in the way of our obedience to the command of Christ, still let each one of us say to Him, "Nevertheless at Your word, I will do whatever You command. That shall be the supreme rule and guide for all my actions."

II. Now, secondly, I want to show you that THE WORD OF CHRIST IS OUR SUFFICIENT WARRANT, as well as our supreme rule.

This is, first, our warrant for *believing on Him*. If the Lord Jesus Christ has bid you do this, you certainly may do it! And if any shall ask you why you believe on Him, this shall be your triumphant answer, "The King gave me the command to do so." Listen to this, all you who desire to have eternal life and who have not yet obtained it! The Gospel commission is, "Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." And this is the Gospel command, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." The poor timid soul says, "How can I venture to trust my guilty soul with Christ? It would be presumption upon my part. What right have I to

come and rely upon Him?" It must be right for you to do it, for He bids you do it! And if He bids you do it, this is warrant enough for you! Every sinner under Heaven who hears the glad tidings of salvation is *commanded* to believe on Jesus—and he is warned that if he does not believe on Him—he shall be damned! "God now commands all men everywhere to repent." This is the very widest form of command, so I bid each one of you to say, this very moment, "Lord, I am not worthy to be Your disciple, but, nevertheless, at Your command, I will believe in You. I feel that it will be a wonder of Grace if I am saved and it is almost incredible that it should ever take place—nevertheless, at Your command, I let down my net. I even dare to trust Your precious blood and Your spotless righteousness and to expect that You will save me." Is not that a blessed form of argument? I pray that some of you may feel its force and act upon it even now!

Next, *this is an excellent reason for being baptized if you are a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.* Somebody may say to you, "What is the good of Baptism? It will not save you—to be immersed in water will not wash away your sins." I hope you will be ready to reply, "Yes, I know all that. Nevertheless, at Christ's command, I mean to do it. I ask not what will be the gain to me of obeying His orders. That would be sheer selfishness—He bids me be baptized and that is enough for me." "But such-and-such a church does not practice the Baptism of Believers, *or* Baptism by immersion." No, but Christ has ordained it! By His own example, by His plain precept, by the preaching and practice of His Apostles, He has revealed His will to us and, therefore, it is for us to obey that will! If any shall accuse us of making too much of the Baptism of Believers, we reply, "Our Lord has said, 'He that believes and is baptized shall be saved,' and we have no more right to leave out one portion of His words than the other. So, at His command we do this—let men say what they will."

This, Beloved, is also *the great argument for our taking up the position which we hold as Dissenters.* Is it not a bad thing to dissent from other people! Yes, of course it is, if they are right and we are wrong, but it is just as bad for them to dissent from us if we are right and they are wrong! I am not to say, "I will be singular and keep myself separate from other people." It would be wrong for me to act like that. But it is right to say, "Whatever Christ commands is Law in His Church." What synods command, or bishops command, or popes command is not worth the paper it is written on—there is no authority in it to a Christian. He is free from all such control as that. But the Law of Christ, as he finds it revealed in the Bible, is binding upon him. I should honor any man who stood absolutely alone, without another individual to support him in his opinion, for having the courage to do so, if he justified his action by the Word of God! To run with the multitude is only too often to go on the wrong road. To believe a thing because the many believe it is a coward's reason! To slink away from truth because she stands in the pillory—because she is unpopular—because the crowd cries her down—oh, this is a cowardly spirit! I would rather be on the side of truth with half a dozen paupers than be on the side of a lie with all the kings and prelates who ever rode in their pomp through the streets of this world, for, at the

last, they who were on truth's side, and on Christ's side, shall be honored and they who had not the conscience and the courage to follow the Lamb shall be dishonored and covered with everlasting shame and contempt!

This principle can also be applied to many other matters. "Nevertheless at your word" ought to be *an argument for keeping on praying*. If you have been asking, for seven years, for the salvation of a soul, and yet that soul is not saved, you may be tempted to say, with Peter, "We have toiled all night and taken nothing." But if you do, mind that you also add, "Nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net." Still pray on! If you have begun to pray for any man, keep on praying for him as long as you live and he lives! Or if it is some choice blessing for the Church or for the world, which God has evidently promised and it is laid on your heart to ask for it, still intercede even though for years you should receive no answer to your petition. Still knock at mercy's door! Wrestle till the break of day, for, if in the night the blessing comes not, before the morning sun has risen, the Lord will give you the desire of your heart.

So, too, is it *with regard to Christian service*. I will suppose that you have begun to labor for Christ and that you feel very stupid at it. You have not much talent and what little you have, you hardly know how to put it to the best use. Well, Brother, Sister, it looks as if you had better not try again, yet I would advise you to say to your Lord, "Nevertheless at Your word I will go to work, again. I will try once more—no, I will try many times more." Suppose you have been working in a certain district, or class, and you have not succeeded—do not yield! Many a hard piece of soil has, after many efforts, at last brought forth a harvest! If Jesus bade you sow there—and He did, for He told you to sow beside all waters—go, and say, "Nevertheless at Your word I will do what You command." When I come to address this congregation, I like to feel that I come because I am told to do so. One of you may say, "If I go to that dark village and stand up on the green to preach, I expect I shall be mobbed. Nevertheless at Your word I will do it." It is a blessed thing to render obedience to Christ under the most difficult circumstances. To obey Him when it is pleasant to do so—when all that you do prospers—is good as far as it goes, but to obey Him when everything seems against you and nothing appears to prosper—to trust the Lord and still to work on for Him—this is, indeed, making Jesus Christ to be your Lord!

III. I must not dwell longer on this part of my theme lest I weary you. So I will conclude with the last point, which is this, TO KEEP YOUR MASTER'S WORD WILL ENSURE A REWARD TO YOU.

You who believe in Jesus are already saved, so you will understand that I speak not of any legal reward, as of debt, for this is all of Grace. But the man who carefully and faithfully does everything according to Christ's word shall have, first of all, *the reward of an easy conscience*. Suppose you go home, one night, and say to yourself, "Today I have done something that I thought to be right, but I did not stop to enquire if it was according to my Master's will. I did not wait upon Him in prayer for guidance." You will feel very uneasy and uncomfortable in your conscience and if any trouble shall arise through it, you will have to say, "I

brought this on myself, for I took my own course." But if you can say, at nightfall, "What I have done today will probably be much discussed and possibly it will be censured by some. And it may even be that it will cost me much pain and even financial loss—but I know that, as far as I could judge, it was my Master's will." You will sleep very sweetly after that. "Whatever comes of it," you will say, "I will take it from my Savior's pierced hands and reckon it to be part of the sacrifice that is necessary in being a Christian." It is better to be a loser in that way than to be a gainer in any other, for, as the old Divine used to say, "He that can wear the flower called heart's ease in his bosom is better off than he that wears diamonds in his crown, but who has not true ease of heart." If a man goes up and down in his daily business in the world and in his family—and is always able, by God's Grace, to feel, "I have labored as in the sight of God to do that which is right according to the teaching and example of my Lord and Savior"—he has a reward in his own heart from that very fact even if he had no other.

But, next, there is a great reward in being enabled to obey the Master's word, because rightly looked at, *it is in itself a blessing of Divine Grace*. When you thank God for the good things He has done for you, thank Him not only for keeping you out of sin, but also thank Him for enabling you to do His will. No man has any right to take credit to himself for his own integrity, for, if he is a Christian, that integrity is the gift of God's Grace and the work of God's Spirit within him. If you did, in your youth, form a candid, honest judgment of the Word of God and then, burning all bridges and boats, and severing all connection with that which was behind you—if you dared to cast in your lot with the despised people of God, bless Him for it and count it as a great favor which He did for you in that He enabled you to act thus! And if, when tempted with heavy bribes, you have, up to now been able to say, "Get you behind me, Satan," and to follow close to the heels of Christ, give God all the glory of it and bless His holy name! In such a case as this, virtue is its own reward.

To have been obedient to Christ is one of the highest blessings that God can have bestowed upon any man. There are some of us who have to thank God that when there were pinching times, we did not dare to yield—but when friends and enemies, alike, pointed out another way, we saw what was our Master's way and followed it, by His Grace. We shall have to thank Him to all eternity for this. Once begin to parley with the foe—to stifle your conscience or hide your principles—young man, once begin to follow trickery in trade—once begin to dally with the wrong and you will soon find that you are sowing thorns that will pierce through your pillow when you grow old! Be just, and fear not. Follow Christ though the skies should fall and, in doing this, you will be rewarded, for it is a blessing in itself!

But, more than this, *no man fully does his Master's will without getting a distinct reward*. Simon Peter's boatful of fish was his reward for launching out at Christ's word. And in keeping His commandments there is always a great reward. There is usefulness to others, there is happiness to yourself and there is glory to God. I sometimes fear that we mi-

nisters do not preach enough about practical godliness. We tell you about justification by faith and the Doctrines of Grace—and we cannot too frequently discourse upon such topics as these—but we must also insist upon it that where there is *faith* in Christ, there *will be obedience* to Christ! And we cannot too often insist upon it that while the everlasting salvation of the Christian does not depend upon what he *does*, yet his own comfort, his own usefulness and the glory which he will bring to God must depend upon that. Therefore, look you well to it, Beloved, young and old, rich and poor—and henceforth, as long as you live—take the Word of God to be the polestar to you in all your sailings across the ocean of life and you shall have a blessed voyage, and reach the Port of Peace, not with torn sails and broken cordage, a dismasted wreck, but, "an entrance shall be abundantly ministered to you into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

May God add His blessing, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HEBREWS 10:19-39.

Verses 19-22. *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.* The place of the Christian is that of the nearest conceivable access to God, for "the Holiest" is "the Holy of Holies"—that innermost part of the tabernacle to reach which the high priest had to pass through the outer court, through the court of the priests and then through the beautiful veil which concealed the Mercy Seat. At the death of Christ that veil was torn from top to bottom, so now there is nothing to keep us back from the Mercy Seat! We, therefore, have boldness and liberty in that way, "to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus"—where the high priest, himself, could only go once in the year—we may go at all times! The veil has not been merely lifted up, for a while, and then dropped again. It is not rolled up ready for future use—it is torn in two—destroyed! Since Jesus has died, there is now no separation between the Believer and his God except by means of such a veil as our base unbelief may please to hang up. The crimson way of Christ's shed blood lies open to all Believers! Therefore, "let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water,"

23. *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.* Not only hold it, but hold it fast without wavering. Let us never have a question about it! God grant that we may have an unquestioning, unstaggering faith! To hold fast the profession of our faith seems good enough—but to hold it fast without wavering is better—and so we ought to do it.

23. *(For He is faithful that promised).* God gives us no cause for wavering, for He never wavers. If He were an unfaithful God, we might natural-

ly be an unbelieving people, but, "He is faithful that promised." Therefore, "let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering."

24. *And let us consider one another to stir up love and good works.* I am afraid there are some who consider one another to stir up in quite a different spirit from this—who watch to discover a tender spot where a wound will be most felt. They observe the weakness of a Brother's constitution and then play upon it, or make jests about it. All this is evil, so let us avoid it. Let us all seek out the good points of our Brothers and Sisters and consider them, that we may afterwards be the means of guiding them to those peculiar good works for which they are best adapted. "Stir up love and good works." I do not know how we can do that better than by being very loving and full of good works, ourselves, for then will others be likely to say, "If these people are helped by God's Grace to love like this, and to labor like this, why should we not do the same?" A good example is often better than a very proper precept.

25. *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some.* Yes, there are some who even make a bad use of what ought to be a great blessing, namely, the printing press and the printed sermon, by staying at home to read a sermon because, they say, it is better than going out to hear one! Well, dear Friend, if I could not hear profitably, I would still make one of the assembly gathered together for the worship of God. It is a bad example for a professing Christian to absent himself from the assembly of the friends of Christ. There was a dear Sister, whom many of you knew, who used to attend here with great regularity—although she could not hear a word that was said. But she said it did her good to join in the hymns and to know that she was worshipping God with the rest of His people. I wish that some who stay away for the most frivolous excuses would think of this verse—"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some."

25. *But exhorting one another and so much the more, as you see the Day approaching.* It is not the work only of the minister to exhort, but the Brothers, and the Sisters, too, should exhort one another and seek to stir each other up in the faith and fear of God.

26, 27. *For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.* This is a solemn text, containing a very terrible Truth of God. If, after having been regenerated and made children of God, we were willfully and deliberately to let the Savior go and apostatize altogether to the world, there would be no hope for us. What, then, *is* our hope? Why, *that we shall never be permitted to do so*—that the Grace of God will keep us so that, although we may fall like Peter, we shall not fall away like Judas—that, though we may sin, there shall not be that degree of studied willfulness about it that would make it to be the sin unto death—a deliberate act of spiritual suicide. The Doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints derives great glory from this other Truth of God that if they did not persevere, there is no second means of Grace, no other plan of salvation. No man was ever born-again twice! No man was ever washed twice in the precious blood of Jesus! The one washing makes us so clean

that, "he that is washed needs not save to wash his feet," for which Jesus provides by daily cleansing—but the one grand atoning act never fails. If it did fail, there would remain "no more sacrifice for sins."

28, 29. *He that despised Moses' Law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose you, shall he be thought worthy who has trodden underfoot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the Covenant, wherewith He was sanctified, an unholy thing, and has done despite unto the Spirit of Grace?* For apostasy from Christ would amount to all this—and if that were possible, what Grace would remain?

30. *For we know Him that has said, Vengeance belongs unto Me, I will recompense, says the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge His people.* O professors, take this message home to your hearts! Let everyone of us take it home—"The Lord shall judge His people." God's fire is in Zion and His furnace in Jerusalem! If a man tries nothing else, he will test his gold. And if no others shall be judged, yet certainly those will be who say that they are the Lord's people! In that dread Day He will separate the goats from the sheep, the tares from the wheat, and the dross from the gold! His fan will be in His hand and He will thoroughly purge His floor! He will sit as a refiner of silver and He will purify the sons of Levi. He shall be like a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap. Woe to those, in that Day, who are a defilement to His Church and an adulteration to the purity of His people!

31. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* What a terrible verse that is! It is a text that ought to be preached from by those who are always saying that the punishment of the wicked will be less than, according to our minds, the Word of God leads us to expect it to be—"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

32. *But call to remembrance the former days.* The Apostle is not expecting that any of them will ever go back to where they were before. He is persuaded that they will persevere even to the end. The very warning that he gives is a powerful preventive against apostasy. Now comes the exhortation—"Call to remembrance the former days." Some of you can "call to remembrance" the time when you joined the Church—when you had to run the gauntlet for Christ's sake. Then, in your early Christian life, you feared nothing and nobody so long as you could glorify God. You then had great enjoyment, sweet seasons of communion with your Lord—"Call to remembrance the former days."

32, 33. *In which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great fight of afflictions; partly, while you were made a gazing stock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, while you became companions of them that were so used.* In your early Christian days, you were pointed at and regarded as quite singular for being servants of Christ. Or, possibly, it was not yourselves so much as your pastors, your leaders, your friends who were prominent in the Church at whom the arrows of the adversaries were aimed. They shot at you through them and, sometimes, that pained you much more than when they distinctly attacked you. Altogether, it was "a great fight of afflictions" that you had to endure.

34. *For you had compassion on me in my chains.* In those early days the Jewish Believers clung to Paul just as ardently as the unbelieving Jews persecuted him!

34, 35. *And took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that you have in Heaven a better and an enduring substance. Cast not away, therefore, your confidence which has great recompense of reward.* Be like the brave Spartan who would never lose his shield, but would come home either with it or on it! "Cast not away your confidence." You trusted in God in those early days and nothing seemed to daunt you, then. "Cast not away your confidence." Rather, get more to add to it! Let there be no thought of going back, but may there rather be a distinct advance!

36. *For you have need of patience.* Our supply of that virtue is often very short. It is an article of which there is very little in the market and all of us have need of more of it—"You have need of patience."

36. *That, after you have done the will of God, you might receive the promise.* There must first be the doing of the will of God—and then the reward will come afterwards. God will not give to His people their full reward yet. Patience, then, Brother! Patience, Sister! Saturday night will come one of these days—your week's work will then be over and you will be more than repaid for anything you have done for your Lord!

37, 38. *For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.* The drawers back—the mere professors—those who say they have been illuminated and who have tasted, in a measure, the sweetness of religion, yet who never received Christ in their inmost heart—these are the people in whom God has no pleasure!

39. *But we.* What a consoling end this is to the chapter! It ought to comfort every Believer in Christ who has been distressed by the earlier verses! "But we"—

39. *Are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.* May that be true of all of us, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—681,533,708.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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

MOVING
NO. 2811

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 28, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 24, 1861

"If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here."
Exodus 33:15.

THIS is a prayer which has been used hundreds of times and which is found quite in place on many different occasions. Moses was in the wilderness when he uttered it. He was about to lead the people into Canaan, the land that flowed with milk and honey, yet he felt that he would rather continue to endure the inconveniences of the tent and of the wilderness, with the Presence of his God, than enjoy the rest and the fatness of the land of promise without Him. God had made the desert to become to Moses like a garden, but he felt that all the gardens of Canaan and the vineyards of Eshcol would be as nothing to him if God should withdraw His Presence.

Throughout the history of the Church of Christ, there have been particular places where men of God have been compelled to fall on their knees and pray this prayer of Moses. I can conceive of our Puritan forefathers, when they first left this spot, Southwark, to seek in another land the liberty which they could not find here, bowing their knees before they entered their little vessel, "The Mayflower," and crying to God, "If Your Presence go not with us, carry us not up hence." I can imagine John Bunyan—after he had been 12 years in prison and had become almost habituated to it, before he crossed the threshold, when the time of his imprisonment was over—looking upon the cold, damp walls of the prison on Bedford Bridge—and saying to his Lord, "If Your Presence go not with me, carry me not up hence." The immortal dreamer would rather abide in his "den" with his God than go forth into the world and leave his Master behind him!

Many a time, dear Friends, in your experience and mine, we also have had to feel the force of such a prayer as this. When, rather more than seven years ago, I left my kind and loving little flock at Waterbeach to come and preside over this great assembly, I could not help crying out to God, from my inmost soul, "If Your Presence go not with me, carry me not up hence." When you, Beloved, have to pass through any changes in life. When, in God's good Providence, you are removed from one sphere of service to another, I think that you, also, may look up to God in prayer

and say, "If Your Presence go not with us, carry us not up hence." And at last, when you and I shall be about to die, when the hour shall approach for us to leave this world behind us and to wade through the cold stream of death, what prayer can be more appropriate than this, "If Your Presence go not with us, carry us not up hence"? To go anywhere without our God is terrible—but to die without the Presence of God would be awful beyond expression. To go down into death's dark river with no kind helper, with no loving voice saying to us, "Fear you not, for I am with you; My rod and My staff shall comfort you," would be sad, indeed. It would be, indeed, a solemn thing to meet death alone, to have no Presence of God to cheer us in the last dread conflict!

I have thus mentioned various circumstances in which we might pray this prayer and expect a gracious answer to it. But I think, as a church and people, such a text as this is peculiarly appropriate at this time. We are about to leave this place, which has, to many of us, very hallowed associations. When some of our older friends left Carter Lane Chapel, which once stood on the site now occupied by the London Bridge railway, I have no doubt that they felt it to be a very dreadful thing to leave the old place. Yet, perhaps, it was one of the best things that could have occurred to the church—that they were obliged to come out and build a larger structure—although it is built, I suppose, in as bad a place as they could have found by a microscopic survey of this entire metropolis.

There are, doubtless, many who will always cherish great love for this place because here Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth before their eyes, crucified among them. I think all of these will join with us, who are younger, and therefore less subject to pain concerning changes, and we will all unite—despite all the advantages which we hope will follow our entering upon a larger and more public place of worship—despite the fact that three or four times as many will be able to listen to the Word of God as can listen to it here. Despite all this, we will unite in saying to our Lord, "'If Your Presence go not with us, carry us not up hence.' Here let us abide unless You, who are the true Shekinah, will go with us, and still shine forth from between the cherubim." I feel inclined to stop my sermon and to bow my head and ask you to bow yours, that we may together present this petition to our God. But, as you have already prayed by the mouth of two or three Brothers, I spread it before you and "stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance," and urge you to plead it in secret, and at your family altars, before your God—"If Your Presence go not with us, carry us not up hence."

I will arrange my subject under three heads. First, *what the Presence of God always involves.* Secondly, *what our present move involves.* And thirdly, *the sins by which God's Presence may be driven away and the means by which that Presence may still be secured to us.*

I. First, then, let us think WHAT THE PRESENCE OF GOD ALWAYS INVOLVES.

The one great need in the Church of Christ is the Presence of God. What is needed in our places of worship is not that they should be spe-

cimens of the highest style of architecture, although, certainly, God's House ought not to be meaner than our own. It is not necessary that they should be sumptuously adorned, although the greatest riches are not too much to be devoted to the service of God. It is not essential that rich people should be in the congregation, although there is a promise which says, "The daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall entreat your favor." It is not absolutely necessary that the minister should be eloquent or talented, although it is well that if a man has 10 talents, he should consecrate them all to Christ, since talent never glitters so much as when it is consecrated and given up to God. There are many things that the churches may need, or may not need, but, certainly, the one thing they need beyond everything else is the Presence of God! It was better for the Church of Christ in England when her members met together by tens and twenties in the woods and were hunted about by informers, and their ministers hauled off to prison—it was better for them to be persecuted and even put to death, in the conscious enjoyment of the Lord's Presence, than it would have been for them to have had such soft, gentle days as these, but not to have had their Lord with them!

It was better for the Church of Christ in Scotland when Cargill read his text by the lightning's flash and when the Covenanter's worshipped God in dens and caves at midnight, through fear of Claverhouse's dragoons—it was better for them to have their Lord with them in the midst of the snow and the tempest than to meet calmly and peacefully in a fine ceiled house from which the Lord Himself was absent! It would be far better for us to go back to the age of old barns, dingy thatched buildings and to the times of an uneducated ministry, when God's power was manifestly with His servants, rather than to go forward and to become great, mighty and intellectual—but to lack the Presence, power and blessing of the most High God! It is the Presence of God that makes the house glorious. Where He is, there is Glory—and where He is not—"Ichabod" is written on the wall, even though that wall should be covered with pure gold!

Why is God's Presence the one thing necessary for His Church? *Is it not God's Presence that makes joy in His sanctuary*? When are we most glad? Is it not when we consciously realize the Presence of our God? That puts more joy into our hearts than when our corn, wine and oil are increased. What is it that comforts the mourners in Zion? Is it not a sight of Jesus' face and a vision of His Glory? What handkerchief can wipe the weeping eyes like that which is held in the hand of a covenant-keeping God? Where is the balm for our wounds and the cordial for our fears, but in Him? "As the hart pants after the water brooks," so does our spirit cry out for God, even the living God—and unless we have His Presence, our soul refuses to be comforted!

Further, *what is it, but the Presence of God that makes His people holy*? Is it not because they see the face of Christ that they are transformed into His likeness? It is not mere teaching that can make a man Christ-

like. It is beholding Christ—Christ shining upon that man's face and the man reflecting the Light of God which he has thus received. The Presence of God is absolutely essential for the edification, instruction, growth and perfecting of Believers! If we have not this, the means of Grace are empty, vain and void. Clouds without rain that mock the thirsty land. Wells without water that tantalize the perishing caravan, but yield no moisture to burning lips—a mere mirage in the desert, looking like pools of water and fruit-bearing palm trees—but only mocking the wayfarer's gaze. We must have the Presence of God for His people's sake, for without Him they can do nothing!

And, my Brothers, *where is the power of our ministry with sinners unless we have the Presence of God*? We sow the seed, I grant you, but who prepares the soil and makes the furrows soft with showers? Who sends the genial sunshine? Would not the seed rot under the clods unless the heavenly Farmer watched over it and took care of it? There was never yet one sinner who was converted by man! It is not in man's power to create, nor is it in his power to new-create. Let a man first attempt to make a fly and if he succeeds in doing that, then let him try to make a new heart and a right spirit. Go, you who think you can do anything to change human nature, or change the Ethiopian's blackness into snowy whiteness, or remove the spots from the leopard's skin—go, check Niagara in its dashing might and make the stream leap upward and return to its source—go, bit the tempest, bind the clouds, bid the winds only howl to music and the waves dance in chorus—but when you have done all this, even then you may not hope to make a new heart and a right spirit by any ministry apart from the Spirit of God!

Ah, my Friends! We have had the Presence of God here [New Park Street] full often, as many of you can testify. If this were the time and place to do so, there are hundreds of you who could stand up and say, ". Christ met with me here, standing on yon spot where the crowd is now." Here, or there, or in the schoolroom—yes, and behind the pillar, too! There have been many of you who have heard the Word of God to purpose in this place. Drunks have strayed in here and some arrow from the bow drawn at a venture has reached their heart! The harlot has come into these aisles, on the way to the bridge to destroy herself—and Christ has met with her—and she now lives to praise His name. Here the thief, the burglar, the passer of bad money and the very worst and vilest of men have stepped in—and Christ has met with them, glory be to His holy name! No man shall stop me from this glorying as I remember how God has, right here, plucked brands from the burning. All the philosophers in the world have never, by their philosophy, worked such a work as the Gospel has worked here, for I can point to hundreds—I might probably with truth say *thousands*—of those who, having before scorned God and scoffed at His name, now love Him with all their heart and desire to live to His Glory—and who would be willing to die for His honor! You may tell this in Gath and publish it in the streets of Askelon—let the mighty men of Philistia tremble and let fear take hold of the sons of Moab, for God

has made bare His arm and smitten His enemies—and the old Gospel has proved itself worthy of its ancient prowess! God has triumphed gloriously and put to flight both our sins and our adversaries! But what would we do now without His Presence? It is He who has accomplished all that has been done, so again we cry to Him, "If Your Presence go not with us, carry us not up hence."

II. Secondly, consider WHAT OUR PRESENT MOVE INVOLVES.

We are about to move to our new Tabernacle. We must move. It is not even humane to continue to worship here. On the lowest ground of common humanity, it is not right that such a multitude of people should be crowded into so small a structure. With every attempt that we have made to get proper ventilation, it is not possible, in such a building as this— overcrowded as it is—that persons should be able to breathe in a healthy way. I feel it as the minister and I am quite certain that you must feel it as the congregation. If I ever by chance I see anybody asleep—and that has occurred, I think, only twice in the last seven years—it is no matter of astonishment to me—the wonder is that you do not all go to sleep under the influence of such unwholesome air as is often bred here by the multitudes.

But, on far higher grounds, we must go hence. Here, every Sabbath night, there are crowds in the streets. Let the faintest gleam of sunshine come out and there are many more obliged to go away than are able to enter this building. It is a pleasing thing that so many are willing to listen to the same minister for seven years right on. The glory must be given to God—but the responsibility is with us. If people will come to hear, the least thing that the Church of God can do is to find accommodation for them! The time was when many of us would almost have plucked out our right eye to get them to come. When they are anxious to come, it is but a small thing that we should provide a suitable structure where they may be housed. The theater services are, no doubt, a great blessing. To my mind, however, they lack one great essential for permanent success—not being connected with any distinct place of worship, whatever good may be done is scarcely heard of—great efforts are put forth with small apparent results. In the theater, the seed is sown, but there is no barn provided in which the harvest can be housed. If some two or three men could be found constantly to preach and if endeavors could be made to induce the people to advance from what is, after all, an irregular form of worship, to some place which should be their own spiritual home where they could worship God constantly, more permanent good to the Church of Christ-at-large would certainly result. We pray God to speed every effort for the proclamation of the Gospel, but we are most glad when there seems the greatest prospect of permanent success.

We must move, then, to our new Tabernacle, but still the prayer recurs, "If Your Presence go not with us, carry us not up hence." *We are going to a place concerning which we entertain great expectations.* We hope to see there vast multitudes attentively listening to the Word of God. We trust that many of these will be converted, that the Church will

be largely increased and that out of the Church there will spring up young men who will be good soldiers of Jesus Christ, men who will preach the Truth of God as it is in Jesus, throughout this land! And some of them, we hope, in far distant countries. But if God's Presence go not with us, our expectations will be vain, we shall have flattered ourselves with a pleasing picture which shall never be completed—we will have raised a cup to our lips, the sweet draught of which we shall never drink if God's Presence go not with us!

Next, *we are going to a place of great opportunities*. What opportunities you will all have for doing good—myself especially, though I certainly do not lack for opportunities. I have always before me a wide and open door. Oh, that I had the strength to do more and that there were more time in which I could work! Still, when some five or six thousand people are constantly being addressed, it is no small opportunity for usefulness. Who can tell how many holy thoughts may be inspired, how many wrong desires quenched, how many evil motives exposed, how many right designs prompted in human hearts? O Lord, You have, indeed, given to Your servant high opportunities, but what are these if Your Presence go not with us? They are opportunities that will be wasted. They are chances of attack upon the enemy that will certainly end in our own defeat if the Presence of God is not with us! It is the same with each of you in your measure—Sunday school teachers, I hope there will open up before you a far wider sphere. Ragged-school teachers, and you who distribute tracts, you who preach in the streets and all of you who feel any desire to do good to your fellow creatures—all of you, I think, will have presented before you a golden opportunity, the like of which seldom occurs! Pray, I beseech you—by all that is good and holy—I implore you to pray to God that His Presence may go with you, for, if not, these opportunities will all be thrown away! It would have been as well for you to have been obscure Christians in some remote hamlet of the Orkneys or Shetlands, where you could not reach a congregation without peril of your lives, as to be members of this largest of Dissenting Churches and yet not to have the Presence of God with you!

There is a still more solemn thought. *Our great house will involve greater responsibilities*. Many persons kindly suggest to me the solemnity of my position. I know I do not feel it as I might, but I do *realize* it as fully as I dare. I sometimes feel, in preaching to such multitudes, as a man must feel who walked along a tightrope and was always in danger of falling—and I shall fail if I look *down*. But if I look *up*, I can walk there even though Hell itself is foaming at my feet! There is no need of fear to the man who relies upon his God, but there is every reason for fear to the man who begins to rely upon himself. The Prophet Habakkuk says, "The Lord God is my strength, and He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and He will make me to walk upon my high places." So may it be with us, but what an awful responsibility it is! You know how the Lord said to the Prophet Ezekiel, "So you, O son of man, I have set you a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear the word at My mouth, and

warn them from Me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, you shall surely die; if you do not speak to warn the wicked from his ways, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at your hands."

I think I have chewed and masticated that text many times. My deacons know well enough how, when I first preached in Exeter Hall, there was scarcely an occasion in which they left me alone for ten minutes before the service, but they would find me in a most fearful state of sickness produced by that tremendous thought of my solemn responsibility. And, even now, if I ever sit down and begin to turn that thought over, and forget that Christ has all power in Heaven and in earth, I am always affected in the same way. I scarcely dare to look that thought in the face and I am compelled to put my responsibilities where I put my sins—on the back of the Lord Jesus Christ, hoping, trusting, believing, knowing, that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that Last Great Day.

You also have your responsibilities—you must be a holy people. "A city set on a hill cannot be hid." I never care what is said of me, except one thing. When I hear that any member of this Church has been betrayed into an unholy deed, that cuts me to the very quick. I had sooner that you should diminish by death one-half, than that there should be even one in a hundred who should fall into sin! It is sorrow enough to bury our friends, but it is a still greater sorrow to have to excommunicate them from fellowship or to censure them for misdeeds. You must be a holy people—nor less must you be an active people. If God has done so much for you and you begin to sleep upon your oars, or to sit still and say, "We have done enough, now we will be quiet," the curse of God will fall upon you! As surely as you are men or women, He has not brought you to this post of duty that you may cease your efforts or stand still! He puts you into the middle of the battle that you may fight with sterner vigor, that you may deal your blows with both your hands to win the battle for your Lord and Master! There are responsibilities that lie upon you as a Church that will utterly crush you unless this prayer is answered for you, "If Your Presence go not with us, carry us not up hence."

III. Thirdly, we are to consider THE SINS BY WHICH GOD'S PRESENCE MAY BE DRIVEN AWAY—AND THE MEANS BY WHICH THAT PRESENCE MAY BE RETAINED.

We can easily get rid of God's Presence *if we grow proud*. Stand inside your new house and say, "This great Babylon that I have built!" "And it will be a Babylon to you at once! Begin to say, "We are a great people, we can do anything that we wish! We have but to attempt and we can accomplish." Offer incense to your own acts. Bow down and worship your own sword as though it had gotten you the victory and the Lord shall say, and the ears of Christians shall hear it as distinctly as the Jews at the siege of Jerusalem heard the rustling of wings and a voice saying, "Arise, let us go from here." A proud heart is never God's palace—and a proud church will never be honored by the Lord.

Further, you can easily drive away the Holy Spirit *by sloth*. Be as lazy as some churches are, or do as little as they do. Be as little consecrated, as sleepy, as dull, as cold, as lukewarm as too many professing Christians are and you shall soon find that the Lord has withdrawn Himself from you. It is fire in the church that is constantly needed—Divine energy to quicken the whole man into an intense activity for his Lord and Master's cause! If you, as a church, fall into sloth, you will hear Him say, "This is not My rest. If it is the place of your sleep, you have polluted it and I will depart from you."

Disunion, too, among yourselves will soon cause the Holy Spirit to leave you. It has been my constant joy to see union in the Church. We are men and, therefore, we do not always see eye to eye with one another. But I trust that we are also Christians and, therefore, that we are always willing to bear with one another's shortcomings. I daresay that you have a good deal to put up with from me—I know that I have, sometimes, a good deal to put up with from some of you! Sometimes there is one person and at other times there is another person who would give offense—and it has been one part of my work, since I have been pastor, whenever the ship has sprung a leak, not to say much about it, but to pick the plug, myself, and to go down and drive it in and so stop the water from coming in at that place.

There are some of you who have often done similar work. This ship would have been scuttled long ago if it had not been for some loving spirits who would not let other people disagree. If any of you have disagreed, I hope you will settle your disagreements at once. If there are any dissensions, I hope you will leave them all behind at Park Street! If any of you are not perfectly at one with each other, we cannot expect God's Presence to go with us until these things are once and for all forgiven and forgotten! Let us feel as perfectly one as though we were all perfect men and women and may God always grant us such a spirit of mutual forbearance! May He give to us that charity which hopes all things, believes all things and endures all things—for then we shall have the Master's Presence. But without this, the Holy Spirit, who is the Dove, will never stay with us!

Furthermore, if we wish to have God's Presence taken from us, there is another quick way of securing that end—*that is by getting slack and slow in prayer*. The Prayer Meeting is the gauge of the Church's spiritual condition. You may always test our prosperity by the multitudes who assemble to pray. Yes, and if we could enter your families and hear how you pray there—and if my ear could be close to your closet door, that I might hear how you pray for the Church in private—then I would know how the Church will succeed! Grow lax and careless, here—do but cease to entreat the Lord for a blessing—and then He will say, "I will not bless this people. I will not give unto them, for they do not cry unto Me. My door of mercy shall not be opened to them, for they refuse to knock." O Beloved, let us be instant and earnest in prayer! And let us have more faith. I wish I could leave all my unbelief behind me and I wish you could

all do the same—it would be a blessed legacy, I am sure, to this Chapel—and the next person who comes to preach here would, I trust, sweep it all out! Oh, that we could get rid of our wicked distrust of our God and our suspicion of His faithfulness, our doubts as to His veracity, our troubles and our fears about the future! O Lord, help us to stay ourselves on You! May we now, as a Church and people, *expect* great things, *attempt* great things, *do* great things and *believe* great things! Then shall we see greater things than we have ever yet beheld! Give us more faith, Lord, and drive away our unbelief!

But how can we keep the Spirit of God with us, now that we are about to go to our new Tabernacle? We can do it by His aid, by cultivating those Divine Graces which are just the reverse of the evils I have mentioned. First, *we must be humble*. Walk humbly with your God, walk humbly towards one another, be patient towards all men. Brothers and Sisters, we must be willing to be *nothing*—we shall never be anything till we are willing to be nothing. If any man will be perfectly content to be nobody, he shall be somebody. But he who must be somebody shall be nobody. I have always noticed, in a somewhat wide observation of personal character, that the most assuming and pretentious are the least respected, but the most humble, disinterested, self-denying and even self-detracting, are those whom men delight to honor. Crown yourself and every fool will try to knock the crown off your head! Go crownless and there will be some who will be wise enough to say, "That man deserves a crown. Let us put one on his head." For Christ's sake as a Church, let us be humble.

Then, *let us be united*. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians, "I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord." They were two women, but even good women will sometimes quarrel. Perhaps you ask, "What did it matter that they were not of the same mind?" Ah, but they were members of the Church at Philippi, and the Apostle Paul did not like for even two women to disagree if they were members of the same Church! What shall I say of two male members of the Church—what shall I say of two aged members of the Church—what if I should look around me and say, "There are some who, I fear, are not perfectly at one with each other"? No, I will not say it. I will suppose that there are none in that condition, but if there are, let me now entreat them to be of the same mind in the Lord! What if one of them has an angry temper and the other has a hard disposition? What if one thinks he has a grievance and the other says that he is the one who ought to complain? What if one of you has spoken ill of another and he has spoken ill of you in return? Do not attempt to revive those old quarrels, but let them be buried! Come, let me throw the first handful of earth upon them. "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." Yet I must gratefully confess that I never knew, or heard, or read of a Church more thoroughly and intensely one than this Church is. But it may be that we have, in our midst, some such as I have been describing—and if so, I pray that if you

would have the Presence of God to go with us to our new sanctuary, you will see to it that all this evil is done away with once and for all!

Next to this, my dear Friends, let us go up into our new sanctuary with *a mind to work*. I do not think I ever have to whip you to work—I do get a great deal of work out of you. I always seek, whenever there is anything extra to be done, to preach Christ to you in such a way that you fall in love with Him over again and you *want* to do something more for Him than you have ever done before! You hardly know all that you have already done and I believe you are just as ready to build another new Tabernacle, now, as you were when we first began! You would have more faith, I daresay, concerning building a second than you had concerning the first. Let each man who has done nothing for the Master up to now, say, "I must begin to do something at once. Though I have been lazy at New Park Street, I must not be lazy in the new Tabernacle." You know that we are going near "The Elephant and Castle." Well, when we once get there, let every elephant carry his own castle, or, in other words, let every man bear his own burden—let every Christian do his own work—whether that service is the offering of prayer and praise, or the hewing of wood and the drawing of water for the House of the Lord.

Then, again, let us take care that we carry up to that new place, *fervent hearts full of prayer*. Come, Brothers and Sisters, let us fill our censers afresh before we start. Let us put in the frankincense and all manner of precious spices, and let us plead for the sacred fire to descend! And then let us stand, as long as that house stands, or we live, waving those censers between the living and the dead, praising the Lord for His mercies and praying to Him for yet further favors! I do not know how to plead with you as fervently as I wish to do, but I trust that I have set my text before you in such a way as to make you cry to the Lord, "If Your Presence go not with us, carry us not up hence."

Finally, let us ask *for greater faith*. When sailing in the little ship, you had the little man's faith. You are about to step on board the larger vessel, so seek to get larger faith in proportion to it. Suppose we all had three times as much faith as we now possess—might we not do three times as much work? Yes, but surely that will not be our limit, will it? No, Lord, give us 10 times as much faith! Take away our unbelief! Help us to believe Your Word and teach us to act as though we believed it! Then shall we see far greater things than we have ever yet seen.

My dear Friends, after all, the main objective of our ministry is the winning of souls to God. Have I any here who have listened to me for these seven years, but who are still unconverted? Oh, what if this last hour in this house should be the time of your conversion? Soul, are you willing to die without a hope in Christ? Surely not! You know yourself to be lost, ruined and undone. I pray you, just as you are, to make a confession of your guilt and come to Christ's Cross! He is just as willing to receive you, now, as He was when I first addressed you seven years ago! Though you have refused His invitation all these years, His heart still yearns with compassion over you. He has spared your life until now! He

has not cut down the old cumber-ground yet. Sinner, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved! O Spirit of God, change the sinner's heart! Give him faith that he may now cast himself on Christ! "Come now"—NOW, this moment—"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." May each one of us now pray the prayer of the penitent thief upon the cross, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom!" Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 SAMUEL 7:18-29.

Verse 18. *Then went King David in, and sat before the LORD.* This was not the usual Oriental posture of prayer, but David was mingling meditation with his supplication, so that his attitude was not according to ordinary rules.

18. *And he said, Who am I, O Lord GOD?* Why, you are David, the valiant man who slew Goliath! No, no, no—the man of God is nobody in his own esteem!

18, 19. *And what is my house that You have brought me up to now? 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?* No, it is not the manner of man in general, but it is the manner of the Man Christ Jesus!

20-22. *And what can David say more unto You? 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.* There is some sweet doctrine here! The Lord blesses David, not because of David's virtue, or David's merit, or David's prowess, but for His own sake—"For Your word's sake, and according to Your own heart, have You done all these great things, to make Your servant know them." The reason why streams of love flow from God is just this—it is according to His Nature. He is a fountain, so the blessing must flow from Him. He is a sun, so He must shine. It is not only because we need His love, but because, "God is Love," that His love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us. Now what is the inference from all this? Does David say, "Therefore, O Lord, I am great and honorable"? Oh, no! He has nothing to say in praise of himself! He says, "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."

23-25. *And what one nation in the earth is like Your people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to Himself, and to make Him a name, and to do for You great things and terrible, for Your land, before Your people, which You redeemed to You from Egypt, from the nations and their gods? For You have confirmed to Yourself Your people Israel to*

be a people unto You forever: and You, LORD, have become their God. And now, O LORD God, the word that You have spoken concerning Your servant and concerning his house, establish it forever, and do as You have said. What a blessed prayer this is, "Do as You have said"! Get hold of a promise of the Lord, take it to the Throne of Grace and then urge this plea, "Do as You have said." It is a good argument for every upright man to use when he reminds Him of His promise and asks Him to keep His pledged word. And we certainly may use this plea with the thrice holy God—"Do as You have said."

26. *And let Your name be magnified forever.* Or, "be greatened"—be made great "forever." Notice the way David returns to God the words that were addressed to himself. The Lord said to him, "I have made you a great name, like unto the name of the great that are in the earth." And David replies, "Let Your name be made great forever. You, Jehovah of Hosts, are God over Israel; if You have made me king, and if my throne shall be established, much more shall Yours."

26, 27. *Saying, The LORD of Hosts is the God over Israel: and let the house of Your servant David be established before You. For You, O LORD of Hosts, God of Israel.* Notice how the name of the Lord seems to grow in this chapter until here it comes to its full force, dignity and majesty—"You, O Jehovah of Hosts, God of Israel."

27. *Have revealed to Your servant, saying, I will build you an house: therefore has Your servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto You.* That is the best place to find a prayer—in your heart—no prayer comes up before God, with acceptance, but that which comes out of the very heart which should be like the sacred ark of old, wherein were hidden Israel's most precious things. God's words had gone right down into David's heart and touched the secret springs of it—and now they welled up in this blessed prayer!

28, 29. *And now, O Lord GOD, You are that God, and Your words are true, and You have promised this goodness unto Your servant: therefore now let it please You to bless the house of Your servant, that it may continue forever before You: for You, O Lord GOD, have spoken it.* There is that grand pleading again—"You, O Lord God, have spoken it." If you can remind God of His own promise, you may have whatever you will of Him. If He has said anything, His word shall surely be fulfilled.

29. *And with Your blessing let the house of Your servant be blessed forever.*

END OF VOLUME 48

[SEE VOLUME 7 FOR MANY SERMONS REGARDING THE BEGINNING OF WORSHIP IN THE "METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT."]

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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