CAUSES AND CURE OF FAINTING
NO. 2812

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 4, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 7, 1877.

"He gives power to the faint."
Isaiah 40:29.

THE connection in which these words stand is very suggestive. The previous verse says, "Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faints not, neither is weary. There is no searching of His understanding." He has the perfection of power and also of wisdom. Unbelief is based upon absurdity, but faith rests upon reason and fact. This may not, at first sight, seem to be true, but it really is. To believe in the almighty and all-wise God is the most rational thing in the world—to disbelieve Him is both the most wicked and the most irrational thing. When a child of God begins to distrust his Father, it must be because he doubts either God's memory or His power. It seems utterly absurd, as well as grievously wrong, to suspect the Lord of fainting or being weary. The moment we give utterance to such a sentiment, we feel as if we must at once withdraw the words. It is so altogether ridiculous and absurd to speak thus of Him who made the heavens and the earth and who supports all things by the word of His power! How can He fail or faint? The Self-Existent One, from whom all the power that ever was, or is, or shall be, and must primarily come—how can He fail or faint? Then would the sun grow dim at noon! Then would earth dissolve and Heaven pass away if once faintness could seize the Deity who supports all things!

We know better and we ought, therefore, to act better. And as we feel that He cannot faint or be weary, we ought not to harbor a single doubt concerning His fainting. How can He faint? It is He that gives power to the faint! When faintness comes anywhere, it does not come to Him—it comes to you who doubt. You are like a reeling man who thinks that it is the earth that reels, or like a person travelling in a train who, for the moment, forgets that he is moving and thinks that the trees and hedges are all swiftly rushing by him! It is not God who changes—it is you who have changed. It is not He that is weary—it is you who are weary. It is not He that is faint—it is you that are fainting. And here comes, in this blessed Truth of God, for your encouragement—that you may be revived from this faintness—instead of Him fainting, God, "gives power to the faint."

I. First, I will endeavor to answer the question, WHAT MAKES US FAINT?

We will first consider the case of the awakened sinner, the man who does not know that he is saved and who, perhaps, is not yet converted. But he is, to some extent, under the gracious influence of the Spirit of God, for he has been awakened from his sleep of sin and has begun to pray. It very commonly happens that when persons are in this condition, they are seized with faintness. What is it that makes them feel faint?

Well, first, they may very well faint, for *they have made a most alarming discovery*. They were not aware of their true position, but they suddenly find themselves lost. Their own righteousness, which appeared to them to be like fair, white linen, has proven to be only filthy rags. Their own merits, which seemed to them to be a great heap of gold, are shown to be just so much dross. They fancied that they were rich, increased with goods and had need of nothing, but they find themselves wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. They see themselves condemned of God on account of sin and they also see before them, with an awful astonishment, the burning lake of Hell—and they cannot tell whether their next step will not plunge them into the dread abyss from which there will be no escape! Is it amazing that when a man first realizes all this, he is filled with terror, the cold sweat stands on his brow and he is ready to faint? Indeed, if it were not for the goodness of God in only revealing the sinner's danger to him, in a measure, I would not wonder if when men saw themselves in their true state, they were to lose their reason!

It has not seemed at all strange to me that men have gone mad when they have suddenly found out where they were and where they were likely to be in a very short time! I have had to bless God that so few cases of that kind have occurred and I have never wondered when I have seen the horror and distress of mind of persons who have discovered their lost condition. Some of you who are now sitting very comfortably in your seats—if you only knew what it is to be already condemned because you have not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God—if you could but catch the meaning of these words, "He that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him." If you discovered that this was no myth, or fiction, but an awful reality, like a cloud charged with deadly electricity you, also, would be ready to faint!

Sometimes, too, awakened sinners faint for another reason, namely, that *they have tried to escape from their dangerous position, but they have not succeeded.* What long and laborious attempts at self-salvation, awakened souls will make! They will deny themselves many pleasures, they will subject themselves to a great deal of toil, they will resolve, pray, cry and fret—yet it all ends in failure. A man trying to save himself is like a prisoner on the treadmill, perpetually stepping, but never mounting an inch higher. He is like a blind horse in a mill—he goes round, and round, and round, but makes no real advance. What can he do? He is trying to weave a substantial garment out of spiders' webs! He is attempting, with worthless works, to make a perfect righteousness! It was no small blessing for Israel when it could be said of them, "He brought down their heart

with labor; they fell down and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses." The sooner an end comes to all self-righteous attempts to obtain salvation, the better! Then does the man's soul faint within him. Then is he like one who is at sea in a storm, who has tugged at the oar, or has tried to use the sail, but can make no headway, or escape the fury of the tempest. "They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end." Thus are they faint.

We have known some grow so faint through a sense of sin and dread of its punishment—and a consciousness of their own inability to save themselves—that *they have even wished to die.* Yet, when they have looked at their condition aright, they have asked themselves what use death would be to them? It would be as when a man escaped from a lion and a bear slew him. Or as if a weary man leaned upon a wall and a serpent that was hidden in a cranny, bit his hand. For a man, loaded with sin, to die, is for him to be damned! Well might he choose to die if death meant annihilation—but there is that dread of something after death, that appearing before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that terrible sentence from Him that sits upon the Throne of God, "Depart, you cursed!" This is what makes a man faint and causes him to dread both to live and to die. Then does he say, with Job, "My soul chooses strangling and death rather than my life." Yet he dare not actually choose it, for he dreads what would come after it. So he is faint, and well may he be!

Perhaps also, at such a time, *a sore trouble may happen to the man,* for, in the parable of the prodigal son, it appears that he was quite as much influenced by the peculiar circumstances without as by his sense of sin within. We have often known the soul that has been under distress because of sin, to also fall into distress through temporal trouble. It has seemed as if the hand of God had gone out against him and he cries out in his agony, "You hunt me as with fierce dogs that would gladly tear me to pieces! You make me the target of all Your arrows. You do not give me space in which to swallow my spittle between one trial and another!" Then the troubled soul faints beneath the hand of God who seems to say to him, "You have sinned against Me; and if you faint, now that I have begun to deal with you, what will you do by-and-by? If, in the land of peace, wherein you trust, My hand is too heavy for you, what will you do in the swellings of Jordan? If you faint when I do but come against you with footmen, what will you do when you have to contend with horses—when I put forth My might to punish My rebellious creatures?" When this happens, the soul is utterly brought into the dust of death, ground down, faint and ready to die."

Now I pass on to another character, namely, the child of God in his fainting fits, but fainting fits of a peculiar class which are especially sinful—for there is a degree of sinfulness about some of these faintings which is not to be found in others. For instance, *sometimes the children of God faint through lack of faith.* David said, "I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." So, the cure for fainting is *faith*—and, therefore, the best way to prevent fainting

is to believe. He who believes shall not fall into this state of pain, prostration, inaction and similitude of death. Child of God, are you fainting because you do not believe your Father's promises? I must not begin to comfort you until, first of all, I have rebuked you! Why do you doubt your God? On what ground do you distrust His faithfulness? Have you ever had cause to think that He will fail you? Put your finger on anything that He has ever done to you that will give you even a shadow of justification for mistrust of Him! O Man, if unbelief is at the bottom of your faintness, repent of it and pray to be forgiven! Surely the Lord deserves to be trusted by His own children, if not by anybody else! If anyone will persist in distrusting Him, led it be the sinner. But as for you, the chosen people of His love, the favored ones of His heart—will you doubt Him? A man might bear almost anybody's distrust sooner than that of his beloved wife or darling child—and shall the Lord have distrust from you whom He has so highly favored by His own eternal love? Pray Him both to forgive and to banish your unbelief!

Again, some are brought into a state of faintness *through a selfish need of resignation*. A specimen of that kind of character was that strange-tempered old Prophet, Jonah. You remember that "the Lord God prepared a gourd and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceedingly glad of the gourd. But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day and it struck the gourd that it withered…And the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, so that he fainted and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live. And God said to Jonah, Do you well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry even unto death." It was not only the heat of the sun that caused him to faint—it was also the heat of his temper! Evil tempers inside of us do more to cause us to faint than all the sultry weather outside of us. If we will not let God have His way with us. If we are like children in a tantrum and begin quarrelling with our Father, or with one another. If we try to be masters in God's house and lords over God's heritage, seeking to rule His household according to our own will and way—do you wonder that when we get into the sulks, by-and-by, we begin to faint? Some of those who have lost dear children seem as if they will not forgive God for taking them. They keep on fretting and pining for years after the bereavement. They go to the drawer and take out the little socks and the toys—and weep over them in a fashion which shows that they are not resigned to the will of God. It is not for us to harshly censure them, but I think it is for them to cease from such a rebellious course of action and to ask God that they may not faint through a lack of obedience and resignation to His will.

There are children of God, also, who fall into faintness *through trusting in themselves*. In the chapter from which our text is taken, it is said, "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall." Why is that? It is because the youths felt themselves able to do anything! Up or down, mile after mile, they could leap, run and jump, for they were so strong. And then, at last, they fainted, for they had nothing

to sustain them but their own strength. And as for the young men—they said that the boys were always so impetuous and spent their strength too soon, but they, themselves, had staying power—so they felt that they could keep up the pace. But the Prophet says, they "shall utterly fall." So will it be with any of us who begin to trust in our own strength! Before long we shall come to the end of our force. The strongest sinew in an arm of flesh will crack, sooner or later. The brightest thought of the most brilliant intellect will one day die out in darkness. Being made of clay and being born of woman, we cannot expect that we should last forever. The worst of it is that this faintness will sometimes come to the strong just when they most need all their strength—when they feel, "If ever we needed all our wits about us and all the vigor of our physical frame, it is now." It is just then that the collapse will probably come, for faintness is sure to follow if we once begin to trust in ourselves!

Then faintness may also arise from another cause which is sinful, namely, *neglect of prayer*. Did not our Savior say that "men ought always to pray, and not to faint"? And did He not imply by that form of expression that if they did *not* pray, they would be sure to faint? We have a choice of these two courses—either to wait upon the Lord and so to renew our strength, or else to be overpowered by faintness. Is the path to your secret place of prayer overgrown? Do you seldom retire for private fellowship with your God? Has your heart forgotten your privilege of momentary, continuous communion with the Most High? Do you live as though you had quarreled with God and would have no more dealings with Him? If so, you will surely faint before long—and it is a blessed thing for you that it should be so, for it would be truly terrible for us to appear to be strong without prayer. It is a sign of something radically rotten within when a man can apparently be just as holy and as earnest without prayer as he is with it. You cannot really know the power of the life of God if you are able to live without prayer, for, just as a man who is unable to breathe, soon faints, so must a person spiritually faint if he does not pray.

Now I am going to mention some other reasons why children of God fall into faintness. And one is *the length of the way*. Some pilgrims faint because the way is so very long. We can do a great deal at a spurt, but we are not able to keep it up. We have a great many people who come among us and who even enter the Church who are splendid fellows for a short time. If they could get to Heaven in a one mile race, they would surely win the prize, but they have no staying power in them. They are like those Galatians to whom the Apostle Paul wrote, "You did run well; who did hinder you that you should not obey the truth?" What is needed is perseverance in well-doing, perseverance under slights, misrepresentations and slanders, perseverance when it means tugging and toiling at the oars, perseverance when there is no smile of recognition, but when there is many a frown from those who misjudge your work. And it is under such difficulties that men are apt to faint. It is not even 10 or 20 years of an unsullied profession that will suffice—our Lord said, "He that endures *to the end* shall be saved." You would not care to live in your

house if it were only half built—you must go on to the crowning of the edifice if it is to be fit for a habitation. Who that has realized how great are the difficulties of persevering in Divine Grace does not feel that, for this task, we must have Divine power? Otherwise, however far we may have gone, we shall tire, faint and walk the ways of God no more. I know of no doctrine that seems to me to show such a splendor of Divine Grace as the doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints, for if the Lord does, indeed, keep His people faithful to the end, as He assuredly will, then is it a veritable marvel of Grace, for, oftentimes, they are ready to faint by the way.

Others are ready to faint *because of the heaviness of their burden*. We are not all burdened alike, but, I daresay, if we could form a right estimate, we should find that we are more equally weighted than we imagine. Sometimes the poor judge that they have a monopoly of trouble, but if they could see how much unhappiness there is in the homes of some of those who are rich, or the lack of health that is the lot of many who live in the midst of abundance, they might be more content to carry their own cross. Yet are there some to whom the burden is peculiarly heavy. Some of God's children seem pressed down under double loads and they are often ready to faint. The remedy for their condition is to get double Grace and double strength from the Lord their God, but, until they do, their soul will feel faint and weary.

Another frequent cause of your faintness is *a sense of your own weakness*. It is not that your burden is really heavier than it was, but you do not feel as if you can carry it any longer. The flesh is weak and the spirit sympathizes with the flesh, and grows weak, too. You cannot do what you did when you were younger. The difficulties which you once smiled at, now oppress you. By reason of the length of your years, the grasshopper has become a burden! Well, then, you must look to the Strong for strength and then no faintness will overpower you—but if you do not, your weakness will soon bring you into a sad state.

Yet another frequent cause of faintness is *the spirit, itself, sinking*. There is a certain condition in which the heart seems to go down, down, down, down, down. I know not how to describe it, but everybody who has ever had that painful experience knows what it is. You can hardly tell why you are so depressed—if you could give a reason for your despondency, you might more easily get over it, but, like David, you cry to your own heart, "Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted within me?" You try to argue with yourself to find out the reason why you are so despondent and why you look at the black side of everything and imagine that things will go amiss which will turn out right, after all. Your friends tell you that you are nervous, and there is no doubt that you are, but that does not alter the case. I will not blame you. I will, however, say to myself, and urge you to say to yourself, "Hope you in God: for you shall yet praise Him, who is the health of your countenance and your God." Better still, I pray our sympathizing Savior will say to you, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in

Me"—and on His loving bosom you will leave all your sorrows and your cares.

There are some children of God who get faint *through lack of spiritual food*. There are some Christians who are so situated that they cannot get proper nourishment for their souls. It is not in every country village or town that Jesus Christ is so preached that the souls of God's people are fed. And among all the troubles a godly man can have, a dreary Sabbath is about the worst—when the sheep look up, but they are not fed—when it is not the Gospel that is preached, but another gospel, which is no Gospel at all—when there are fine words and grand elocution, but nothing for the heart to stay itself upon. In such circumstances it is small wonder if the best of God's children begin to faint! Be thankful, Brothers and Sisters, if you are privileged to enjoy a soul-feeding ministry! And if you are not so favored, try to make up for it by being doubly diligent in searching the Scriptures and feeding upon the Word in private.

Still, at the same time, it is a great deprivation to a child of God if he is not supplied with spiritual food. I thought it was a good prayer of the deacon who thanked God that the minister had put the food down in a low rack where the sheep could get at it. There are some who put the provender in such a high rack that it could only be reached by giraffes! God's children need to have the Bread of Life broken up in small pieces for them, and to have the Truth of God made very simple and plain so that they can understand it. May all of us who teach or preach always try to do that and, remembering the folly of others, let us avoid it ourselves!

Sometimes, God's children also faint *when they are in adversity*. Solomon said, "If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small." That is true and our strength is often thus proved to be small. Many a man who thinks that he is rejoicing in the Lord, is really rejoicing in his prosperity—but adversity tries him—it is to him what the fining pot is to silver. Under adversity, we begin to faint and especially if, coupled with that adversity, there is the rebuke of God. Oh, how we faint when we are rebuked of Him! I know of nothing that more readily makes a man faint than that God should look at him with angry eyes. He has trouble in the home and no consolation. He has loss of property, but, above all, loss of fellowship with his God! The promises are no longer sweet to him. Prayer is like a dead letter. Waiting upon God seems to be in vain. The Lord says to those who are in this condition, "I have withdrawn Myself from you. As you have walked contrary to Me, I also will walk contrary to you." Under such circumstances, it is necessary for the child of God to ask for more Grace and strength so that he may wrestle and pray until he gets a blessing. But the tendency of the poor deserted spirit is to begin to faint because the Lord seems to be favorable no more.

There are some who become faint *through increasing infirmity* which makes them unfit for such service as they formerly rendered. When David, in his later years, went out to battle against the Philistines, we are told that he waxed faint and would have been slain by a giant if Abishai had not succored him. Yet, in former days, he had killed a lion and a bear, and the great Goliath of Gath! It was a dreadful thing for David to

wax faint at such a time as that, just in the middle of the fray, but a like experience has happened to many of the Lord's champions in order to teach His people that the best of men are but men at the best—and that the strongest of them are only strong in God's strength—and that they will be as weak as water if the Lord should leave them to themselves!

II. Now I want to show you how the Lord deals with His fainting people—"He gives power to the faint. I must just briefly mention many points, that you may meditate upon them at your leisure.

See how tenderly the Lord deals with His fainting people. He does not desert them when they are faint, saying, "They are no longer any use to Me. They can do nothing for Me, I will leave them where they are." No, but, "He gives power to the faint." Observe that He does not merely comfort the faint, or rebuke or reprove them. That would not help them much when they were fainting. But He does what we cannot do for fainting people—He *gives them power*. That is the best way to deliver them from their faintness! Even if no cheering word is whispered in your ear, if power is given to you, if your pulse is quickened and your spirit is filled with new energy, your faintness will soon be over. This is what the Lord does for you when "He gives power to the faint."

What sort of power does He give to the faint? Well, you may be sure that *He does not give them any of their own*. That has all gone from them. The very image of death is stamped upon them. See how pale they look! Note how the blood seems to have fled from their faces—their own power has all gone from them. So, my Brothers and Sisters, when the Lord gives power to the faint, it is His own power that He gives to them! What a blessing it is to feel that it is His power that is working in you! To attain such an end as that, a man may well be content to have all his own power bled out of him. Let it run out at every vein till the last drop of it is gone, that I may then be filled with the power of God! He gives His power to the faint because, in their faintness, there is room for the display of His power. Their power has all departed, so now His power comes in.

When God gives power to the faint, you may rest assured that *it will be sufficient for the emergency*, for He has all-sufficient power and He never gives to His people merely half the power or a tenth of the power that they need—He gives them all the power that they require! His promise is, "As your days, so shall your strength be."

The mercy is that the power that God gives is a *power that the devil can neither defeat nor take away*. If He has given you that power, it shall be yours as long as you need it. That power neither man nor devil can take away from you, but, through it, you shall be enabled to tread down all your adversaries and conquer all your difficulties. There is wondrous power in the weakness which leads us to faint away on the bosom of God and so to be made strong in the Lord and, in the power of His might, to swoon into unconsciousness and then to find our all-sufficiency in our God! To get out of life of a carnal kind by swooning into the image of death and then being raised into newness of life by the resurrection power of the Lord Jesus Christ! That is the kind of power which God gives to the faint.

Why is it that He gives this power to the faint? Well, I think it is because in His great goodness *He looks out for those who need it most.* As we, if we are wise, give our alms to the most destitute, God gives His power to those who require it most—those who are fainting for lack of it.

Then, next, He gives it to them because *they will praise Him most for it.* When the fainting ones receive the power that God gives to them, they will say that it is of the Lord and not of themselves.

They will be the people to receive this power because *they will be sure to use it.* I think that when a person who has been faint, receives power from God, he will likely be sympathetic, tender and gentle towards others. At least that is how he should be. If a man is always strong, how can he sympathize with God's weak and afflicted people? I have known a dear Brother who has never had an hour's illness in his life, seek to sympathize with me when I have been in great pain. But it was like an elephant trying to pick up a pin—he cannot do it, it is not in his line. But he who has been faint and *then* has received power from God is the man who knows what faintness means—and so is gentle towards other fainting ones as a nurse is with the little child committed to her charge. Hence the Lord entrusts power to His fainting children because He knows that they will be sympathetic and use it wisely and well.

What, Beloved Friends, is the conclusion that we may draw from our text? Is it not this? If God gives power to the faint, let us be thankful if we have fainted and have been revived by Him. I do not refer to any sinful kind of fainting when I speak thus, but I mean what the Apostle Paul means when he says, "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." But let us have done with fainting for the future because, if God gives power to the faint, if He has given us His power, we ought to have no more fainting, now that we have received God's power! So let us henceforth seek to live in the energy of that Divine might above the faintness to which the flesh is prone.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 40.

Verse 1. *Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God.* "They need it, and they shall have it. Mind, O My servants, that you give it to them. Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God."

2. *Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she has received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins.* The first meaning of these words was that, as Jerusalem had passed through a time of great tribulation, she should have a season of rest. But the grand Gospel meaning to you and to me is that our Lord Jesus has fought our battle and won the victory for us—that He has paid our debt and given to Divine Justice the double for all our sins and, therefore, our iniquity is pardoned! One would think this is enough to make anyone happy. It is the best thing

that even Isaiah could say, or that God, Himself, could say by the mouth of Isaiah, when his object was to comfort the Lord's tried people.

3, 4. *The voice of him that cries in the wilderness, Prepare you the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain.* When God means to come to men, nothing can stop Him or block up His road. He will level mountains and fill up valleys, but He will come to His people somehow or other. And when He comes to them, if He finds many crooked things about them, He will make the crooked straight and the rough places He will make plain.

5. *And the Glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD has spoken it.* And since He has spoken it, it must come to pass. "Has He said, and shall He not do it?" With Him, to say anything is to will its accomplishment!

6-8. *The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withers, the flower fades: because the Spirit of the LORD blows upon it: surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades: but the word of our God shall stand forever.* Yes, the dearest ones that we have are but flesh, so they wither and pass away like the green herb. Have you been bereaved, my believing Friend? Well, you may still say to your Lord, in the words of our hymn—

"How can I bereaved be,
Since I cannot part from Thee?"

The mower with the sharp scythe cuts down the grass, but he cannot touch the secret source of our hope, joy and confidence in God and, above all, he cannot touch the God in whom we confide!

9. *O Zion, that brings good tidings, get you up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that brings good tidings, lift up your voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!* If the chief, the best, the holiest city has found her God. If Jerusalem has been thus favored, let her sing the gladsome tidings over the hilltops to the most distant cities of the land and say to them, "Behold your God!" If you have seen your Lord, Beloved, proclaim the good news to those who have well-nigh forgotten that there is a God. Say to them, "Behold your God! He is still to be seen, by the eye of faith, working graciously in the midst of the earth."

10-11. *Behold, the lord GOD will come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him: behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.* He knows their weakness, their weariness, their pain and how incapable they are of speedy and long travelling. He is very tender and full of pity and He will gently lead them.

12-14. *Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out Heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being His counselor has*

taught Him? With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of judgment, and taught Him knowledge, and showed to Him the way of understanding? And yet, Beloved, we sometimes act as if *we* were God's teachers, as if we had to instruct Him in what He should do! And because we cannot see our way, we almost dream that He cannot. And because we are puzzled, we conceive that Infinite Wisdom must be at a nonplus—but it is not so. He was full of wisdom when there was no one with whom He could take counsel—and He is still wise in the highest degree!

15. *Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket.* Not a bucketful, but just a drop that remains in the bucket after you thought it had been completely emptied.

15. *And are counted as the small dust of the balance.* Remember that this is said of "the nations." China, India, Europe, Africa—with all their teeming multitudes are only like the small dust of the balance that is blown away by the slightest puff of wind!

15, 16. *Behold, He takes up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon.* With all its forests of cedar. "Lebanon"—

16. *Is not sufficient to burn.* Think of all the cedars of Lebanon as being on fire, like some great forest fire, yet not being sufficient to supply the wood for God's altars!

16. *Nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering.* Whether it is the wild or the tame beasts that are on the mountain range, they are not sufficient for a burnt offering unto the Most High.

17. *All nations before Him are as nothing; and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity.* As if they were the mere shadow of something and had no more influence over Him than as if they did not exist!

18. *To whom, then, will you liken God?* This is a strong argument against idolatry, against the worship of God under any visible form whatever—"To whom, then, will you liken God?"

18. *Or what likeness will you compare unto Him?* The heathen did make these supposed likenesses of God. Here is a description of the process by which they manufactured their idol gods.

19. *The workman melts an engraved image, and the goldsmith spreads it over with gold.* The rough metal is cast in a certain fashion and then the goldsmith puts on it his thin plates of gold,

19. *And casts silver chains.* To adorn it.

20. *He that is so impoverished that he has no offering.* The poor man who cannot manage to make a god of gold—

20. *Chooses a tree that will not rot.* A good piece of heart of oak or enduring elm.

20. *He seeks unto him a cunning workman to prepare an engraved image, that shall not be moved.* Fix it firmly, drive the post down far into the earth so that it may be an immovable god!

21-26. *Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is He that sits upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers, that stretches out the heavens as a curtain,*

and spreads them out as a tent to dwell in: that brings the princess to nothing. He makes the judges of the earth as vanity. Yes, they shall not be planted, yes, they shall not be sown: yes, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and He shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble. To whom, then, will you liken Me, or shall I be equal? says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high. Suppose it to be night time—"Lift up your eyes on high"—

26. *And behold who has created these things.* These wondrous worlds, these stars that sparkle in the firmament!

26. *That brings out their host by number.* For God knows the number of them all and the name of every separate world that moves in the vast expanse of space!

26. *He calls them all by names. By the greatness of His might and the strength of His power, not one fails.* They are not propped up with pillars, nor hung upon some mighty ropes, yet they continue to occupy the spheres appointed to them by God. He hangs the world upon nothing and keeps it in its place by the perpetual out-going of His power!

27. *Why say you, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God?* What? When He has not forgotten one of all those mighty hosts of stars and when not a sparrow falls to the ground without His notice—how can you *dream* that He has forgotten you, or that your way is hidden from Him?

28-31. *Have you not known? Have you not heard that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faints not, neither is weary? There is no searching of His understanding. He gives power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint.*

—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, AND THE PATH TO IT
NO. 2813

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 11, 1903,

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 7, 1877.

"You will show me the path of life: in Your Presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand there are pleasures forevermore."
Psalm 16:11.

I THINK YOU must have noticed, while I was reading the Psalm from which my text is taken, that I expounded it partly concerning David and partly concerning David's Lord, Jesus, the Messiah. It often happens, in the Psalms, that you can scarcely tell whether it is David, or Jesus, or both of them to whom the writer is referring. Oftentimes you lose sight of David, altogether, and are quite certain that he is not there, while, at other times, the words seem equally suitable either to David, the type, or to Jesus the antitype. I think that this fact is very instructive to us. It looks as if the Holy Spirit intended, even in those ancient times, to let God's saints know that there is a mysterious union between Christ and His people, so that almost all things which may be said concerning Him may be said, also, concerning those who are in Him. They are so completely one, they are so intimately united in bonds of mystic, vital, eternal union, that it would not be possible to always keep the sayings concerning them apart. As two bank-divided streams flow side by side for a while and, at last, melt into one river—and you can scarcely say which river it is when they are joined in one—so Christ and His Church are united in one mighty stream and, therefore, what is said of the one may, at least in some sense, be said of the other. O Christian, treasure up this precious thought! You are one with Jesus and, consequently, much that is said concerning Him may also be said concerning you!

In this 16th Psalm we are sure that there is a clear reference to the Savior because to no one but to Him could these words be absolutely applied, "You will not leave my soul in the abode of the dead; neither will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption." All other bodies see corruption, but His holy body did not. His birth was not according to carnal generation. His Human Nature was perfect, untainted by evil. Such a body belongs to no one else, so these words are, in the fullest sense, only applicable to our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet we feel no hesitation, as Believ-

ers, in taking them to ourselves, at least to a very large extent, remembering that our Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "Because I live, you shall live also." And that He prayed, "Father, I will that they also, whom you have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory." This proves that we, also, shall tread the path of life which He has trod—that the Presence of His Father, in which He is glorified, is that same Presence which will make our Heaven! That the right hand of God, at which He sits, is the place to which He will also exalt *us* and that the pleasures forevermore, in which He Himself rejoices, are the very pleasures with which He will indulge our souls, for it is His purpose that His joy shall abide in us that our joy may be full.

This brings us to our text, in which there are two things of which I am going to speak to you. First, *an assurance as to the untrodden path.* And, secondly, *an assurance as to the life to which that path leads.*

I. First, then, we have here AN ASSURANCE AS TO THE UNTRODDEN PATH—"You will show me the path of life."

If you take these words as referring to Christ, they must apply to Him as Man. As a Man, He was to die. His soul was to be, for a little while, separated from His body, yet, even as a Man, He spoke with perfect confidence to His Father. You remember that His dying words were, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit." "And having said this, He gave up the ghost." He spoke with the full assurance that His Father would show Him "the path of life." Where did the spirit of Christ go when it left His body? In what mysterious way it entered at once into Paradise, it is not for us even to *guess*. There have been a great many questions raised in the Christian Church, in all ages, concerning this matter. Some, taking the words literally, have said that Christ descended into Hell and they have even ventured to affirm that He preached to the dead and delivered the spirits that were in that awful prison. All that kind of talk seems to me very like that which come from dreamland! We know, from our Savior's own declaration, that He was in Paradise the very day that He died, for He said to the penitent thief, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." But whatever pathway the human soul of Jesus took, it was not unguided—His Father showed to Him, "the path of life."

His sacred body had to lie three days in the tomb, but it was not corrupted in the least degree. Dr. Watts very sweetly sings—

"There the dear flesh of Jesus lay,
And left a long perfume."

That body, lying in Joseph's sepulcher, wrapped in linen and sweet spices through the love and kindness of Christ's disciples, must rise again—and once more the Father showed to His Son, "the path of life." How it came to pass that the Spirit of God worked upon that precious body and raised Jesus from the dead, we cannot tell, for the work of the Spirit is secret and mysterious. But those blessed eyes of Jesus opened again and the pulses of His human heart began to beat once more—and He stood

upon those dear feet that had been pierced by the nails and He unwound the napkin from His head with those very hands that had been fastened to the Cross, but which would never again suffer pain, for He had risen from the dead no more to die! As the first-born from the dead, His Father had showed to Him, "the path of life."

Then, after tarrying here a little longer—that His re-united soul and body might dwell, for 40 days or so, in the midst of His disciples, that they might be quite sure that it was His own body that had risen from the dead and His own soul that communed with them—He led them out to Olivet and once again His Father showed Him "the path of life."—

"Then He arose ascending high,
And showed our feet the way."

His disciples beheld Him ascend while He was blessing them. And they gazed upon Him as He ascended, until a cloud hid Him from their astonished gaze. And we are expressly told that at the appointed time He shall come again in like manner as they saw Him go up into Heaven. Truly, in Him was fulfilled the Psalmist's confident declaration, "You will show me the path of life." We can easily imagine that as He passed through that cloud, the angels came to meet Him—squadrons of bright beings from the courts of Heaven hurried down to do Him homage and to escort Him back to the Glory which He had with the Father before He came to sojourn here below! It seems to me to be not merely poetry, but a matter of fact that they did then sing, "Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be you lift up, you everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in." And He did enter the gates and went straight to the Throne of God which His Father had appointed as the grand reward of His victory—and there He sits—and will continue to sit until His foes are made His footstool!

Thus you see that our text is true concerning our Lord Jesus Christ—and it is also true concerning all who are in Christ—and each of us who is trusting in Him may, with the hand of faith, grasp this Divine assurance, "You will show me the path of life." I feel quite enamored of this portion of my text and would be perfectly content if I had only to preach from it. *You,* O my God, You who know everything, You will show me the path of life! There is no other guide like You, my God. I trust no priest, no man like myself, nor even an angel. You, who did lead Your people through the wilderness by the cloudy, fiery pillar, You will show me the path of life!

And You will show it to *me*—unworthy as I am—just as if I were the only traveler upon life's rough way. You will devote Your wisdom and Your strength to me, taking me by the hand and leading me, as a father leads his child. You will be gentle and patient with me and when I am so blind that I cannot see my way, You will go before me and say to me, "This is the way; walk you in it."

And, my Lord, as there is only one "path of life," you will show *me* the path. It is but a narrow track and it runs clean contrary to the broad way that leads to destruction. You will show me the path, O Lord, and guide my feet into it! When I know not which way to turn, to the right or to the left, You will show me the path—I know that You will!

And it will be the path of *life* that You will show me. I shall not live in a kind of living death, as others do, but I shall be really quickened by Your Holy Spirit. In that path, I shall find life and, by that path, I shall receive yet more of life and, at last, I shall attain to the perfection of life and see You in the Glory-Life above, far more fully than I can ever see You in the Grace-Life below.

Thus you see that every word is precious and full of meaning, but just for a moment think of the complete sentence, "You will show me the path of life." That is true, my Brothers and Sisters, about the whole of your life while you are here. You will not be misled if you trust in God! Your own supposed wisdom will surely lead you astray if you follow its guidance, but trust in the Lord and you shall be rightly guided in all times of trouble and difficulty. And when you come to die. When you are, indeed, entering upon a new and untrodden path, the Lord will still show you the path of life. He will teach you the way to be confident even when the dewdrops of death lie cold and clammy upon your brow. He will show you the way to meet your last great adversary without a fear and without even a tremor—and He will teach you how to find life in death and how to triumph in the last dread conflict! Think of what will happen when the parting moment comes and the spirit is launched upon a sea it never traversed before. It leaves the familiar precincts of the house of clay and finds itself stripped and unclothed, and it cries, "Oh, where shall I go? In that unknown land without a track, where shall I go?"

You need not ask that question, Brother, Sister, or, if you do, you can give the answer, "You will show me the path of life." Up to the realms where angels dwell, borne up on eagle wings, you shall ascend to Heaven! God Himself will stoop from Heaven to be your Guide and He will take you to dwell, as a pure spirit, at His right hand. The ages will speed on and, in due time, there will ring out the mighty blast of the Resurrection trumpet! Where will my body be then? These limbs, all moldered back to dust. These eyes vanished from human kin. The whole mortal fabric dissolved and returned to mother earth. Ah, my Lord! But I shall not have to raise myself from the grave, I could not work that miracle of resurrection—my bones have not to come together to their fellow bones by their own power. God will teach each atom to come to its fellow and each individual life will be identified the same as before, yet wondrously changed! I know not how it will be, but God knows, and He will show us, "the path of life," the way to be conformed to the image of Christ, the way to attain to the perfection of life everlasting! This is the path that no

eagle's eyes have ever seen and no lion's whelp has ever trod, yet, in blissful confidence I may die and rise again, for the Lord will show me, "the path of life."

Is not this a blessed Truth of God? Then drink it in and if you have any fears of death, let them all fly away as you meditate upon this comforting assurance which your Lord, Himself, has so graciously revealed to you!

II. Now, secondly, we have, in our text, AN ASSURANCE AS TO THE LIFE TO WHICH THAT UNTRODDEN PATH LEADS—"In Your Presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand there are pleasures forevermore."

Concerning that life, we are told, first, *the place where it is to be spent.* Many people ask, "Where is Heaven?" Others enquire, "Is there such a place at all?" Assuredly, there is such a place, but where it is, I cannot tell. Some have imagined that, possibly, it is in the central star of our solar system, Alcyone in the constellation of the Pleiades. We may dismiss the conjecture as soon as we have heard it and not be any the better for having heard it! What we do know, however, about Heaven, is that it is in the Presence of God. Do you know, Beloved, what the "Presence of God" means? Yes, in a feeble sense, you have realized it when, in His House and, especially at His Table, He has unveiled His face. When the King has been with us—when we have consciously felt that we were in the royal Presence, we have sung—

"No beams of cedar, or of fir,
Can with His earthly courts compare."

But what must it be to be in His Presence when relieved from the burden of this flesh for a while, or when it is refined and purified—when the dimness that is now in our eyes shall all be gone and the unclouded Glory of God shall shine upon us? A poor prisoner who has seen a little gleam of light down in his dismal dungeon, knows something about the sun, but what a difference there must be between his knowledge of the great orb of day and that which is possessed by the angel whom Milton represents as living in the sun! A contrast as great as this is going to happen to you, dear Friends, in passing from this world—with now and then a glint of Heaven's sunlight—to dwelling with God forever in the Glory that excels anything that we have ever imagined here! I cannot tell you what it will be—and neither will you know it until you get there and learn what it is by actually dwelling in His Presence!

We are also told that Heaven is to be enjoyed at the right hand of God. The right hand, even on earth, is the place of favor, the place of honor and the place of security. The right-hand place is always regarded as the post of dignity and nobility in all courts. God is not going to give His people any left-handed Heaven—they are to dwell at His right hand forevermore! It is the place that Jesus Himself has and that He has promised to His victorious followers—"To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with Me on My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Fa-

ther on His throne." The very choicest place in Heaven shall be yours, Beloved! God will not put you away somewhere behind the doors of His royal palace, but He will guide you to the place of honor at His own right hand where "there are pleasures forevermore."

Those last words that I quoted tell us something about *the enjoyment of Heaven*—the kind of life which the glorified spend at the right hand of God above. The life of Heaven is a life of joy and the crowning joy is that the pleasures, there, are "pleasures forevermore." In this world a few drops of joy fall here and there and there are, sometimes, showers of blessing. But up there it is joy, joy, joy forever—"pleasures forevermore." Let these blessed joy bells ring in your ears and in your heart just now—and if you know even a little of what they mean, you may anticipate that they will mean a thousand times as much on the other side of the Jordan of death—in the heavenly land of Canaan!

Our text tells us of the *quantity*, as well as the quality of the joy of Heaven. It is to be "fullness of joy." That is what we never reach here, for, when we are most joyous, there is always room for more joy, or there is something lacking to the completeness of our joy. But, in God's Presence, is "fullness of joy." It may well be described as the fullness of joy because it is infinite. He who drinks from a cup can soon drain it dry, but he who lies down on the brink of a great river may drink as long as he likes and he will never empty it, for he has come to its fullness.

"Fullness of joy" means that you shall not only have as much joy as you can hold, but that it shall keep on running and your capacity shall be enlarged, but you shall still be filled with joy—and so it shall continue forever! If you are the least among the saints in Heaven, you shall have fullness of joy. And if you are the greatest, you shall still be full of joy. You shall be so full of joy that you could not be more happy! You shall have reached the very summit of eternal happiness! Yes, even there it shall not enter into your heart to conceive anything that shall be above the joy which God has revealed to them that love Him! What indescribable bliss must this fullness of joy be! You know that when you are full of anything, you cannot put anything else in—so, where there is fullness of joy at God's right hand, no sorrow will ever be able to enter. There are—

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

There will not be room for a single doubt there, or for a fear—no, not even for one sad memory! There will not be room for a wish—we shall be so full of joy that we shall have all that we could desire! Every faculty of our body glorified and every power of our soul perfected, the life everlasting shall rush through us and we shall be filled with it, sunk in it, as in an ocean of infinite satisfaction and eternal content! I find that words are but poor things to describe such a theme as this—I wish that I could more worthily speak of this "fullness of joy" in God's Presence.

Notice next, the *variety* of this joy, for I take it that while the term,, "fullness of joy," is given to show that it is one, yet the expression, "pleasures forevermore," may teach us that the bliss is varied. I cannot give to you, Beloved, a complete list of the joys of Heaven, but I will briefly mention a few of them.

The glorified before the Throne of God are forever singing about salvation, praising Him who washed them from their sins in His own blood. A sense of perfected salvation is a part of the bliss of Heaven. They are washed whiter than snow and they know it. They are delivered from all sin and are "without fault before the Throne of God"—and they know it. Now have they been brought right away from all danger of perishing, for they are "saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation."

There will be a sense of security, too, for all who are at the right hand of God in Glory. They are all perfectly safe there. "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up there, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there." "Neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." And they know that it shall be so and, therefore, a sense of their security is one of the sweetnesses of the beatific state.

Coupled with that will be their assurance of victory. They will know that they have overcome all their enemies through the blood of the Lamb. Even the last enemy, Death, himself, will then have been destroyed. When the Resurrection shall be complete, what a vast sweep will the mind's eye of the glorified Believer take! All human history will open up before him and as he gazes upon it, he will see that God has triumphed, by His Grace, in everything! And the adoring song of victory will go up forever and ever unto Him who has conquered sin, death and Hell, and led captivity captive. The palms will forever be waving and the harps forever ringing out, "Glory, glory, glory to the mighty Grace which has triumphed from the first day even until now!" Victory blending with security will indeed make glad the spirits of the saints at God's right hand!

There, too, their joy will consist in freedom from every form of evil. No temptation can ever enter there, no carking care, no spiritual weakness. They are eternally clear of all that made them sad in the days of their sinfulness and imperfection. One great part of the joy of the glorified will be the perfection of their characters, for he that is holy must be happy. Perfection of holiness must mean perfection of happiness—the two things must go together. Sin and sorrow cannot be divorced—and holiness and happiness cannot be separated. O Brothers and Sisters, what must it be to feel that you have no tendency to err, no understanding out of balance—that even memory does not bring to you a sinful reflection that would stain your purity—that, altogether, your whole mind is godlike, made holy through the operation of the blessed Spirit and the cleansing blood of Jesus? Oh, to completely get rid of sin! One would not mind keeping a frail body with all its weakness and pains if he could once get

rid of sin. One might be willing to be as poor as Lazarus if he could but get rid of sin. To shake off this viper into the fire—to be altogether clear of even the taint of sin would be Heaven! And we shall have that bliss at God's right hand.

Part of the joy of Heaven will also lie in clear knowledge. Here, we only know in part, but there we shall know even as we are known. Here, "we see through a glass, darkly; but there, face to face." Some of you do not understand the Doctrines of Grace, here, but you will understand them there. You meet with a great many questions that are too difficult for you to answer, now, and you are often puzzled with problems which you cannot solve. You must believe, now, much that you cannot comprehend—but things will look very different in the clear light of Heaven from what they do, now, in the dim twilight of earth! Wait a while and do not worry. Tarry just a little season and the eternal day shall break, and the shadows shall forever flee away and you shall know all that you will desire to know when you are at God's right hand in Glory!

But perhaps it is still sweeter to remember that Heaven's bliss will very much consist in fellowship, first, with the Father. How near we shall be to Him when we are in His Presence! Here, we cannot see His face and live. But there we shall live by seeing His face! It will be the ecstasy of our glorified life to gaze upon Him who is invisible to mortal eyes! There, too, we shall see Jesus. Do not your sacred passions burn at the very thought of such bliss as this?—

"For there the Man that loved and died,
Sits glorious at His Father's side"

and these eyes shall behold Him, the God that died for me! Oh, that wondrous sight! Do we not feel as though, like John, we must fall at His feet as dead when we see Him as He is? O blessed Christ, we scarcely need any more of Heaven than to be where You are! Then, too, the Holy Spirit, who dwells in us, will yet more gloriously manifest His Divine power to us there—

"O blissful hour! O blest abode!
I shall be near and like my God."

We shall have such fellowship there with the Father, the Son and the Spirit as is not possible before and, then—this is coming down a long way from the sublime height of fellowship with God, yet it is a fact that is worth remembering—we shall have fellowship with the innumerable holy angels and with all the glorified saints!

All who have been redeemed with the precious blood of Jesus, even as we are, will be there as our happy companions forever and ever. Are you not anxious to see the Apostles and Prophets who have gone to Heaven before you? Well, Beloved, you shall see them—and the communion that you will have with them will be of the most intimate kind! And your beloved ones who have been called Home before you, you shall meet them, by-and-by, when the Master shall say to you, also, "Come up here." Oh,

yes, there will be "the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven . . .the spirits of just men made perfect," and it will be a part of the delights of Heaven to have fellowship with them! I have heard some people say that they will have such sweet and satisfying fellowship with Christ that they will not want to have any with His people, but that is both absurd and impossible because you cannot have fellowship with the Head without having fellowship with the members at the same time! Christ will never wish you to look upon Him in Heaven as divided from His people—they shall be so completely one with Him that in fellowship with His people, you shall in no degree be diminishing your fellowship with Christ, but rather be enjoying it in the form in which He, Himself, rejoices, for His delights will still be with the sons of men and if, on earth, they were the excellent in whom was all your delight, He would have you take the same delight in them when you meet them before His Throne in Glory.

There is one more pleasure of Heaven that I must mention, and that is rest—not that state of idleness of which some lazy people foolishly think—but that kind of rest which will be perfectly compatible with holy service. We are to serve God day and night in His temple—we shall always have something to do for our God throughout eternity, but that service will be rest to us. Just as, here on earth, we take Christ's yoke upon us and learn of Him, and so find rest unto our souls—in Heaven itself we shall continue in the service of our God and we shall find therein the very sweetest rest. One part of that service will be everlasting praise. I am longing for the time when I shall have a heart that will never wander from my Lord—what hallelujahs will I sing to His holy name! And will not you, who love Him, do the same? Oh, what shouts we will make together when, as one complete family before the Throne of God, we shall praise the almighty Grace which has brought us safely Home and enabled us to join in the heavenly anthem, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sits upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever"!

The last thing to be mentioned is the *duration* of all this bliss—"pleasures forevermore." It would be robbing Heaven of all that makes it to be Heaven if you could deprive it of its everlasting duration. Our Lord will at the last say, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." Your life in Heaven will be everlasting and your joy will be everlasting because you have an everlasting Christ, an everlasting God—and an Everlasting Covenant has been made with you, ordered in all things and sure! A million millions, what must that be? The human mind cannot grasp the meaning of such vast numbers, yet, when millions of millions of millions of millions of years have passed over the heads of Christ's saints in Glory, this text will not be exhausted! No, more—not one jot or tittle of it will be exhausted—and throughout

eternity it will still be, "pleasures forevermore." Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, this prize is worth winning! Eternal life is worth having! And it shall be the portion of everyone who truly trusts in our Lord Jesus Christ.

The last thing I am going to say is this. I greatly fear and tremble for some of you lest you should never enter upon this, "fullness of joy," and these, "pleasures forevermore." You know that dreadful word, *"damned,"* which Jesus used—"He that believes not shall be damned." I will not try to explain to you what the sufferings of the lost must be, for they cannot be described. But a great part of the condemnation of the lost will consist in the fact that they will lose the "fullness of joy" in the Presence of God and the "pleasures forevermore" at His right hand. How dreadful this punishment of loss must be, in addition to all the suffering that must be forever endured in Hell! There stand the pearly gates, but what if you should never enter them? Yonder are the streets of gold, but what if you should never stand upon that radiant pavement? There is the face of Jesus, but what if He should say to you, "I never knew you"? There is the Throne of God, but what if it should burn like a devouring fire for you, so that you should be unable to come near it and to say, "Father," to Him who sits on it? Shut out of Heaven! Shut out forever! In the outer darkness forever! Away from the marriage feast forever! When once the Master of the house is risen and has shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, "Lord, Lord, open unto us and He shall answer and say unto you, I know you not who you are...depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity." Surely there is not a man, or woman, or child, who could look forward, without alarm, to the prospect of being shut out of Heaven forever!

And you will be, as surely as God lives, you will be unless you repent of sin and trust His Son! I am no Prophet of evil, neither do I like to harp upon this string, yet I must remind you that God has declared, concerning Heaven, that "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defiles." You must, therefore, be washed in the blood of the Lamb if you are ever to be admitted within the pearly gates! Remember the Apostolic message, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved," for it is as true, now, as when it was first uttered. May the Holy Spirit graciously constrain you to believe in Jesus, now, and at once to yield up your whole being to His supreme sway! Ask Him to show you "the path of life" and to lead you in it, for then you shall enter into His Presence, where there is "fullness of joy," and you shall stand at His right hand, where "there are pleasures forevermore!"

Somebody recommended all persons, before they go to sea, to wear a lifebelt. I do not believe that people in general are ever likely to follow that advice, but if somebody could invent a belt that made the wearer of it more ready for his work on land—that made him stronger, healthier and more handsome—then everybody would be ready enough to have it!

Well, now, salvation is a life belt for the hour of death, but it is also a strengthening belt, a help, a beauty, a joy and delight for this present life. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." It is as good to live with as to die with and nobody is fit to live who is not fit to die—and nobody is fit to die till he is fit to live! Fitness for work on earth is fitness for rest in Heaven! Depend upon it, these two things go together. Do you all know the Lord? With that question I will conclude.

Do you all know the Lord? If not, you do not know your best Friend. You do not know Him who is the Father of all Believers. Do you know the Lord? If not, I pray you to seek His face this very hour and especially I urge you to obey that word of His Apostle which I quoted to you just now, but cannot quote too often, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." When you trust Christ, you shall see God in Christ and shall come to the Father through the Son and the Holy Spirit shall reveal Him unto you. The Lord grant that this may be the case, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 16.

Verse 1. *Preserve me, O God: for in You do I put my trust.* Notice how the Psalmist urges the prevailing plea of faith. A trusted God will be a preserving God. If you, Believer, can truly say that you are trusting God in any time of trouble or danger, you will be safe enough in His keeping.

2, 3. *O my soul, you have said unto the LORD, You are my Lord: my goodness is nothing apart from You; but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.* "I cannot do You any good, my God; You are too great to need anything from me; but I may be the means of blessing to Your people, Your saints may reap some little benefit from what I do. They are the company I keep, they are the choicest friends I know, and if You will but help me to do something for You which shall bring blessing to them, I shall indeed rejoice."

4. *Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips.* We must be faithful to God—to the God revealed to us in the Book of God, the God of the Old Testament and of the New Testament, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! We must keep to Him, not make another god after our own imagination. It is practical idolatry even to conceive of God otherwise than He is revealed in Holy Scripture. This we must not do, but say, concerning the God of the Bible, "This God is our God forever and ever."

5. *The LORD is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup: You maintain my lot.* One of the great houses of nobility has for its motto the

words, "I will maintain it." But David's is a better one—"You maintain my lot." God is the best Defender that His people can ever have!

6. *The lines are fallen into me in pleasant places; yes, I have a goodly heritage.* Many of us have proved this to be true in our experience. May we continue gratefully contented and more than contented—*delighted* with whatever God appoints for us!

7, 8. *I will bless the LORD, who has given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons. I have set the LORD always before me.* "In my acts by day, and my thoughts by night."

8. *Because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.* Now across the sacred page there comes the wondrous revelation of a glorious One who speaks in the very words that are recorded here. Though, possibly, we have not recognized Him, these words that follow apply especially to Jesus Christ our Lord.

9. *Therefore My heart is glad.* Because in the night watches He had sought His Father and found help in Him, He could say, "Therefore My heart is glad,"

9, 10. *And My glory rejoices: My flesh also shall rest in hope. For You will not leave My soul in Hell.* Or, rather, Hades, the abode of the dead.

10. *Neither will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption.* Now David was gathered to his fathers and his body saw corruption, as the Apostle Peter rightly observed, so it is clear that he is not speaking of himself, here, not in the first place, at any rate, but of "great David's greater Son," our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! "Neither will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption."

11. *You will show me the path of life: in Your Presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand there are pleasures forevermore.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—844, 229, 832.

—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.

ABRAHAM'S GREAT REWARD
NO. 2814

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 18, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 14, 1877.

"Fear not, Abram: I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward."
Genesis 15:1.

You have probably heard a great many sermons on the first part of the text, "I am your shield," so, on this occasion, I am going to leave that portion in order to more fully consider the second part—"I am your exceeding great reward."

Notice, first, the circumstances under which these words were spoken to Abraham. It must have been in his memory that not very long before, he had parted from his nephew, Lot, and had given him his choice as to which way he would go with his flocks and his herds. And Lot, regardless of the character of the people among whom he was going to dwell, chose the well-watered plain of Jericho or Jordan in which were the sinful cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. He thought only of temporal advantages and now he had lost everything in the battle of the four kings against five. Abraham had an eye to the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, so he had not lost anything. In fact, he was able to restore to Lot all that he had lost. And now the Lord appears to him and seems to say to him, "Your nephew Lot trusted in what he could see. He followed the leading of his own judgment and chose that which seemed to be for his own immediate advantage, and now he has lost all. But, fear not, Abram: I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward. You shall not lose. You have chosen the good part which shall not be taken from you. You have no share of the well-watered plain of Jordan to lose. You need not fret, for you shall never lose your portion." The Patriarch might also have said, on his own account, "The Lord is my portion, says my soul; therefore will I trust in Him."

You, Beloved, have probably seen others suffering the loss of all things and brought to deep despair as the result. But do not be alarmed at whatever happens to you. You have made God to be your refuge and you shall find a most secure abode in Him. You may have losses and afflictions—these are a part of your lot—but they shall not overwhelm you. You shall be no real losers in the end, but you shall be kept by the power of God and shall be delivered out of every trial and affliction. He shall also be to you your shield and your exceeding great reward.

Again, Abraham had just at that time refused the gifts of the king of Sodom. They were his rightful spoil and he might very properly have taken them, yet he would not do so, lest, in later days the king of Sodom should say, "It was not Abraham's God that enriched him. It is no use for him to talk about living by faith, for it was *my* gifts, or the spoils of war that enriched him." "No," says Abraham, "you shall never be able to say that! Whatever I have shall be God's gift to me, not the king of Sodom's gift. I will be independent of men. I will be dependent only upon the living God." The Lord admires this spirit, so He comes and says to His servant, "Fear not, Abram. Whatever you may have given up for My sake, for My Glory's sake, for the sake of My honor, you shall not be a loser in any respect, for I will be your shield, and your exceeding great reward."

Have you, dear Friend, made any sacrifices for Christ? Have you lately been called to imperil your own interests by pursuing a right course? Have you been steadfast even though you lost friendships? Have you been so firm in your adherence to principle that you have been judged to be obstinate? Well, if so, you shall be no loser through your faithfulness! As certainly as God is in Heaven, you shall prove, in some way or other, that in keeping His commandments there is great reward. It is always a pity when any of the children of God begin to think that they can be enriched by the king of Sodom, or try to find their portion, in any measure, among the ungodly sons of men. God's command to His people is, "Come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." And His promise to those who do is, "I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

We must also remember that at the time the Lord spoke thus to Abraham, the Patriarch was not the possessor of a single foot of the land which had been promised to him. The whole of it was to belong to his posterity and, in God's promise, Abraham held the title-deeds to the freehold. Those who were in possession were but leaseholders and their lease would soon run out, but, at that time, Abraham had not even a foot of ground that he could call his own. And when he needed a sepulcher, he had to buy the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron, in the presence of the children of Heth. So, in our text, the Lord seems to say to him, "Abraham, you have no possession in this land. You are a stranger and a foreigner in it, but 'fear not,' I am your portion and your heritage, your exceeding great reward.' Although others look upon you as a mere Bedouin wandering about with your flocks and herds, and pitching your tents here, today, and there, tomorrow, with no settled resting place, be not troubled because of that." It is the same with us, Beloved, for the Lord has been the dwelling place of His people in all generations, even as He was the dwelling place of Abraham! And He would have Abraham know that it was so and feel that he was not penniless, or landless, for the Lord was his "exceeding great reward."

One other circumstance is worth remembering. Abraham had just been paying tithes to Melchizedek, so now was just the time for the Lord to give him a blessing. Have you ever heard a sermon from the text,

"Prove Me now herewith, says the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open to you the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it"? I have read discourses upon that passage, but the singularity of the sermons has consisted in the fact that they were not fairly preached from the text, because it runs thus, "Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in My house, and prove me now herewith, says the Lord of Hosts." *It was their bringing of the tithes that was to be the test as to the time when the blessing should be given to them*—and the proof of God's fidelity to His promise would be seen by the filling of their barns and houses by His bounty! Abraham had paid to Melchizedek, as the representative of the Most High, tithes of all—*then* came the blessing—"Fear not, Abram: I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward."

Solomon's word is still true, "There is that scatters, and yet increases; and there is that withholds more than is meet, but it tends to poverty." The most impoverishing money in the world is God's money locked up in His own steward's possession, left to canker and to rust among the gifts of His Providence—not the man's own possession at all, but stolen from his Master, embezzled—that he might accumulate more and more, to die a little richer and so be unfaithful to his stewardship! O my Brothers and Sisters, this may seem to some of you a thing about which we ought not to speak, but we will hold our tongue about nothing that is a part of the duty of Christians and the will of the Lord! And since we do believe that many professors bring a curse upon themselves through neglect of this duty, we must speak of it. You will find that in faithfully serving the Lord in this matter, He will give you such a blessing upon your substance that you shall praise His name that He ever taught you the value of self-sacrifice and self-denial—and showed you how to consecrate your substance to Him!

These are the circumstances under which these words were spoken to Abraham. Now let us consider the text itself—"I am your exceeding great reward." And let us ask, first, *What is this reward?* Secondly, *What are the excellences of this exceeding great reward?* And, thirdly, *What then?*

I. First, then, let us enquire, WHAT IS THIS REWARD? "I am your exceeding great reward."

It is not the land of Canaan. That was to be given to Abraham, but that was not his great reward. It is not a posterity, though he pined for it. No, it is not anything that God will give him—it is God, Himself. I—I, Jehovah—the Hebrew is peculiarly emphatic in setting apart the word, "I, Jehovah, am your exceeding great reward." The Lord Himself is the portion of His people! When Canaan was divided, there was a lot for Judah, for Simeon, for Reuben and so on—but as for the Levites, *the Lord was their portion*—and we are like the Levites—as many of us as who have believed in the Lord. The Lord is our portion and He is such a portion as excels everything else that we might have!

I do not think that any human mind can ever grasp the fullness of meaning of these four words, "I am your reward." God Himself the reward of His faithful people! This I feel sure of—that although I can enjoy the

sweetness of this text for myself, my feeble lips can never tell even the hundredth part of the precious meaning of it! Therefore, my Brothers and Sisters, do not depend upon *me*, but appropriate the text to yourselves. Be not content for me to cook and carve for you, but come and cut from the roast for yourselves—and cut large slices, too! Let each man take to himself all that he needs out of this glorious text as he meditates upon it!

Think what a reward it is for us *even to know God*. Years ago we knew that there was a God. At least we heard so, but He was a perfect stranger to us. We never recognized Him. Possibly we asked His blessing upon our meals, but it was a mere formality. We did not see His hand in everything—in fact, we lived almost as if there was no God. If there had really been no God, probably we would have been all the happier. But now we know Him! We know that He made the heavens and the earth, that He is the Preserver of men and we see His hand in every gift of Providence. As we walk about the earth, we are accustomed to say, "These are His glorious works. My Father made them all. Here is God's pencil, painting each flower. Here is God riding on the wings of the wind and there is God walking on the waves of the sea! To us, God is everywhere." It has made life so happy, at least, I speak for myself, to feel, "My God is everywhere." Perhaps you remember that simple story of Mungo Park when he was lost in Africa, recovering his spirits by looking at a little piece of moss and admiring its beauty, and saying, "Here is God at work even here," and feeling that, if God was there, He was not really lost, He was still safe enough, for His Father was close at hand! It is worthwhile living when we have come into a practical recognition of God, when we have made the acquaintance of that glorious Divine Being who fills all in all! If we never had any reward but this, this would be a great one.

But we have gone on from knowing God to *loving Him*, which is much more. A good man once said, "If God did not love me, yet if He would but allow me to love Him forever, I think that I could not be unhappy." Surely you must know that to love God is a most blessed emotion! To look up to Him in all His excellence and goodness. To admire Him with all your heart. To realize that your lips cannot sufficiently extol Him, or your mind think highly enough of Him—this is a most profitable exercise! The very thought of God, to a man who truly loves Him, is ecstasy! If my eternity could be spent in a dungeon with my heart full of love to God, it could not be an unhappy experience to live so!

But, at the back of this, there comes a far greater thing. Brothers and Sisters, we know that *God loves us*. I never dare to try to speak about this great Truth of God—it is a thing to think over rather than to talk of. I like to get away quietly in a corner and just try to roll this sweet morsel under my tongue, to suck on it till I draw the very essence out of it—God loves me—or, as the hymn puts it—

"I am so glad that Jesus loves me."

For God to *think* of me is something. For Him to *pity* me, is more. For Him to *help* me practically, is still more. But for Him to *love* me—this is the greatest wonder of all! You know how you, being evil, love your own children, but your Heavenly Father loves you far more! You husbands

know how you love your wives, yet there is One who loves His Church far more, for He gave Himself for her! God loves you, my Brother. God loves you, my Sister, if, indeed, you have been brought to believe in Jesus. And to know this great Truth of God is to have an "exceeding great reward," because, if God loves us, everything must be right!

I was going on to say what He would do for us, but it seems to be almost too selfish to go into those details, for, *as He loves us, what is there that He will not do for us?* Why, He has already done more for us than He ever can do in the future! He has already given to us His greatest Gift, for He has given His Son to us and, in so doing, He has given us all things. Your Father loves you, dear child of God and, therefore, He will continue to feed you, and clothe you, and teach you, and support you, and preserve you, and educate you till He has made you meet to see His blessed face and then you shall no longer be here at school, but go Home to dwell in His blessed Presence forever and forever! Is not this an "exceeding great reward"—to know God, to love Him and to be loved by Him? What more can we desire than this?

Yet we have even more than this, for, loving God we come to realize that *we have possession of Him*, so that we can say, "This God is our God forever and ever." We say of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His." We have bowed before Him, as Thomas did, and cried, "My Lord and my God." Just think, for a minute, dear Friends, what the possession of God means. God is yours in everything that He is. His Omnipotence is pledged to strengthen you. His Omniscience is engaged to direct you. All His attributes are employed on your behalf. He is everywhere present and, therefore, He will show Himself everywhere strong for your defense! He is Immutable so He changes not in His love to you. He is Eternal so His mercy endures forever. Even the sterner attributes of God smile upon the saint—His Justice, His Righteousness, His Glory are all on the side of every Believer! You say, "I am poor," but how can you be poor with such a rich Father? You say, "I am heavy of heart because of my low estate." What? With God as yours. With Father, Son and Spirit yours. With the everlasting God, the Creator of Heaven and earth as your Father and your Friend forever and forever—how can you be troubled by reason of the difficulty of your circumstances? Brother, Sister, chide your heart for its foolishness! End your sighing and begin to sing! When we have God as our possession, we have an "exceeding great reward!"

And the reward seems to grow all the greater in the course of years, *God's infinite mercy has transformed us, at least in part, into His likeness.* God is so fully ours that we enter into fellowship with Him and receive of His sacred influences till we are changed into His image, even by the Lord, the Spirit. As you read the story of Abraham, you can see many of the attributes of God reflected in the character of His noble servant. Now, child of God, you should mourn that you are so little like God, but you should also rejoice that you are already made somewhat like Him and that when He shall appear, in whom your life is hid, you shall be like He is, for you shall see Him as He is. Oh, it is worthwhile to have lived, is it

not, notwithstanding all the cares of life, when this is to be the end of it all? Though man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward, blessed be God for an existence that has for its end that we should be made partakers of the Divine likeness and should be lifted up to be the sons and daughters of the Most High and dwell with Him in perfection forever! I thank God for His great Truth of the immortality of the soul, even with all the dreadful risks of everlasting wrath that surround it! It is worth the risk to have the possibility of becoming like God and we who have believed in Jesus have gone beyond the possibility, for we have the earnest and the assurance, the pledge and the token of the good work commenced within us, which, when it is perfected, shall make us like God Himself!

O my Soul, bow yourself before the Lord in reverent and adoring gratitude! You were almost like the devil by nature and what are you even now? You are dust and Deity combined, for the Hoy Spirit dwells in you! That body of yours must crumble back to dust, but, by-and-by, it shall be refashioned in glory and in power, and then, creature as you are, you shall be near and like your God! Is not this an "exceeding great reward" to even now be in process of preparation for so wonderful a climax as that?

I must also mention that God is our "exceeding great reward" in another sense, namely, that *He deigns to visit us and speak with us.* We have been moved by Divine influences. I am, of course, addressing myself only to those who have been born from above and are Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Upon you, Beloved, God has already bestowed a great reward, for He has raised you from your death of sin and His Spirit abides in you, fashioning and forming you unto perfection. And the Lord has, I trust, often spoken with you. If not often, whose fault has it been? Some of us can testify that He has drawn very near to our spirits at times. Do you not remember some happy seasons when you felt that you could not have borne any more delight? I mean, when you were so happy that to have been happier might have made you run the risk of death from excess of joy! Oh, the indescribable bliss, the heavenly joys of a soul when it feels the love of Christ shed abroad in the heart by the Hoy Spirit who is given unto it!

II. The time will not allow me to say more on that point, so now I come to enquire, in the second place, WHAT ARE THE EXCELLENCES OF THE GREAT REWARD WHICH IS PROMISED IN THE TEXT?

Notice, first, that *it is an infinite reward*—"I am your reward." Anything earthly that God pleases to give to us, we can take away, carry it off and house it somewhere. But when God says, "I am your reward," we pause and look with mingled wonder, love and praise! This reward is incomprehensible—who can carry it away? Who can even measure it? Who can fathom the depths of this ocean, or soar to this vast height? God gives to other men health, wealth, fame, pleasure. But to you, Beloved, He gives Himself! Their gifts are no more comparable to yours than the darkness is to the sun! In giving you Himself, He has given you all that He is! Truly, that is an infinite portion.

Then, next, this is *a spiritual reward.* There are some people who will not value it because of this very excellence. And this may be a test between the regenerate and the unregenerate. The ungodly say, "If God will but give us our barns full of wheat and our winepress bursting with new wine. If He will only fill our purses with gold and our houses with all manner of earthly delights, that will be enough for us." But you, Believer, are of another mind, for you have seen through the emptiness and vanity of all material things. You say, "What is the mere pleasure of eating and drinking but that with which a beast is my associate? What if I have honor among my fellow mortals? What is it but so much breath from other men's nostrils, so much clapping of the hands of fools? That is all it really is." What is there beneath the sun, that, to a man who is born of God, is worth his stooping down to pick it up? But when he gets his God, the new-born spirit within him, which hungers with an infinite hunger for the highest good, he says, "Here I have all that I need! Father, Son and Spirit—blessed Trinity, You are mine! My awakened spirit feels that this is a sea in which I can swim forever. This is the element in which I can truly live." To possess God is a great spiritual blessing, so the declaration of the text is true—"I am your exceeding great reward."

Notice, next, that *this is an eternal reward,* for he who has God as his own shall never lose Him since God changes not. And he shall never exhaust Him, for who would even think that he can drain dry the infinite all-sufficiency of Jehovah? If God is yours, you have all for today, tomorrow, for time, for eternity, forever! All emergencies and circumstance of life—all for the tremendous terrors of the Day of Judgment, all for the ages of ages that shall never end! What more can you need?

To have God is, also, *most ennobling.* I do not know that there is anything in a great deal of wealth to make a man noble. Many men seem to get more greedy, the more money they have. Their soul cleaves to their dust. But he who gets God as his own, oh, what a privileged man is he! Talk of princes—here is a prince, indeed! You may put as many emperors and great ones of the earth as you please in a barrel, but, if they are not saved by the Grace of God, they are not worthy, in the sight of God, of being compared with the poorest, weakest, most despised of all His people, to whom He is an "exceeding great reward!" O you great ones of the earth, you might well be content to become beggars if you might but have God to be your everlasting portion!

And what *a soul-satisfying portion and reward* this is! If you have God as yours, my Soul, sit down and see if you can think of anything else—you cannot do it! Try and let your desires ramble over other fields. Untie them and give them liberty. But what can they ask for, seek for, wish for beyond God Himself? There are, alas, some Christians who do not seem to realize the truth of this and they get dissatisfied with God. You have been serving the Master, my Brother or Sister, for some months. Perhaps it is in the Sunday school that you have been working, but nobody has taken much notice of you. The superintendent has not praised you, so you are discouraged. But remember that when you serve God, *He is your reward*!

"Oh, but, Sir! I have been trying to do good in many ways. I have labored hard, but people only misrepresent me." Did you look for your reward in that way? If you did, I am glad that you are disappointed, because God says, "I am your reward." To know that you love God and that He loves you—that He is yours, and you are His—that is reward enough for you. "Oh, but," says a minister, "you do not really know how badly I have been treated. I have had many years of service in my congregation, but they are most ungrateful and do not appreciate me. They even want to get rid of me!" But, my Brother, *God* does not want to get rid of you. And He will appreciate you, for He loves you with an infinite love. Why did you look to men and women for your reward? A man may have other rewards if he is content with God as his reward, but he who has any sinister or even secondary aim in what he does in the cause of God, spoils it all. This is the fly in the precious ointment! We must get rid of everything of this sort and be just as satisfied to serve God in obloquy and reproach as we are to serve Him amid the acclamations of the multitude!

"It is not easy to do that," says one. No, Beloved, nothing is easy that is good, except to God—and you must go to Him to enable you to act so. But never shun a duty because you think it is difficult. Sit down with your Lord, alone, and He will speak to you and comfort you, and strengthen you. Remember how Elkanah comforted his wife, Hannah, when she sorrowed because she had no children? "Am not I better to you than ten sons?" And as he drew her close to him and she felt the warm glow of his loving heart, she realized that it was even so, and that gave her rest. And the Lord seems to draw each weary, sad, disappointed laboring one to Him and say, "Am I not better to you than all the praises of men? Am I not better to you than wealth? Am I not better to you than the health that you have lost? Am I not better to you than all the world?" And what is your answer? Surely it is this, "Whom have I in Heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You." O God, bring us to that blessed position and keep us there! Then shall we have drunk in the meaning of our text, "I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward."

III. My third question is, WHAT THEN? As God is our exceeding great reward, what then?

First, it is quite clear that *the rewards which are given to Believers are of Grace and not of debt*. Do you not see that in the text? Look at it again and you will perceive it at once. If God is the reward of His people, it is not possible that any being could ever deserve to have God as his reward. It is very possible that a man should deserve the esteem of his fellow men and I think that most people deserve what they really earn. It would be well if some could have more than they receive—wages are often less than they should be. We may deserve more money than we get, but there is nobody who ever deserved God! To deserve Heaven has never been possible yet, but even if it had been, that would not be so much as deserving God! This is too big a portion to ever come to us on the ground of law, merit and good works, so, when the Lord says, "I am your reward," it must be all of Grace—and there is no possibility of earning this reward. When the men went into the vineyard and agreed with the householder

for a penny a day, they earned it. But when the reward is God, Himself, there is nobody who has ever earned *that*, or who can ever do so. So, my Soul, sing of Free and Sovereign Grace! Let your life-song be—

"Free Grace and dying love,"

because the portion you have received is such as could have come to you on no other terms than those of free, rich, almighty, covenant, everlasting Grace! And therefore let God be glorified forever and ever.

I want to call your attention, next, to the fact that according to our text, *we hold God on a very sure tenure* because what a man holds as a reward, he knows to be his own. "Why," he says, "I won this and I may well hold it fast." Now, Brothers and Sisters, you and I have never deserved God. I have told you that is impossible, but He is as surely ours as if we *had* earned Him, for He is our reward! A man, I say again, feels the utmost assurance that anything that comes to him as a reward is really his. Let us feel the same assurance and brave confidence concerning God and even more than if we stood upon the footing of merits. "I am your reward," says the Lord. Then, "let no man beguile you of your reward." Hold it fast! Let not the devil, himself, take it from you, or rob you of your joy in it! It is yours so surely and so safely that you may at all times rejoice in it as being yours upon the most certain tenure!

Another practical thought may come in here. If God is our reward, let us take care that we really enjoy Him. Let us exult in Him and let us not be pining after any other joy. You have to go and live in a lonely place where you will have few encouragements—but you will still have your God—so how can you feel lonely? You are coming down in earthly circumstances. Your income is decreasing. But your God is not any less than He was, so you are not really a loser. One dear Friend after another is being taken away from you—there is a great probability that the dearest one you have will soon go to the grave. Yet the Lord lives, so blessed be your Rock! Rejoice in Him! Possibly you are soon going to the grave yourself. The years are taking their toll upon you and increasing weakness proves that, before long, you must put off this tabernacle. Well, even if it is so, He who is your All-in-All will not die! This world is not your rest or your portion! You are not, therefore, losing your portion, you are going Home to it, for the Lord, Himself, is "your shield, and your exceeding great reward."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
GENESIS 14:17-24; 15.

Genesis 14:17, 18. *And the King of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale. And Melchizedek, King of Salem, brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the Most High God.* One who exercised both the kingship and the priesthood—the only person that we know of who did this, and who, therefore, is a wonderful type of that marvelous King-Priest of whom we read in the 110th Psalm and in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

19, 20. *And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of Heaven and earth: and blessed be the most high God, which has delivered your enemies into your hands. And he gave him tithes of all.* It must have been peculiarly refreshing to Abraham to be met by a man of kindred spirit and one whom he recognized as his superior. No doubt he was weary, though triumphant and so, just then, the Lord sent him special refreshment. And, Beloved, how sweet it is to us when the greater Melchizedek meets us! Jesus Christ, our great King-Priest, still meets us and brings us bread and wine. Often, the very symbols on His Table have been refreshing to us, but their inner meaning has been far more sustaining and comforting to our spirit. There is no food like the bread and wine that our blessed Melchizedek brings forth to us, even His own flesh and blood! Well may we give Him tithes of all that we have! No, more—we may say to Him, "Take not tithes, O Lord, but take all!"

21. *And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to yourself.* As the spoils of war, they were all Abraham's by right.

22, 23. *And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lifted up my hands unto the LORD, the Most High God, the possessor of Heaven and earth, that I will not take from you a thread even to a shoelace, and that I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, I have made Abram rich.* Sometimes a child of God will find himself cast, through force of circumstances, into very curious companionship. For the sake of Lot, Abraham had to go and fight the enemies of the king of Sodom. And sometimes, in fighting for religious liberty, we have had to be associated with persons from whom we differ as much as Abraham differed from the king of Sodom—but right must be fought for under all circumstances. Yet, sooner or later, there comes a crucial test in which our true character will be discovered. Shall we personally gain anything by this association? We loathe it even while we recognize that it is necessary for the time being, but we have not entered it for the sake of personal gain.

24. *Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.* They had a right to it. What we do ourselves, we do not always expect others to do. There is a higher code of morals for the servant of God than for other men. And we may often think of what they do and not condemn them, although we could not do the same, ourselves, for we are lifted into a higher position as the servant of the Lord.

Genesis 15:1-3. *After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward. And Abram said, Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold, to me You have given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is my heir.* Perhaps he did not doubt the promise, but he needed to have it explained to him. He may have wondered if it meant that one born in his house, though not his son, was to be his heir, and that through him, the blessing would come. He takes the opportuni-

ty of making an enquiry, that he may know how to act. At the same time, there does seem to be a clashing between Abraham's question, "What will You give me?" and the declaration of God, "I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward." There is a great descent from the language of the Lord to that of the most stable Believer—and when you and I are even at our best, I have no doubt that if all could be recorded that we think and say, some of our fellow Believers would feel that the best of men are but men at the best—and that God's language is after a nobler fashion than ours will ever be, till we have seen His face in Glory.

4, 5. *And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be your heir; but he that shall come out of your own body shall be your heir. And He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward Heaven, and count the stars, if you are able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall your seed be.* Now was Abraham's faith tried, indeed! He had no child. He was old and his wife was also old, yet the Lord's promise was, "So shall your seed be" as the stars of Heaven! Could he believe it? He did.

6. *And he believed in the LORD; and He counted it to him for righteousness.* Oh, what a blessing to learn the way of simple faith in God! This is the saving quality in many a life. Look through Paul's list of the heroes of faith—some of them are exceedingly imperfect characters! Some we would hardly have thought of mentioning. But they had faith and, although men, in their faulty judgment, think faith to be an inferior virtue and often scarcely look upon it as a virtue at all, yet, in the judgment of God, faith is the supreme virtue! "This," said Christ, "is the work of God," the greatest of all works, "that you believe on Him whom He has sent." To trust, to believe—this shall be counted to us for righteousness even as it was to Abraham!

7, 8. *And He said unto him, I am the LORD that brought you out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give you this land to inherit it, and he said, Lord God, how shall I know that I shall inherit it?* What? Abraham, is not God's promise sufficient for you? O father of the faithful, though you believe and are counted as righteous through believing, do you still ask, "How shall I know?" Ah, Beloved, faith is often marred by a measure of unbelief—or, if not quite unbelief—yet there is a desire to have some token, some sign beyond the bare promise of God!

9-11. *And He said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon. And he took unto Him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not. And when the fowl came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.* Here is a lesson for us. Perhaps you have some of these unclean birds coming down upon your sacrifice just now. That raven that you did not lock up well at home, has come here after you. Eagles and vultures and all kinds of kites in the form of carking cares, sad memories, fears and doubts, come hovering over the sacred feast. Drive them away! God give you Grace to drive them away by the power of His gracious Spirit!

12. *And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.* He had asked for a manifestation, a sign, a token, and lo, it comes in the "horror of great darkness." Do not be afraid, Beloved, if your soul sometimes knows what horror is. Remember how the favored three, on the Mount of Transfiguration, "feared as they entered into the cloud." Yet it was there that they were to see their Master in His glory! Remember what the Lord said to Jeremiah concerning Jerusalem and His people, They shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it." That is the right spirit in which to receive prosperity, but as for adversity, rejoice in it, for God often sends the richest treasures to His children in wagons drawn by black horses! You may except that some great blessing is coming near to you when a "horror of great darkness" falls upon you.

13. *And He said unto Abram, Know of a surety that your seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years.* It was to be a long while before the nation should enter upon its inheritance. Here is a promise that was to take four hundred years to ripen! Some of you cannot believe the promise if its fulfillment is delayed for four days—you can hardly keep on praying if it takes four years—what would you think of a four hundred years promise? Yet it was to be so long in coming to maturity because it was so vast. If Abraham's seed was to be like the stars of Heaven for multitude, there must be time for the increase to come!

14-17. *And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come here again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. And it came to pass, that when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces.* True emblems of the Church of God with her smoke and her light, her trying affliction, yet the Grace by which she still keeps burning and shining in the world.

18-21. *In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto your seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.* He mentions the adversaries to show how great would be the victories of the race that should come and dispossess them. Let us always look upon the list of our difficulties as only a catalog of our triumphs. The greater our troubles, the louder our song at the last.

—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.

GOOD CHEER FOR MANY THAT FEAR
NO. 2815

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY, 25, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, EARLY IN THE YEAR 1861.

"Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not."
Isaiah 35:4.

THIS is an exhortation which is addressed, not to one person, but to several. In the third verse you can see that the message runs, "Strengthen you the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees." What, Lord? Is not one man sufficient for this task? Will not one of Your servants, when he repeats Your precious promises, be able to drive away the fears of Your people? Will not half a word be enough to put to rout their foolish, groundless suspicions and suppositions? No, they have need of many comforters. It is not enough, O Lord, that one should come and speak in Your name? No, "for precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." We are a people of a stubborn will and of a wayward heart, O God. Too often do we wander from Your ways! It is well, therefore, that God has spoken thus, not simply to one of His servants, but to all those who love His appearing and rejoice in the certainty of His promises—"Say you, all of you"—for I may rightly supply the pronoun here—"say you to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not."

Let me observe that in the original, the word for, "fearful," is, "hasty." Now, a hasty man is never a wise man. And equally true is it that a "fearful" man is never prudent. Fearful men are always hasty—they jump at conclusions. They say, with Jacob, "All these things are against me," because they cannot see to the end of the Lord's dispensations. They forget that He is full of pity and full of compassion. Circumstance or expediency is their guiding star. They seek to follow the track of the meteors which fly here and there across the midnight sky—they forget the pole-star of God's Truth and faithfulness. They go to sea without chart or compass and they are driven backwards and forwards by contrary winds! And even when there is no wind, they know not how to steer their ship. As you know, even in this world's affairs, a hasty man is constantly getting himself into trouble. He speculates in certain stocks and shares because some con man has told him that he can gain by doing so. And soon he hears quite a different story, some great disaster is about to come—he hastily believes the lie and is again deceived!

So is it with fearful souls—they are always doing this or that on the hasty impulse of an ill-drawn conclusion. Thus they are constantly misjudging their God, misusing His Word, misdirecting their own steps, bringing a world of trouble upon themselves and dishonor upon the name of their God! Fearful souls are hasty souls. They judge the Lord by feeble sense, by the bitterness of the bud and not by the sweetness of the flower. They judge by the clouds of the morning, forgetting that the clouds may soon be scattered and that the sun may shine out brightly again. To them, then, that are of a hasty heart—to those who condemn themselves unjustly, who think that all things are against them and so become exceedingly fearful, say, "Be strong, fear not."

I am going, first of all, to mention some of the spiritual fears which have vexed the people of God at all times—*fears from without which are associated with a belief of the Truth of God.* Secondly, I will mention *some fears from the feelings within.* Then, thirdly, I shall try to *excite you to get beyond these fearful things* and to come up to the place of strength—the place of confidence and of full assurance.

I. First, then, I am to mention SOME OF THE GREAT TRUTHS CONCERNING WHICH THE PEOPLE OF GOD ARE OFTEN FEARFUL.

How many there are, babes in Grace, who are troubled about *election.* "Are we among the Lord's chosen ones?" is a question that they often ask. They would be glad enough if an angel could fly down from Heaven and make a solemn affirmation that he had read their names written in the golden page of the Lamb's Book of Life, but, since they cannot have this assurance, they question, and question, and question yet again! "Suppose I have not been chosen unto eternal life? What if my name was never engraved upon the hands or upon the heart of Christ? When the muster-roll of the redeemed is read at the Last Great Day, if my name should not be found on it, how can I bear that piercing thought? The dread surmise fills me with dismay!"

Now, to you who are trusting in Jesus, yet who have fears about your election, let me say, in God's name, "Be strong, fear not." That very Doctrine of Election which now appears to you to be like a lion in your way, shall prove, by-and-by, to be, indeed, a lion upon which you shall ride in glorious triumph! It is no enemy. Come and look it in the face and you shall find it to be your richest, dearest friend. If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are as certainly elected as ever Peter and Paul were! If, as an empty sinner, Christ is all your fullness. If, as a naked soul, Christ's righteousness is your glorious dress—then be you assured of this—you would never have had the stream if you had not had an interest in the Fountain! You could never have had the fruit if you had not had a part in the Root! Inasmuch as you have the blessing of God's elect and the faith which is the common mark of them all, do not any longer question your election, but be bold to enter into this solemn mystery! Venture, now, to the heart of Christ. Trace the streams of Divine Love up to the eternal Fountain from which they spring, and say, with John Kent—

"A monument of Grace,
A sinner saved by blood—

The streams of love I trace
Up to the Fountain, God,
And in His sacred bosom see
Eternal thoughts of love to me!"

Again, there are many of God's people who are disquieted concerning their *redemption*. They want to know whether they were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. According to some theories, nobody need ever be perplexed about this matter. The Arminian says, "Christ died for *all* men." Some go so far as to say, "He died for *all alike*." According to them, He died as much for Judas as He did for Peter, and as much for those who were damned in Hell before He laid down His life as for those who were saved in Heaven before He came into the world! Now, I do not hesitate to say that such a redemption as that is a redemption that does not redeem! It is not worth the expense of paper and ink to write about it. It is not worthwhile to open one's mouth to speak of it. A redemption which pays a price, but does not ensure that which is purchased. A redemption which calls Christ a Substitute for the sinner, but yet which allows the person for whom He was substituted to suffer is altogether unworthy of our apprehensions of Almighty God! It offers no homage to His wisdom and does despite to His covenant faithfulness. We could not and we would not receive such a travesty of Divine Truth as that would be! There is no ground for any comfort whatever in it.

We believe that by His atoning Sacrifice, Christ bought some good things for all men and all good things for some men. And that when He died, He had a definite purpose in dying and that His purpose will certainly be effected. Those who are saved owe their security to what His Redemption has accomplished and we fully believe that the accomplishment will be just as great as was the intent and purpose. Not, my Brothers and Sisters, that Christ's blood was less than Infinite in its value—less than Infinite it could never be! The question is not concerning the *value* of it, but the *purpose* of it. If God had willed it, there was enough efficacy in the blood of Christ to have redeemed ten thousand worlds. We have, however, not to speak of the efficacy that *might have been in it*, but of the efficacy that *is in it* according to the good pleasure which God has purposed in Himself. This doctrine of a special and particular intention in the Atonement of Christ has often troubled Believers in Jesus. But it never ought to. Do you believe in Him? Is He all your salvation and all your desire? Has His precious blood been applied by the Spirit to your heart and conscience? Has He purged you with hyssop? Then you are clean and that hyssop cannot have been applied to you in a wrong way. Being pardoned, you have the fruit of Redemption, so Redemption is certainly yours! Jesus came into the world to redeem you unto Himself. You are His and you have a clear and proper right to share in the efficacy of His blood and the power of His Atonement. Therefore, I say unto you who, on this account, are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, fear not."

There are many, also, who are troubled about their *effectual calling*. "Oh," says one, "if I had heard the Master say to me, as He said to Zacchaeus, 'Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down, for today I must abide at your house,' then I would know that I was called by Him. Or if He had

said to me, 'Mary,' and I had said, 'Rabboni,' I should know that He had called me. But, oh, Sir, I have come to Christ, yet I sometimes fear that He has never called me. He knows that He is my All-in-All. Other refuge have I none, but I am half-afraid that I have got into this refuge without any right—that I crept up to the foot of the Cross without being called—and that I have taken to myself a confidence which has no sure ground." O child of God, dismiss all those fears! You could not have come to Christ unless He had first come to you! If you have but come behind Him in the crowd and only touched the hem of His garment, you are cured and you shall never again suffer from that disease! That poor woman was not called by Christ's voice, yet I will venture to say that there was a secret call, within her heart, that moved her. Touch the hem of His garment! You may never know exactly how you were first convinced of sin, nor how you were quickened by the Holy Spirit—but if you have really come to Christ, that is enough, for you would never have come to Him unless He had drawn you! He has secretly put the bands of His love about your heart and you have turned to Him as the needle turns to the magnet! The proof that you have been called by Christ is that you have come to Him!

I have frequently noticed that those persons who think that they have had some special and particular call, have been no better, in regard to their evidences and, sometimes they have been much worse than those who have come to Christ in the more ordinary way. I would not say this to the disparagement of any man's conversion, for God works as He wills. But I recollect, and my eyes are just now fixed upon the very place where there once sat a man who presented a Bible to me, (I have it at home now), in which are written these words, "'Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down, for today I must abide at your house.' Dear Sir, When you pronounced these words last Sabbath morning, I heard a call from God to my soul and I am sure that I came down and that Christ did abide at my house."

That man joined us in Church fellowship. I shall not mention his name, but some of you may remember how sadly he dishonored the name of Christ. He went out from us because he was not of us, for, if he had been of us, doubtless he would have continued with us. It is very easy for us to imagine that we have received some special call of this sort—and then to build our confidence upon it—but if we have not something better than this to rest upon, woe was the day to us! I would far rather, my dear Friends, come to Christ and never know that I had been called except from the fact that I had come, than have some vision or audible words and yet, after all, cease to stand as a simple soul covered with the righteousness of Christ! Well do I know that there is a temptation to look back to the day and to the hour when we had some special manifestation—rather than to look only to the Cross and to the blood—and to calculate that we are converted because we felt this or that extraordinary emotion, instead of still coming, as we always must come, crying to our dear Lord and Savior—

"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Your Cross I cling!"

Another fear, arising from the great and precious Doctrine of *Final Perseverance*, has troubled many a true Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. "How shall I hold on and persevere unto the end?" is a question that often causes great anxiety even to a genuine child of God. The best of things, when corrupted, become the most corrupt. The sweetest of comforts, when not believed in, become the bitterest of discomforts. I think that the Doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the saints is one of those that are most plainly taught in the Scriptures. If I found any difficulty, at any time, in defending against its assailants, the Doctrine of Particular Redemption, I should certainly never find any difficulty in defending the Doctrine of Final Perseverance! Those who oppose it have an irresistible array of passages of Scripture to contend with—they have, indeed, when they attack this Truth of God—to leap into a lion's den! It is strange that so many of the Lord's people should have been troubled concerning this precious Doctrine which is so clearly revealed in the Word of God. "How shall I endure unto the end? How shall I stand fast in the hour of trial? If my temptations are multiplied, if my pains are increased, if my bereavements should follow one upon another, if I should be called to a position of great responsibility, or if I should be cast down into the depths of adversity, how shall I endure it? How shall I be kept steadfast, year after year, and be brought safely home at last? Amid so many rocks and quicksands, storms and hurricanes, how shall my poor water-logged vessel ever enter the port?"

O Believer, if you are really called by Grace, you shall certainly persevere! He who set your feet a-running in His ways will never let you stop till you have come to your journey's end! Christ's promise to all His people is, "Because I live, you shall live also." Your perseverance does not rest with *you*, otherwise you were indeed an undone wretch! But it rests with your Lord and Savior—and He will preserve you even unto the end! "As your days, so shall your strength be." With the temptation, He will make a way of escape that you shall be able to bear it. So again I say to you who are troubled about your ultimate salvation, "Be strong, fear not." He who has begun the good work in you will carry it on and finish it in righteousness! He will not leave you, for His promise to everyone who believes in Him is, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

II. I have thus dealt with some fears from without. Now I am going, for a only few minutes, to speak upon SOME OF THE FEARS WHICH COME FROM WITHIN.

Multitudes of Believers are of a fearful heart *because they have not the joys and comforts with which some Christians are favored.* God has some of His people who live very near to Himself and who, therefore, partake of the richest things upon His banqueting table. These privileged saints tell of their joys, but certain desponding Christians who have backslidden from God and who, therefore, have not of late tasted of these dainties, cry out, "We cannot be the Lord's people, for we have no such joys as these." As well might the plant in the corner say that it was not planted at all because it did not stand in the front row of the bed! As well might some small tree in the forest say that it did not live because it did not tower

aloft, like some mighty cedar of Lebanon! Because I am not the fairest rose, but only a humble violet hidden among the green leaves, am I to conclude that I am not a flower at all? Oh, no, no! We are not saved by our comforts! They are given to us after we are saved, but we are saved without them. Many a soul has gone to Hell singing, while others have gone to Heaven sighing. It is not right that God's people should hang their harps upon the willows, but far better is it for us to hang our harps upon the willows than, like Haman, to be hanged upon the gallows that, in his pride and malice, he had erected for his enemy, Mordecai! Because we have not all the comforts which some Christians have, let us not be fretful and repine—that is the way to prevent ourselves from ever having them. I would say of the comforts of religion as Christ said of the comforts of this world, "Seek you first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Seek Christ first! Have simple faith in Him and then the ecstasies, the raptures, the enjoyments, the uplifting which some of His people have, shall be added unto you if the Lord sees that it is well for you to have them! But if you seek those things *first*, you shall neither have them nor any other sort of comfort whatever.

Full many there are, also, who are greatly cast down *because of the conflict within.* As soon as there are wars and fights between the two men—the old man and the new man—they at once conclude that it is all over with them. Foolish conclusion, indeed, since, if there were no wars it would be a proof that there was no life! If there were no conflicts it would be an evidence that there was but one power within—and that power the evil one! Draw not, from your internal commotions, from the temptation which assails you and the force with which it acts against your inward principles—draw not the inference that, therefore, you are a castaway of God! This is rather a reason why you should cry, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And, by faith should shout, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

Very many have come across my path, too, who are of a fearful heart *because they have such little faith* and they fear that their little faith will not be sufficient. Ah, Believer, your true riches do not depend upon the amount of your spending money! The Lord sometimes keeps His children rather short of pocket money, but, still, the whole of His riches belongs to them all the while. The unsearchable riches of Christ are the measure of our true wealth—not that portion which we can manage to lay hold of by the hand of faith. If I have, in my hand, but one farthing of faith's wealth, that is a proof that *all the riches of Christ belong to me.* If I have but faith as a grain of mustard seed—so small that it looks as though the first bird of the air that came my way might carry it away, yet, inasmuch as there is life hidden within that tiny mustard seed—a life which only needs the Grace of God to expand and develop it—I am saved, though my faith is but small!

A few, too, I have known, who are troubled with doubts and fears *because they do not understand as much as they would like to.* They cannot read books of divinity, or, if they do read them, they get lost amid the

maze of difficult theological terms. They cannot reconcile certain Truths of God, the one with the other. But this is no ground for fear, for the Gospel is so simple that it is adapted even for those who are all but idiots! I have read some extraordinary instances—facts that no one can dispute—of persons scarcely a degree above sheer idiocy who have, nevertheless, believed in Christ, yes, and whose sayings have had about them certain flashes of a superlative simplicity and supernatural wisdom—and whose words, when they were sifted and carefully examined, were found to read rather like the mind of the Spirit than like the utterances of a poor creature whose mind was almost gone! Think not, dear Friend, that your ignorance can push you out of the family of God! Little children cannot read Greek and Latin, but they can say, "Abba, Father," and that is all they need to say. If you cannot read books of deep theological lore, yet, if Jesus Christ is yours—if you are trusting in Him—even the imperfect knowledge that you have of Him proves that you are His! And He will never leave you, nor forsake you.

I have met with some, too, who were of a fearful heart, afraid that they would be lost *because they felt that they had, at some period of their lives, neglected Christian duty.* This is an old temptation that Satan often casts in the way of godly people. You remember how John Bunyan represents Apollyon as charging poor Christian with being unfaithful—"You did faint at first setting out, when you were almost choked in the Gulf of Despond. You did attempt wrong ways, to be rid of your burden, whereas you should have stayed till your Prince had taken it off! You did sinfully sleep and lose your choice thing; you were also almost persuaded to go back at the sight of the lions. And when you talk of your journey and of what you have heard and seen, you are inwardly desirous of vain-glory in all that you say or do." Now, if any of you should be troubled by similar accusations of the adversary, recollect that since Christ did not love you for your good works, *they are not the cause of His beginning to love you*—and so He does not love you for your good works even now—and they are not the cause of His continuing to love you! He loves you because He will love you. What He approves in you now is that which He has, Himself, given to you! That is always the same—it *always* abides as it was. The life of God is always within you. Jesus has not turned away His heart from you, nor has the flame of His love decreased in the smallest degree. Therefore, faint Heart, "fear not, be strong."

III. I might go on to deal with other fears of God's people, but, instead of doing so, I want TO EXCITE YOU TO GET BEYOND THESE FEARS. In the words of my text, to exhort you to "fear not," but to "be strong."

Some few Sabbaths ago I told you that I had met with a Christian Brother who had never had a doubt. Lately, in Glasgow, I met with another. Mr. Alexander Macleod, the oldest Baptist minister, I believe, in Scotland, told me that he was converted to God, upon the Calton Hill, under Rowland Hill's ministry. He is now, I suppose, 82 or 83 years of age and is still a strong man. He has known the Lord for more than 60 years and he says that not once in his life did he ever have a doubt concerning his election, his calling, his interest in Christ, or his final perse-

verance. He said that he once heard a Unitarian minister preach against the Divinity of Christ and his mind was greatly disturbed, but he never went the length of having any doubts either about Christ, or about his own interest in Him. I knew the man to be everywhere revered for his piety and for the holiness and consistency of his life. I could not, therefore, doubt the truth of what he told me. But I was surprised, not at him, but at myself, that I, who have the same God as he has and perhaps have had more mercies than he has received—that I, in the full vigor of early manhood should doubt, while he, in his old age, should be able to truthfully declare that his soul had never wavered in his simple confidence in Jesus. When I expressed my surprise at him, he expressed a great deal more surprise at me! He said that he came to Christ as a poor sinner and trusted Him to be his All-in-All, and he did not mean to alter his belief until he saw good reason for doing so. I hope that you and I, dear Friends, will come to Jesus, yet again, as poor sinners and take Him to be our All-in-All—and never change from that simple faith till we see good reason for doing so—which, I take it, will never be so long as the heart of Christ is full of affections, the arm of Jesus is unpalsied through affliction, and the eyes of Christ are undimmed with age!

I am sure that Satan is very much gratified when he sees that any of us are of a fearful heart. No doubt he chuckles over it and makes as much as he can of his sorry triumph over poor weak mortals. Do not yield to him, Beloved! Draw your swords and strike boldly at him! Believe that you will overcome him, and you will do so. March forward and believe that the land of promise is yours, for it *is* yours and you shall surely go up and possess it! Is it necessary that the children of God should be a doubting people? Is it necessary that they should be continually cast down? By no means! For it is a great and grievous sin for us to distrust our God. Let us trust in Him at all times and even say with Job, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him."

The path of faith is the smoothest path, after all. The road of life will always be rough, but he who walks by faith will find half its roughness removed. The greater part of our sorrows come not from Heaven, nor Hell, nor earth, but from ourselves. We are our own plague-makers and our own tormentors! A man with strong faith is like one who wears a leather glove who can lay hold of thorns and thistles and not be hurt. But the man with weak faith is like one not only with a naked hand, but with the skin off it—everything he touches irritates the tender flesh and even the small grains of dust may fret within the wound and breed ulcers and foul sores. "Be strong." God is with you, so how dare you be dismayed because of your own weakness? "Fear not." The Lord is your confidence—it is presumption for you to mistrust Him. "Be strong." The might of God is engaged by promise and by oath to bring you safely through. "Fear not." There is no cause for fear—the enemies whom you have seen today, you shall see again no more forever. "Fear not." Fear weakens you and moreover, it dishonors God and gives cause to the enemy to blaspheme His holy name.

I do not know whether this is a portion of meat to any troubled heart here present. Possibly it may be. If so, poor Soul, feed on it. You have gone to a new situation, have you not, and there are some ungodly young men who revile and ridicule you? Well, then, "fear not, be strong." Your business does not answer so well as it did and you hardly know what will become of you. "Fear not, be strong." Commit your cause unto the Lord, lay your case at His feet. Possibly you have sickness in the house and you are half inclined to repine, and to think that there is some anger mingled with the strokes of the rod. "Fear not, be strong." Either the blow you dread will never be inflicted or it will be a blessed blow! This is but a slight sorrow. Do you think me hard and unfeeling in so describing it? But it may be that this sorrow will be very slight compared with that from which you are spared—if this blow did not fall, it might involve a ten times heavier one!

Perhaps you have been sorely tempted by Satan lately and he says that he shall at last have you. "Be strong, fear not." Strike him all the harder for telling that lie! Strike at him with all your power, for, in the might of God, you are far mightier than he is and you can prevail over him! And you, young Man, have recently undertaken service for your Savior, but you feel that you have not the strength needed for it and you are inclined to give up. "Fear not, be strong." He who calls you to His service will support you in it! You and I have to stand like Gideon's soldiers, with the lamp inside the pitcher—that pitcher needs to be broken before the light of the lamp can be seen. The strength of man is like that earthen pitcher and the light of God cannot shine forth until that pitcher is dashed in pieces!

There is one person I must not forget, perhaps more. There are those who know that they are drawing near unto the grave. The shadows lengthen out and their life becomes like the spider's web and they are afraid to die. They know the living Savior, but they fear the dying hour. They think Death's stream is dark, cold and deep—how shall they pass through it to reach the Celestial City? "Fear not, be strong." Death is the last enemy and he is to be destroyed. Remember that, and be of good cheer! He shall not destroy you. Do not call him Death the Destroyer, but Death the Destroyed! Be certain of victory in your last moments! No, *look forward, even now, with hopeful joy* to that most blessed of all moments when, laying your head upon the death pillow, you shall find that Christ's bosom is where that pillow lies and you shall breathe your life out there, finding no iron gates, no shadow of dark wings, no horror of darkness, no dying strife—but bliss beginning, bliss increasing, bliss overflowing and running on forever and ever—bliss that shall be yours beyond the hazard of loss!

God grant unto each one of us that we may be strong, and fear not, for Christ's sake Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 45.

While we are reading this chapter, and thinking of Cyrus, the Lord's anointed deliverer for Israel, let us not forget the greater Deliverer of whom the hymn writer sings—

"Thus says God of His Anointed,
He shall let My people go!
'Tis the work for Him appointed,
'Tis the work that He shall do.
And My city
He shall found, and build it, too."

Verse 1. *Thus says the LORD to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut.* It was thought impossible for any foreign troops to enter Babylon, yet the gates were found open and the army of Cyrus marched in and took possession of the city!

2, 3. *I will go before you, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in piece the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: and I will give you the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that you may know that I, the LORD, which call you by your name, am the God of Israel.* Whenever God calls a man to do any work, however difficult and even impossible it may seem to be, he will certainly accomplish it because he will have God with him. The Lord will gird his loins and make him strong—and all the forces of Providence shall work towards the accomplishment of the Divine end. Has God given you any work to do? It may be a much easier task than that of Cyrus, so, as the Lord enabled him to succeed in his great enterprise, you may have confidence that His power is sufficient to give success to you, also! It may seem to be presumption for you to undertake such a work, yet, if you are called of God to do it, go on without a shadow of doubt, for He will make the crooked places straight and break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron. We must not forget that whatever God did in relation to Cyrus was done with an eye to the welfare of His own people.

4. *For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name: I have surnamed you, though you have not known Me.* And all the powers and princes that arise in this world, God can use for the good of His Church! All the nations, kingdoms and powers there are, are only like so much scaffolding for the building of God's own house—and He makes use of them as He pleases, though, often, they know not what He is doing with them!

5, 6. *I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God besides Me: I girded you, though you have not known Me: that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is none else.* This was intended to correct the mistake of Cyrus who probably was a fire-worshipper—a believer in the two great forces of good and evil which were supposed to be equally eternal and powerful—which the Persians regarded as the god of good and the god of evil. So the Lord says—

7. *I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.* There are not two distinct principles that

are omnipotent and, though God is not the Author of moral evil, yet whatever there is of evil which causes us pain and loss is under His control. There are not two gods, but only one living and true God.

8-10. *Drop down, you heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together, I the LORD have created it. Woe unto him that strives with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashions it, What are you making? Or shall your handiwork say, 'He has no hands'? Woe unto him that says unto his father, What are you begetting? Or to the woman, What have you brought forth?* God, on the ground of His being Creator, demands that He shall not be questioned by human wisdom, nor dictated to by human pride. He is the one Supreme Sovereign and Lord of All—and He may do absolutely as He pleases. It is a joy and delight to us that He always wills to do what is just and right. Still, His Divine prerogative must not be abridged in any way whatever. The potsherds that He has made must never question the action of the great Potter who has made them! Has He not power to mold and fashion the clay exactly as He pleases?

11, 12. *Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask Me of things to come concerning My sons and concerning the work of My hands, you command Me. I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even My hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded.* When we think of this, we ought to worship God, alone, and trust Him, alone, and pay all loyal homage to Him. What can there be that is comparable to the Creator of all things? There is not so much as a grain of dust, nor a single fly that is self-created, or man-made—but everything has come from God and exists because He wills it. Therefore, give to the Lord the Glory that is due unto His name and rest in His power, and trust in His might.

13. *I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build My city, and he shall let go My captives, not for price nor reward, says the LORD of Hosts.* And so Cyrus did. It was through him that Jerusalem was rebuilt and the captive Israelites were delivered!

14, 15. *Thus says the LORD, The labor of Egypt, and merchants of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto you, and they shall be yours: they shall come after you; in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto you, they shall make supplication unto you, saying, Surely God is in you, and there is none else, there is no other God. Verily You are a God that hides Yourself, O God of Israel, the Savior.* This is a most merciful arrangement, for, if God did *not* hide Himself, none of us could exist! The full blaze of His Divine Countenance would be our destruction. God said even to Moses, "You cannot see My face: for there shall no man see Me and live." But it is also partly in judgment that God sometimes hides even that measure of His Presence which, at other times, He reveals in love. But even then, though He is hidden, He is still there. As the blue sky is up yonder, though it is long since you saw it, so is God always present even though we cannot see

Him. The mountains, when hidden in darkness, are as real as they are in the light of day—and God is as truly near to His people, to preserve and succor them when they do not see Him, as when they do.

16-19. *They shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them: they shall go to confusion together that are makers of idols. But Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: you shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end. For thus says the LORD that created the heavens, God Himself that formed the earth and made it; He has established it, He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else. I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, See you Me in vain: I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.* It is a very consolatory thing for us to be told not only what God has said, but also what He has *not* said. You can be sure of this, that there is nothing in the secret book of God's decrees, and nothing in the sealed book of prophecy which is contrary to the gracious Covenant promises which God has revealed to His people in His Word. He does not say one thing and mean another. You may rest assured that all the revelations that are yet to be given, if there are to be any, (and there are some who are always talking about fresh light breaking from the Word), will never contradict that which has been revealed of old! God did not tell His ancient people anything which contradicts what He has told us. The poorest and meanest of His people who have been able to spell out, in the Word of God, their right and title to the Divine inheritance, may rely upon it that if any wise man comes to them with some wonderful discovery which contradicts the Bible—he simply comes with a lie—for God has nowhere contradicted what He has plainly revealed in the Scriptures!

20, 21. *Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, you that are escaped of the nations. They have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save. Tell and bring forth your case; yes, let them take counsel together.* What wooden god has ever foretold the future? What idol of brass or stone had a word to say about the coming of Cyrus? Not one.

21-25. *Who has declared this from ancient time? Who has told it from that time? Have not I, the LORD? And there is no other God besides Me; a just God and a Savior; there is none besides Me. Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. 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. Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to Him shall men come, and all that are incensed against Him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.*

—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.

INVITATION TO A CONFERENCE
NO. 2816

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 1, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 17, 1877.

"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."
Isaiah 1:18.

THE persons to whom this gracious invitation was addressed were in a terrible condition—they could not well have been in a worse plight. They had provoked God above measure by their many sins. He had severely chastened them, yet they had not repented of their iniquities. They would not be either drawn from them or driven from them. Now the Lord seems to say that something else must be done—such a state of things must not be allowed to last any longer.

I am addressing myself to all the unconverted people who are in this congregation and to all who have not yet believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. I have to say that your condition is a very sad one and a very sinful one. You are standing out against the God of Love, refusing to submit to Him whose service is perfect freedom and joy. You are utterly wrong in your relationship to God. You are either living in complete forgetfulness of Him, or you are living consciously in antagonism to Him in unrepented sin and, therefore, unpardoned. This state of things cannot be allowed to continue—you have yourself felt that it must not. There have been many times when you have been by yourself, when you have felt that you must not remain in this sinful condition. You have even breathed a prayer to God asking that you may not continue as you now are, yet you have not had resolution enough to turn from your evil ways.

The first temptation that has crossed your path has drawn you back into the ways of sin and you still remain just as sinful as ever. Some of you are getting old and it is a long time since you received your first religious impressions. Possibly they have been repeated again and again, yet they have all come to nothing and now you are in danger of death at any moment. If you were to die in your present condition, your everlasting state would be fixed and you know it would be a state of the utmost misery and woe! You tremble at the very thought of being launched into it, yet you may be so even while I am addressing you—before the very next word that I shall speak shall have reached the ears of others of my hearers! It may never reach your ears, for they may be closed in the silence of

death. You know this, but do you always mean to go on in this way until you die? I know that is not your intention—you have, within your hearts, a secret expectation that, sooner or later, a change will come to you.

Why should it not come now? I would not like, even for a single moment, to be slung by a slender rope over the yawning mouth of a deep pit. I would not care to be, even for five minutes, in an upper room of a burning house. I would not like, even for a few seconds, to have a dose of poison in my system, although I might hope that there would be time enough to swallow an antidote and so save my life. Yet your position is more perilous than any of these conditions would be! Surely, you have indulged long enough in hesitancy, delay, questioning and promise-breaking, have you not? The Lord seems to me to say to you, "Come now, let us end this state of things. 'Come now, and let us reason together.' Let us talk over the matter and settle it, one way or the other, so that, if your present condition is one that is worth continuing in, you may continue in it with some justifiable arguments to back you up. But if it can be clearly proved to you that something better is to be had and *ought* to be had by you, then perhaps our reasoning together may be the means of leading you to a better condition than that in which you are just now." May God the Holy Spirit help me to speak upon this important theme so as to reach your hearts! If it shall be so, He shall have all the glory!

Some texts need to be preached upon very often because they contain such vital Truths of God, Truths of the very highest importance which it is not easy to get into our hearers' minds and hearts. The carpenter is not blamed because he strikes a nail many times on the head, nor because he strikes the same nail with the same hammer, for he has to drive it into the wood, somehow or other, and to clinch it on the other side. So, if one stroke is not sufficient, he must not leave his work incomplete, but must strike the nail again and again until it is driven home. We shall do well to act in the same way. If we have preached from these words before and, I daresay some of us have done so many times—[Brother Spurgeon preached the following sermons on Isaiah 1:18—*No. 366, Vol. 7*—THE SILVER TRUMPET; *No. 1278, Vol. 22*—REASONS FOR PARTING WITH SIN *and No. 2354, Vol. 40*—SCARLET SINNERS PARDONED AND PURIFIED.—*Read/download them, free of charge at* http://www.spurgeongems.org.—and we feel quite justified in doing so again.

Our first division is to be *an invitation to a conference with God.* "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord." Secondly, we have *a example of the reasoning on God's part.* "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Then, thirdly, I shall endeavor to show you that *this example of the reasoning, on God's part, is an abstract of the whole argument,* a summary of all the real reasoning that there can ever be between the holy God and guilty sinners.

I. First, then, here IS AN INVITATION TO A CONFERENCE WITH GOD. "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord."

The first observation I have to make upon this point is that sinful men and women—the great mass of mankind—do not care to reason with God. I am, on the whole, pleased when I find men reasoning about spiri-

tual matters, even although they argue in a foolish fashion. I mean when they raise the objections and arguments with which skeptics and infidels are usually tolerably familiar. There is a great deal more of hopefulness about people in that condition than about those who will not think at all on religious subjects!

A husband and wife had parted and had been separated for years. He, on several occasions, entreated her to meet him and talk over their differences with a view to reconciliation. She steadily declined an interview and would not enter upon the subject of their alienation. Are you surprised when we add that the fault from the beginning lay with *her*? You cannot doubt that the sin of their continued separation was hers alone. The parable is easy to be interpreted.

The great masses of men seem to want a form of religion that does not require them to think. The people described in this chapter were quite willing to bring their rams, their bullocks, their incense and their oblations—for all that could be done without any effect being produced in their hearts and lives. And there are, at the present day, plenty of persons who will pay for masses, who will attend fine ceremonies and who are very pleased to see the place of worship turned, at one time, into a theater, at another time, into a conservatory, and at a third time into a costumier's shop. They have no objection to all such external observances, for there is nothing to give them any trouble or pain. They just open their mouth, shut their eyes and take in whatever "the priest" is pleased to give them! Many people like that style of religion. They want to avoid the trouble of thinking about sin, righteousness and judgment to come. In fact, they do not want to be bothered about the whole matter. As they get their solicitor to attend to their legal business, so they would prefer to have their priest, their clergyman, their minister, to see to their spiritual business for them. As to reasoning with God and having the matter out with Him, that is not at all according to their ideas. A great many folk want somebody else to do their thinking for them—they put it out, as they do with their washing—so that somebody else may do it in their place.

But, dear Friends, this will not do! Of all things in the world, *true religion demands most serious thought.* It is a thing which has to do with our mind, heart and spirit. Even under the old Law, the command to Israel was, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might." It was a matter for the heart and soul even under that old, dim, preparatory dispensation—how much more is it so under the dispensation of the Gospel whose very first commandment is, "Believe," which does not mean a blind shutting of the eyes, but the exercise of the most serious thought of which the mind of man is capable!

"Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord." This invitation to a conference with God is, next, *a most reasonable thing.* I know that there is, in certain quarters, an idea that all religion is fanaticism, that you have to believe in something or other, whether it is true, or reasona-

ble, or not—and then go ahead without thinking anything more about the matter. It is not so, Beloved. To me, the religion of Jesus Christ is as much the subject of cool, calculating, common sense as anything that I have to do with. I know many Christians who are gifted with calm, collected minds, and clear, argumentative powers, and I am certain, from my conversations with them, that they have reasoned out the truth of the things which are most surely believed by them. They have proven, to their own satisfaction, that the Word of God is a Divine Revelation to men. They have argued the matter out and they are fully convinced of the soundness of their conclusions. And being so convinced, they have ascertained what this Revelation from God demanded of them and, finding what it was, they judged that it was an act of true wisdom on their part to accept God's way of salvation. That way of salvation has commended itself to their judgment as far as they have been able to understand it. They have not pretended to comprehend it altogether, but what they have understood of it has seemed to them to afford such a solid foothold for their spirit that having reasoned the matter out, in solemn earnestness—before the living God—they have become convinced that they must believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior!

Beloved Friends, we are not afraid to set publicly before you the Gospel which we desire you to believe! The Romish Church locked away the Bible from the people—the priests did not want to have a thinking people, people who would search the Scriptures for themselves. But we earnestly exhort you to study the Word of God for yourselves! Become familiar with its words and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit as to their meaning. Judge of our preaching by its agreement with the teaching of this Book—never accept anything we say simply because we say it, but bring it all to the Law and to the Testimony, for if we speak not according to this Word, it is because of the lack of the Light of God in us.

It is most gracious on the Lord's part to invite you to a conference with Him. How condescending it is for the Most High to be willing for you to reason with Him! He seems to say to you, "Come, My Friend, you and I are not agreed. There is something or other in your mind that keeps you from yielding to My love. I mean you no hurt. 'Come now,' keep nothing back from Me. Come and tell Me all about the matter." How graciously the Lord stoops down to us in saying, "Come now, and let us reason together"! "Us." It is His voice that shakes the earth with tempests, the voice of the mighty God, the Creator and Judge of All who speaks to us, worms of the dust, utterly insignificant compared with Him, and says, "'Come now, and let us reason together.' Tell Me what is your difficulty. I will lay aside My Glory and will come down and talk familiarly with you that we may have this question settled."

See, dear Friends, what a proof this is of God's loving kindness and graciousness that He invites us to reason with Him! If He had not meant good to us, He would have had no reasoning with us. He would simply have said, "These people have sinned against Me—let then die. I have already sent My Son to them and they have rejected Him. They have disre-

garded My Sabbaths and despised My holy Word—why should I reason with them? They have Moses and the Prophets—let them hear them. Their fathers and mothers have reasoned with them and their minister has done the same. Now I will punish them as they deserve." But, no, the Lord still says to you, "'Come now, come now.' All the reasoning of other people has failed. Perhaps the argument has not been put fairly before you. 'Come now, and let us reason together.' Speak out the bitterest thought that is in your mind. Let the very wormwood and gall of your enmity against Me come out, but, 'let us reason together, says the Lord.'" He must mean well to you, dear Friends, or He would never have spoken such words as these. He could not have thought of them in anger. Designs of love must be within His heart when He says, "Come now, and let us reason together."

I think that there is also great tenderness in my text in the use of the word, "*now*." "Come *now*, and let us reason together, says the Lord." God would not have you live another moment as you now are. "As I live, says the Lord God"—and He lifts His hand to Heaven and swears by Himself, as He can swear by none greater—"I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn you, turn you from your evil ways; for why will you die?" The Lord has no delight in having you continue to be His enemy! It gives Him no pleasure to see your hardness of heart, or to see the consequences of that hardness of heart in the awful peril that you are running every minute that you live in sin, so He says to you, "There is the whole universe for Me to govern, yet I am willing to have a conference with you. 'Come now,' this very hour. Come now, do not put it off till tomorrow. I am always at leisure to reason with a sinner—whenever there is a soul that is anxious to seek Me, I am always ready to seek that soul and to welcome it to My heart." "Come now," says the Lord. Then, let it be now with you! God appoints this present time for His conference with us—let it be our time, too. "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation." "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

II. Now let us turn, in the second place, to AN EXAMPLE OF THE REASONING ON GOD'S PART.

We will suppose that the sinner is willing to confer with God about this all-important matter and that he goes at once to his main argument. "My Lord," he says, "I would be reconciled to You if I could, but, alas, sin lies at the door and I am no ordinary sinner! I have broken Your commands a thousand times. I have done what I ought not to have done and I have left undone the things that I ought to have done—and there is no health in me." Now observe the method of reasoning on God's part.

First, *the one main ground of difference is honestly mentioned.* The Lord does not deny the truth of what the sinner has confessed, but He says to him, "'Though your sins are as scarlet, I meet you on that ground. You need not try to diminish the extent of your sin, or seek to make it appear to be less than it really is. No, whatever you say it is, it is

all that and probably far more. Your deepest sense of your sinfulness does not come up to the truth concerning your real condition. Certainly, you do not exaggerate in the least. Your sins are scarlet and crimson. It seems as though you have put on the imperial robe of sin and made yourself a monarch of the realm of evil." That is how a man's guilt appears before the searching eyes of God.

Now see how the Lord deals with this sad and difficult case. *He Himself removes the ground of difference between Himself and the sinner.* 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 does not, in our test, say how this great change shall be worked. It suffices here to give us an assurance that it shall be so. Well, then, what is the inference from that assurance? Why, Sinner, surely it is that there is nothing now to keep you away from God because your sin, which was like a great stone that had been rolled between you and your God, has been rolled right away by God! He has removed every stain, spot, speck and trace of sin by the precious blood of Jesus which cleanses all to whom it is applied. Why do you stand back, then? Surely, you cannot continue to stay in the background. If your sin is pardoned, you will rush into your Savior's arms—the reasoning will be ended and your heart melting with repentance! And God's Grace pouring itself over you in a flood of holy joy, there will be no longer any ground of difference between you and your God, for you and He will be truly one!

Now let us look a little more closely at this example of reasoning on God's part. I have pointed out to you the grand outline, now let us consider the argument in detail. This will show you that *the Lord will remove the offense perfectly*—"scarlet" and "crimson" are to become "as snow" and "as wool."

I suppose that the text implies that the sinner might say, "Lord, there is the guilt of my sin—how can I ever get rid of that? I have been guilty of transgression all my life—how can that guilt be put away? I know of nothing that can remove it. Though I should give enough of the blood of bullocks and rams to make a river, my guilt could never be washed away by it." I remember how I asked this question of God many and many a time and I could not, for a long while, exercise any hope of salvation because the mountain of my guilt seemed to separate me from the thrice-holy God. Our text shows us that the Lord meets the difficulty, not by denying the sinner's guilt, but by removing it! He says to the guilty one, "No doubt you are as bad as you say you are, but I will make all this guilt of yours to vanish away. It shall be cast behind My back into the depths of the sea and shall be found no more forever. The scarlet shall be as snow, the crimson shall be as wool."

Then the awakened conscience brings forward another difficulty and says, "But, Lord, my sin must be punished." I cannot make out how it is that some people seem to think that the punishment of sin is an arbitrary act on the part of God. I remember well when God burnt this Truth into my soul as with a hot iron, that sin necessitated punishment, that if

I walked contrary to God, if I was out of gear with Him, I must suffer, just as certainly as I should do if I were to thrust my arm amidst the wheels of a powerful engine when they were revolving at a tremendous rate. If I were to do that, I am certain to suffer, just as, in continuing to sin, I am resisting the moral Law of God and its ponderous wheels must crush me. I remember when I used to say to myself, when I was quite a lad, "If God does not punish me for my sin, He ought to do so." That thought used to come to me again and again. I felt that God was just and that He knew that I did not wish Him to be anything but just, for even my imperfect knowledge of God included my recognition that He was a just and holy God. If I could have been certain of salvation by any method in which God would have ceased to be just, I could not have accepted it on those terms—I would have felt that it was derogatory to the dignity of the Most High and that it was contrary to the universal laws of right.

But this was the question that puzzled me—"How can I be saved, since I have sinned and sin must be punished?"You see, in our text, the blessed answer which the Lord Himself gives, "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 is to say, the Lord means, "You shall have no sin to be punished, for I will so effectually remove it that there shall be none left upon you. I will be as sternly just to you as a righteous and holy God must be, yet I shall not smite you, for I see nothing in you, or upon you, which I ought to smite." O wondrous miracle of mercy and Grace!

Then the sinner further objects, "But, Lord, if You do thus pardon me at once and take all my guilt and fear of punishment away, yet, alas, there are habits of evil which I have acquired, but which I cannot conquer. I would oh, that I could be perfectly free from sin, but, Lord, how can I be? I find always within me a tendency towards that which is evil—and though I now hate the evil, yet I find the law of sin in my members warring against that better law which your Holy Spirit has implanted within me. O God, how can I ever be reconciled to You, for how can I kill these deadly serpents that are coiled up in my heart?" To this piteous lament, the Lord graciously replies, "Yes, poor Soul, your nature is all that you say. It is a nature that has been lying soaking in the crimson lye till there is no getting the stain out by any human instrumentality. This evil thing called sin is engrained in your very being, but I can take it out and I will take it out. I will conquer every propensity to sin—yes, and so utterly conquer it that the day shall come when you shall have no tendency to sin whatever, but shall be altogether delivered from it and dwell with Me in spotless and eternal perfection." Oh, how sweetly does the Lord, by promising to do all this, take away from the sinner the great barrier that stood between him and his God! Thus, the guilt, the penalty and the power of sin shall all be removed.

Now give me your most earnest attention, for two or three minutes, while I remind you that although it is not in our text, yet, in other parts of God's Word the Lord has been pleased to tell us how He works this

great change. I like you to understand, as far as you can, how it is worked, though, mark you, many have been saved who have not understood very clearly how their salvation was accomplished. They have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. They have not comprehended as much as it is well that you should comprehend, but yet, simply trusting in Jesus, believing that the promise of Grace was true, they have proved it true to them.

But listen. God has told us how He can put our guilt away. Most of you know "the old, old story," yet, perhaps, as I tell it once again, God the Hoy Spirit may enable some people to understand it who have never understood it before. I know that there are some of us who heard the Gospel preached very plainly for many years, yet we did not understand it till, one day, when the familiar story was being told to us yet again, in much the same language as before, God the Holy Spirit let the Light of God into our dark minds and we saw Jesus as our own dear Savior and rejoiced in Him with unspeakable and glorious joy!

Now, this is how God puts away our scarlet and crimson sins. His Son, His only-begotten and well-beloved Son came down from Heaven, took upon Himself our nature and became a Man. And being found in fashion as a Man, He stood as the Substitute for all who should ever believe in Him, so that God regarded Him as the Representative of all those for whom He stood as Surety—and laid upon *Him* all their sin. And when it was laid upon Him, it was no longer upon them, since it could not be in two places at the same time. So the sin of Christ's people was removed from them and put upon Him, according as it is written in the Old Testament, "The Lord has laid on Him ("caused to meet upon Him") the iniquity of us all." And in the New Testament, "For He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

The sin being, by imputation, laid upon Christ, God the Father proceeded to deal with Christ on account of that sin as though He had been the actual sinner. He was brought up, charged, condemned and put to death—and He died deserted of His Father, crying, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" And that agonizing death of His—God tells us that it is so, therefore we may well believe it—has vindicated the justice of God, magnified the Law and made it honorable. And now God, for Christ's sake, can—no, more, He *does* blot out the sin of all His people and make it cease to be, seeing that it is a rule of His never to punish the same offense twice. So, if Christ was punished for my sin, I can never be punished for it. For, as Toplady truly sings—

"Payment God cannot twice demand,
First at My bleeding Surety's hand,
And then again at mine."

If you, my Friend, whoever you are, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, I am able to assure you, beyond all doubt, that He bore your sin, carried your sorrow and discharged your debt and that, therefore, you are forever clear! Do you not see how reasonable all this is? Perhaps you raise a difficulty and ask, "But why should Christ stand in my place? Where is

the justice of punishing the Innocent, and letting the guilty go free?" Ah, that is a wonder of distinguishing Grace that we cannot comprehend! When the angels fell, they fell one by one, each one sinned and rebelled as an individual, but when you and I fell, it was in our representative head, Adam the first. Therefore it became possible, since we originally fell in one Adam, that we could be raised on the same principle through another Adam and, lo, Jesus Christ, the Second Adam in whose loins lay all His elect ones, even as the whole human race lay in the loins of the first Adam, has come and, instead of all who are in Him, suffering, He has suffered in their place upon a strictly righteous principle. At any rate, you need not question the rightness of the principle—if God approves of it, if it satisfies Him, it may very well suffice for you! If the system of salvation by substitution meets the claims of eternal justice, it should certainly content you. O poor Soul, trust in the blood of Jesus and your sins shall all vanish through His substitutionary Sacrifice!

Listen again. Something was said, just now, about evil habits that were to be put away. How is that to be done? The moment you believes in Jesus—at that very instant the Holy Spirit entirely changes your nature! There is then born in your soul, a new principle—the spirit, something far superior to the natural soul—a spirit which understands and has to do with spiritual things. This is what our Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." And this new spirit within you is the Spirit of Christ! It is a living and eternal principle which will follow after holiness and which cannot sin because it is born of God. Do you not see, then, how your old habits will be broken? You will be a new man and you will be able to say with the Apostle, "We are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God." This is what God will do with you—your scarlet and crimson sins shall vanish because you are born-again—made "a new creature in Christ Jesus."

I do not know whether I am putting this matter plain enough for all of you to understand it, but I know that there was a time when I was very anxious about my soul, when I would have been very thankful to have heard such plain talk as this rather than a fine sermon that would have been of no service to me in my sad condition. And I say to you, young man, you who are troubled because of your sin, that if you believe in Christ Jesus, His atoning Sacrifice will take all your guilt away and the Hoy Spirit will come and dwell within you—and so enable you to conquer every sinful propensity, and your life shall, from this time forward, become "holiness unto the Lord." "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord." And is not this grand reasoning when your greatest difficulties are thus swept away by His almighty Grace?

III. I must, however, finish by briefly showing you that THIS EXAMPLE OF REASONING IS AN ABSTRACT OF THE WHOLE ARGUMENT.

I do not know the particular condition of everybody now present, but I do know that all possible cases are covered by the Divine invitation given in this one verse of Scripture.

Possibly, somebody says, "I do not need to be saved." My dear Sir, I am not speaking about such a case as yours, for you refuse to reason—there is no sense or reason in you. "But," says another, "I do not intend to yield to the Gospel." That is another case in which there is no reasoning and no reason. You simply say, "I do not want to have anything to do with Christ." Well, if so, you have only yourself to blame for your fatal decision! Your destruction, when it comes upon you, will rest upon you alone and, amidst the flames of Hell, as you bite your tongue in anguish, you will not be able to charge your ruin upon God, or upon the preacher who is now addressing you. You put the Gospel of Jesus Christ away from you, counting yourself unworthy of it—and if you continue to do so, there remains nothing for you but to perish forever and ever!

But there are some people of another kind and these have various difficulties in coming to Christ. One says, "I have been too great a sinner." That difficulty is fully met here—"Though your sins are as scarlet." Granted that they are scarlet, "they shall be as white as snow." "But I have sinned so long." Very well, that case is also included here—"though they are red like crimson." These two colors, scarlet and crimson, are often made to lie a long time and soak till the very warp and woof of the cloth has taken the dye. Well, you are like that, but, though it is so with you, God will make you "as snow" and "as wool"!

"Oh, but I have sinned against a great deal more Light than most people have!" No doubt that is true. I do not deny it and that certainly increases your guilt, but my text covers your case—"though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." "Ah, Sir, but I have resisted the Holy Spirit," says another. Granted, but, "though your sins are red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

"I fear," says yet another, "that the Holy Spirit has left me, for I have so sorely grieved Him." Read the verse following our text—"If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land." Now, if you are willing to be saved and willing to be obedient to that Divine command, "Believe and live," the Hoy Spirit has not left you! As long as you have any feeling whatever, you have not committed the sin which is unto death, for, if you had committed *that* sin, you would have been utterly unmoved and careless—and no thought of Divine things would come across your mind again.

Oh, you may tell me what you like about yourselves, but my text meets your case! You may be a harlot, Sister—give me your hand, just as you are, and listen to these words of God, Himself, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." If there were a murderer here, red-handed from his crime, his sin would, evidently, be scarlet and crimson, yet, my Brother, yes, even your hand would I take and I would say to you, "'Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.' If you believe in Jesus Christ, that is, if you trust Him with your soul, if you will accept God's way of salvation, which is ceasing to try to save yourself

and yielding yourself to be saved by Jesus only, you shall be saved here and now!"

I cannot get out to you all that this text keeps on saying to me. It is singing in my soul! I can hear the music of it even if you cannot. I only wish that you might do so. Sometimes, when I am preaching, I feel like a butcher at the block—cutting off large roasts of meat for others and getting nothing himself. But just now I am feeding on the text myself—I only wish I could make every soul here feel hungry after it, for it is yours as much as it is mine—as you, too, are a sinner against God. Perhaps I am addressing someone who says, "I do not see any need to reason with God." Friend, let your condition of mind startle and alarm you! A man who is not right with his God may be sure that there is something wrong with his soul. And if this grandest of all possessions—the possession of God Himself—does not seem to you to be pre-eminently desirable, it is because your eyes are blinded and your heart is dead to the things of God and you are in "the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." It is because you are of the earth, earthy, that you find your pleasure in the things that you can see, feel, taste, and hear. It is because you are carnally minded and have never been renewed in spirit, that you are thus content with what will do you no good!

Do you know what will become of you if you continue as you are? You are born of the flesh and that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and flesh will go to corruption one of these days—and that is what you will go to, to corruption, the worm that never dies and the fire that shall never be quenched! There is only one way to keep in check the hurtful, horrible corruption that grows out of carnal mindedness. "You must be born-again." "You *must* be born-again." There are some things that may be or may not be, but you "*must* be born-again," for, unless you are born-again, if you could go to Heaven, it would not be Heaven to you! And if God gave Himself to you, you could not enjoy Him. You must be born-again! Oh, let that, *"must,"* impress itself upon your mind and heart—and rest not, O dear Hearer, until you are born-again! This is the work of the Spirit of God upon you and, side by side with it runs that other text, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." May you be enabled by the Spirit to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ! Then you will be born-again—no longer will you be under condemnation, but, as a spiritual man you will delight in spiritual things—and, chiefly, you will delight in God and He will make my text true to you, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Pray David's prayer and you will receive a gracious answer from the Lord even as the Psalmist did, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

I have done with my text for this time, yet I have half a mind to linger a minute and say, "Come now, if you have not reasoned with God, let *me* try to reason with you. Let us reason together. Come, my dear Friend, can any good result from your continuing as you now are? You uncon-

verted men and women and especially you unconverted old people, can any good come of your remaining strangers to Christ?"

Let me put another question. Could any hurt come of your being the friends of Christ? Can you imagine any real loss that you could sustain by being saved? I would not tell a lie, even for God, Himself, and He would never wish me to do so, but this Truth of God I declare to you now—ever since I have believed in Jesus, the joy, rest and peace I have experienced are altogether indescribable! One thing ought to convince you of the blessings of true religion and that is that you never met a Christian yet—you never saw a dying Christian, setting up in his bed, leaning on the pillow, with his children round him, and saying, "My dear boys and girls, beware of the Christian religion! Beware of confidence in Christ! It is all a delusion." There has never, since the foundation of our blessed faith, been one who, in the valley of the shadow of death, has said," I have discovered all this to be a fiction and I wish to warn everyone else against it."

On the contrary, they have unanimously said, either with shouts of triumph or with quiet words of peaceful trust, "Blessed be the name of the Lord! This is joy, indeed, to be found in Christ Jesus, now that I am about to depart to be forever with Him!" Let practical evidence convince you, dear people, and if there is anything real and precious about all this of which I have been speaking—as there certainly is—if it is anything worth having, it is worth having now! If it is ever a good thing to be saved, it is well to be saved at once! If it is ever worthwhile to be rid of sin, it is worthwhile to be rid of sin before that clock ticks again! If it is ever worthwhile for you to have joy in God, it is worthwhile for you to have it before your eyes have again closed in slumber!

The Lord grant that you may find it right speedily, for His name'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.

JACOB'S FEAR AND FAITH
NO. 2817

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 8, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 21, 1877.

"Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And You said, I will surely do you good, and make your seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude." Genesis 32:11,12.

JACOB is the type of a Believer who has too much planning and scheming about him. He is a wise man according to the judgment of the world. Put him down by the side of Laban and if his relative tries to stint him in his wages and to cheat him in all manner of ways, you will see that Jacob, in the long run, will get even with Laban. He seems to have been able to deal, even with that con-man, quite as sharply and not to come off second best in the bargain! Abraham never descended to any of the tricks by which Jacob sought to increase his flocks. He lived like a princely man in simple, childlike confidence in God, willing to be injured rather than to seek his own interests, letting Lot, though a younger man, choose the best part of the land and being quite content to take whatever remained. Because God was with him as his portion, he had no hunger after anything else. He was worth fifty thousand of such kings as the king of Sodom and though he had a right to the spoils of war, he waived them, saying, "I will not take from a thread even to a shoelace. I will not take anything that is yours lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich.'"

Jacob, if he had been in such a case, would have looked very closely after all the threads, the shoelaces and all the other things that he had captured in the war. He would have said that God gave them into his hands and he would take good care to preserve them. Among worldlings, Jacob would be regarded as a much more sensible man than either his grandfather Abraham, or his father Isaac. But when you come to weigh him in the balances of the sanctuary, although he was a great and good man, and a man of such force of character that he is reproduced in his descendants, even to the present generation, yet, for all that, the weakness of his character lay in the human strength of that character—his power to plot and plan makes him appear as a much smaller and feebler man in the eyes of those who can judge *spiritually*, than Abraham, his forefather was.

I suppose Jacob's bargaining faculty came from his mother and she got it from her brother, Laban, and Laban, with his niggardly ways, was enough to infect the whole family. Rebekah, in that artful plot by which she deceived her blind old husband and taught her son to rob his elder brother of his father's blessing, showed that the same vein was in her—and that she belonged to that plotting, scheming stock. And the mother's character was strongly manifested in her son Jacob. Hence it is that you find him getting into all manner of trouble. Abraham had his trials and one great supreme trial, but, as a summary of his life, it is written, "The Lord had blessed Abraham in all things." And everybody feels that Abraham's life was a most desirable one. It is such a life as we might, any of us, wish to live. But Jacob's life is not a desirable one. At one time he is bargaining with his famished brother about a mess of red pottage—a transaction which we cannot approve. Then, afterwards, we find him joining with his mother in deceiving his poor old father. It is noteworthy that he who had deceived his father, Isaac, was himself deceived by his uncle, Laban! Such conduct is generally repaid into our own bosoms—our chickens come home to roost and we get back for ourselves what we thought we had given away to others. Jacob's own summary of his life, as he gave it to Pharaoh, was, "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been," so full were they of sorrow and trial. I may say of him as was said of many of David's mighty men, "Nevertheless, he attained not unto the first three." There he stands, accepted and blest, for he was a man of faith, but the very strength of his character, as I have already reminded you, was the proof of its weakness and caused him many sorrows.

Our text introduces Jacob to us just before that memorable night by the brook Jabbok. He was expecting his brother Esau to come with a troop of 400 men, perhaps to slaughter the whole company. The Patriarch's state of mind is a mixture of fear and faith. He doubts, yet he believes! He has much distrust, yet he does confide in God, at least to some extent. As two hosts met him, so he, himself, was the representative of two hosts. Solomon says in the Canticles, "What will you see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies." So was it with Jacob. There were both nature and Grace, belief and unbelief, fear and faith battling together in his soul. What a picture he is of many of us in whom a perpetual warfare is being waged between the Law of Grace and the Law that is by nature in our members—between the heavenly principle that cannot die, and cannot sin—and the old nature which is always struggling for the mastery and making us often cry out, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

I. I am going, first, to speak about JACOB'S FEAR as we have it mentioned in our text—"I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children."

My first observation is that *Jacob, in his fear, is not to be held up as an example to us.* He is not to be commended for thus fearing Esau and neither are we to imitate him in this respect. My next remark will, perhaps,

seem strange to you, but I ask you to weigh it well and consider it carefully. There is a great deal that Christians feel which they never ought to feel. There are a great many things that Christians do which they never ought to do and there are many places into which Christians go into which they never ought to go. It was so with the ancient Believers and especially with Jacob. His experience is the experience of a good man, but it is not, in all respects, the experience that a good man ought to have. Why should he have been filled with fear at the prospect of meeting his brother? There was no reason for it—his grandfather Abraham would not have had any such fear—and if Jacob had possessed more Divine Grace, he would not have said, concerning Esau, "I fear him." He knew that God had given him the blessing which Esau despised—again and again had the Lord appeared to him—and he must have known that he was blessed in a way that Esau was not. Why, then, should he fear his brother?

Should the elect of God be afraid of one who has neither part nor lot in the matter? Should he not rather feel that the son of the King of kings must not fear the child of Satan, the heir of wrath? The friends of the wicked Haman said to him, "If Mordecai is of the seed of the Jews, before whom you have begun to fall, you shall not prevail against him, but shall surely fall before him." And well may Mordecai stand upright in the king's gate and never bow his head before Haman! Why should he fear and tremble even though Haman has the ear of the king? Mordecai has the ear of the King of kings, so he need not be afraid of anything Haman could do!

Jacob's fear was wrong, first, *because it followed immediately after a great deliverance*. He had left his father-in-law, Laban, in haste. He had stolen away by night and Laban had hurried after him. Encumbered as Jacob was with so numerous a company which included so many young children and so much cattle, he had to move very slowly—and Laban soon overtook him. He was boiling over with rage when he started and meant to do desperate things, but God interposed and made him put the sword into the scabbard, so that, instead of there being any slaughter, there was as kindly a state of feeling between the two as could be expected under the circumstances. After God had preserved His servant Jacob from the wrath of Laban, it is strange that he should have been afraid of Esau. He has been delivered once, cannot he expect to be delivered again? He has just been rescued from one peril, yet he trembles in the prospect of another!

Do you know anybody who ever acted in that way? If you do not, I do. I know where he lives. I will not say that I live with him, but I will confess, with sorrow, that I have sometimes been that very person. Have you also been one of the same sort of persons? If so, I will not say what I think of *you*, but I will say of *myself*, "How foolish I am to act thus! How basely am I acting towards my Lord!" He who has been with us, never changes—what He has done once, He will do again. Is His arm shortened, or His eye blinded, or His heart turned to stone? No! Then surely we ought to have learned by experience to trust in God, even as Jacob

ought to have learned from his experience so fresh in his memory and trusted the Lord concerning Esau as He had delivered him from the wrath of Laban!

Another thing that tended to make Jacob's fear inexcusable was that *the angels of God had met him just before*. The chapter from which our text is taken, tells us, in its opening verse, that, "Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him." Messengers from the eternal Throne of God came to salute God's favorite! And, I suppose, to escort him back to the land that was given to his fathers by a Covenant that could not be broken. The Patriarch was attended, before and behind, or on the right hand and on the left, by two companies of angels, yet he says, "I fear Esau." Even in the society of those who must have borne a perfume of Heaven upon their wings, standing in the midst of immortal spirits whose faces must have reflected the Glory of their Lord and Master, Jacob says, "I fear Esau." Again I ask, Did you ever know anybody act in such a fashion as this? Perhaps you say, "I never saw any angels." No, but you have, by faith, seen the great Angel of the Covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ, and you have had most intimate communion with Him. At His Table, how often has He revealed Himself to us in the breaking of bread? And in the reading or hearing of His Word, how often has He been set forth before us as our Heavenly Bridegroom, the Beloved of our soul? And, sometimes when we have been quite alone, the bright light of His Presence has surprised us and our hearts have burned within us while He has communed with us. Well, then, it has been very shameful on our part if, afterwards, we have feared Esau, or have been afraid of some anticipated trouble, or fearful because of bodily pain, or, perhaps, put out of temper by some trifling matter in the household which should have been altogether beneath our notice as companions of the Lord of the angels! The Lord have mercy upon His servants and forgive our unbelieving fear, for which we will not pretend to make any excuse!

Note, concerning Jacob's fear, that *it probably arose out of the recollection of his old sins.* Old sins, like old sores, are very apt to break out again. The very mention of the name of Esau brought up before his mind the day when his mother cooked the "two good kids of the goats," and took his brother's goodly raiment, put it on Jacob and put the skins of the kids upon his hands and his neck, that he might deceive his father into the belief that he was his "very son Esau." Jacob remembered all that and felt that Esau had good reason to be angry, for he had supplanted him twice, and done him grievous wrong. He was afraid of Esau on the principle that "conscience makes cowards of us all." A sin may be forgiven by God, yet, for all that, its sting may be felt by you 50 years afterwards, just as, perhaps, some of you may have had a bone broken in your boyhood and had it very well set, yet, sometimes, before bad weather, you feel a twinge that reminds you that bone was once broken. Thus it was with Jacob—that old bone began to creak and to threaten that bad weather was coming. If he had dealt fairly and justly with Esau—and left the Lord to settle that matter of the birthright as He had always intended to give it. If he had left God to arrange everything in His own way, and

had not been so wise, in his own estimation, like his clever, scheming mother, he would not have been afraid to meet Esau as he now was!

Well, dear Friends, perhaps some old sin is the cause of your fear. If so, I pray you to remember that one sin ought not to lead you to commit another, or to be an excuse for committing another. Suppose that, in your early days, you did sin in a certain fashion, or that, in your later days, you have transgressed in some other way? Should you, therefore, doubt your God? You should be humble in the remembrance of your sin, but you should not, therefore, mistrust the Most High! He is always faithful, whatever we may have been. He did not, at the first, receive us as innocent, but as guilty—yet He saved us. As we look back upon the past, we may well mourn our guiltiness, but let us not doubt our salvation if we have believed in Jesus! Even when God's people get themselves into trouble, it is very remarkable how He delivers them. They ought to be careful as to how they walk before Him, but even when they are not, and their folly brings them into a net, yet does He come and tear the net in pieces—and the poor captive bird escapes out of the snare of the fowler. Even when we willfully wander from Him, the Lord graciously restores our souls, blessed be His name! Do not, therefore, let the remembrance of our past guilt lead us into any doubt concerning the fidelity of Him who has cast all our sins into the depths of the sea and who will never allow them to be again laid to our charge.

There is this which is commendable to be said about Jacob's fear—*it led him to prayer.* What was he doing when he said of his brother Esau, "I fear him"? O Brothers and Sisters, if you ever say the same thing, mind that you get to the same place where Jacob was and say it, as he said it, to his God! It is ill to say it at all, but if it is said, it is well to say it to the Lord. Go to Him with whatever troubles you have and unburden your souls at the Mercy Seat. If there is any suspicion or mistrust in your mind or heart—dark and black though the thought may be—yet go and tell Him all! He knows all about it, for He reads your heart, yet go to Him and lay it all before Him and ask Him to cleanse it all away. To go and tell our doubts to our fellow creatures is like spreading an infectious disease—it does not often bring us any comfort—and it frequently causes others to have more distrust who had quite enough of their own before. We ought not to be slack in prayer, for we are ready enough to tell our neighbors all about our trials and troubles, though they cannot help us!

Note, also, that *Jacob's fear led him to take a review of his life.* That was a good thing. "I am not worthy," he said to the Lord, "of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have showed unto Your servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan and now I am become two bands." It is a blessed thing, sometimes, to look back upon our past history in order to revive our confidence in God at the present time. It never does to rely only upon the past and to say, "God favored me at such-and-such a time and, therefore, I am His." No, you need *present mercy*—as you cannot live on the meat you ate long ago—so you cannot exist on only past mercy. Yet, as I have reminded you, you may have seen how the bargemen on the canal push backward to send the boat

forward—and you may push backward with your experience in order to send the boat of your life forward in new confidence in God.

I do not speak only for myself when I say that if we will review our lives from the first day until now, we shall be again surprised at the wonderful loving kindness of the Lord towards us. Jacob speaks to the Lord, "of *all* the mercies, and *all* the truth, which You have showed unto Your servant." Now, if anybody could have foretold, 20 years ago, to some of you, that you would be in such a good position as you are now in, you would have been filled with delight at the prospect, yet, perhaps, you are not now happy in the possession of it. And if you could have foreseen all the mercy which God has strewn in your pathway, you would have jumped for joy! Yet you do not jump for joy now as you look back upon it. Is not that wrong? Oh, when I think of what the Lord has done for me, personally, I reckon that I would be the very chief of sinners if I should ever mistrust Him again! I can say, and so can you, my Brothers and Sisters in Jesus—

"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!"

Then, why should any of us ever say, in unbelief—

"He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink"?

Beloved Friends, think of the places from which the Lord brought some of you. It is not so very long ago since you were living in sin—perhaps in the worst forms of sin—without hope and without God in the world. Had you died as you were then, where would you have been? Yet now you are numbered among the Lord's children and you have enjoyed much of His love and been highly favored by Him! I charge you by the abounding mercy which you have received—let these present fears that now molest you, be driven from your bosom!

Furthermore, *Jacob was also led to seek out the promise that was most suitable to his case,* for he said, "I fear Esau, that he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children." Now notice how appropriate was the promise that he quoted to meet the case—"And You said, I will surely do you good, and make your seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude." Now, if the father is killed and the mother and the children are killed, how can Jacob's seed be as the grains of sand upon the seashore which cannot be counted? He had a good hold upon his God when he quoted that promise and, Beloved, it may be the same in your experience. You never know the preciousness of the promises till you realize your need of them. You may not know what keys the locksmith has in his possession. Possibly he does not know, himself, how many he has. But if you lose the key to your door, you send for him and he comes with a great bunch of keys—and he tries one, and another, and another, and another till, at last, he finds one that will fit. God's promises are often so little studied by His people that they are like a great bunch of rusty keys till we really need them! And then we turn them over and we say, of some particular promise, "That just meets my case. Blessed be the name of the Lord, it must have been made on purpose for

me! That key fits all the wards of this lock." And then you begin to prize the promise.

It is, I think, worthy of note that God had *not* said to Jacob, in so many words, "I will surely do you good." At least, as far as the Scriptures are concerned, there is no record of any such promise. But He had said to the Patriarch, "I am with you," and, "I will not leave there." So, this is Jacob's version of the promise and it is a true one, too, because if God says, "I am with you," he means, "I will do you good." Have you ever heard Brothers pray, in the Prayer Meeting, "Lord, You have promised that where two or three are gathered together in Your name, You will be in the midst of them and that to bless them and do them good"? Well now, that last part is what they have tagged on to our Savior's words. He did not say, "and that to bless them and do them good," because it was not necessary to say that. If the Lord is in the midst of them, He must bless them and do them good! So Jacob felt that if the Lord had not put it in just those words, He implied it when He said, "I am with you." How could the Lord be with him except to do him good? That was his translation of the original text which came out of God's lips—and that is what the Lord really meant by it. Jacob had gone below the surface and spied out the hidden meaning—and if you should ever be able to see more in a promise than is in it, it is in it! I seem to contradict myself by that paradox, yet it is true. If the Word of the Lord should, in its literal construction, not actually contain all that your faith can see in it, yet over every promise there is this Law of God written, "According to your faith, be it unto you." And you may rest assured that your faith will never outrun the promise of God! He will keep His promise, not only to the letter, but to the fullest possible meaning that you can impart to it!

II. But I must not say any more about Jacob's fear, or I shall have no time for speaking about HIS FAITH. Yet I *have been* speaking about it while I have been talking concerning his fear.

First, *Jacob's faith was based upon God's promise.* He mentioned his fear of Esau and then he turned to the Lord, saying, "You said, I will surely do you good." Oh, what a hold he had of God! "'You said.' You cannot lie and You said, 'I will surely do you good.' You cannot go back from Your word and, 'You said, I will surely do you good.'" He seems to hold God to it as men hold their fellow men to a promise which they have given. There is nothing that he can see in which he can trust. God seems to be doing nothing, to be quite still—yet Jacob reminds Him of His promise, "You said." The promise is sufficient for Jacob without any act or deed as yet. "You said, You said, I will surely do you good."

I must also remind you that *this was what Jacob said when he began to pray.* If you turn to his prayer, you will see that he began by saying, "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which said unto me," and so on. That is the beginning of his prayer and the end of it is, "And You said." That should always be both the beginning and the ending of prayer. You must never go beyond God's promises. If He has said anything, that is enough for you, but do not expect that your whims and fancies will be indulged. You must begin your prayer by say-

ing to God, "You said," and when you do that, the weakest saint or sinner may plead so as to prevail. You can never get a stronger plea than the Lord's own promise! You can never strike a blow that will more effectually clinch the nail than this, "You said. You said."

O Brothers and Sisters, I scarcely know how to put this matter before you as I ought, because if God says a thing, who is there among us who shall dare to give Him the lie? If it was years ago that He said it. If it is an old promise, even in the oldest book of the Old Testament, yet there is no such thing as time with God—one day is with him as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day—and the promise is just as good as if He had made it at this very moment! If you could hear God speak now, you would not doubt Him, would you? Well, but did He at any time utter this promise? Then it stands fast forever, for He has never spoken in secret so as to change what He has said in public! Every promise of God is sure to all those who put their trust in Him. Jacob's faith rested, in its beginning and its end, upon the promise of God—this was the basis of it, and this alone. Can you say that this is the foundation of all your confidence for time and for eternity? If you can, is it not a basis worth resting upon, a foundation fit to build upon? Is there any supposable weight which this Rock cannot sustain? Is there any imaginable trouble which may not be endured while God's great solemn promise stands forever fast?

Yet Jacob's faith, while it was resting upon the promise of God, was, nevertheless, *a struggling faith*. It was a mixture of, "I fear Esau" and, "You said." Beloved, have you only a struggling faith? Then, struggle on! Never give up struggling. If your faith is only like Jacob's wrestling, wrestle on, for, notice that Jacob, when he had said to the Lord, "You said," and quoted the promise, stopped praying, for he was satisfied to leave the case there. So, Brothers and Sisters, if your faith begins only as struggling faith, it is the nature of it to increase and grow till, at last, it comes to be victorious faith! Pray for victorious faith. Ask the Lord to give you the confidence that will not be daunted, the unstaggering faith of Abraham, who, though he was as one dead and his wife far advanced in years, yet knew that God had promised him a son and, therefore, believed that he would have a son—and looked for him without a doubt! And then, when God bade him take Isaac and slay him, he believed that God would even raise him up from the dead, but, somehow or other, He would keep His promise.

Beloved, believe anything except that God can lie. Believe any miracle, any impossibility, or that which ungodly men tell you is an inability. Take it all in, but never let the thought come into your mind that God can be false to you! Oh, if we only believed God as He deserves to be believed, we should be able to move mountains and cast them into the sea! Nothing is impossible to the man to whom it is impossible to doubt his God. A mighty faith, though it is not, in itself, omnipotent, yet lays hold upon the Omnipotence of God and girds itself with Divine strength. Does not the Lord deserve such a faith from us? Yet we shall never have it unless He gives it to us! Oh, that the Holy Spirit would work it in us, pre-

serve it in us and perfect it in us till faith is lost in sight—and hope is changed to full fruition! Never let us doubt the living God for a single moment.

The Lord bless you, dear Friends, and especially bless any of you who have not yet believed in His Son, Jesus Christ! Oh, that they could see the sinfulness of doubting the great God and Jesus Christ, His Son! Oh, that they would but trust Him and confide in Him just as they are! They would never have to lament doing so, but, throughout eternity they would have to bless the Lord who taught them this sweet way of life and peace, namely, the way of simple dependence upon the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
GENESIS 32.

Verse 1. *And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him.* When he left the promised land, he had a vision of angels, ascending and descending upon the ladder, as if to bid him farewell. Now that he is going back, the angels are there again to speed him on his way home to the land of the Covenant, the land which the Lord had promised to give to Abraham and his seed.

2. *And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim.* The marginal reading is, "Two hosts, or, camps." The angels of the Lord were encamping round about the man who feared Him, though there had been much in his character and conduct which the Lord could not approve.

3. *And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother into the land of Seir, the country of Edom.* After a visit from angels, afflictions and trials often come. John Bunyan wrote, as I have often reminded you—

"The Christian is seldom long at ease,
When one trouble's gone, another does him seize,"

and though the rhyme is rather rough, the statement is perfectly true! Full often we are hardly out of one trial before we are into another.

4, 5. *And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall you speak unto my lord Esau; your servant Jacob says thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now. And I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and menservants, and women servants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in your sight.* It is very proper, when we have offended other people, and especially if we feel that we have done them wrong, as Jacob had done to Esau, that we should use the humblest terms concerning ourselves and the best terms we can about those whom we have offended. Yet I must say that I do not like these terms that Jacob uses—they do not seem to me to be the right sort of language for a man of faith—"My lord Esau, your servant Jacob says thus." What business had God's favored one to speak "thus" to such a profane person as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright? Surely, there was more of the Jacob policy than there was of the Israel faith in this form of speech!

6, 7. *And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to your brother Esau, and alas he comes to meet you, and four hundred men with*

him. Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed. "Four hundred men with him"! "That must mean mischief to me and my company. Surely, he is coming thus to avenge himself for the wrong I did him, long ago. My brother's heart is still hot with anger against me." So, "Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed."

7, 8. *And he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels into two bands; and said, If Esau comes to the one company, and smites it, then the other company which is left shall escape.* This man Jacob was always planning and scheming. He was the great progenitor of the Jews who are still pre-eminent in bargaining. See how he plots and arranges everything to the best advantage. I blame him not for this, yet, I think he is to be blamed that he did not first pray. Surely, it would have been the proper order of things if the prayer had preceded the planning—but Jacob planned first and prayed afterwards. Well, even that was better than planning and not praying at all! So there is something commendable in his actions, though not without considerable qualification.

9. *And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD.* Jacob uses that august name, "Jehovah"—"the LORD."

9, 10. *Who said unto me, Return unto your country, and to your kindred and I will deal well with you. I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which You have showed unto Your servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands.* Not even one servant had he with him when he fled away across the river! He was alone and unattended, but now he was coming back as the head of a great family, with troops of servants and an abundance of cattle, sheep and all things that men think worth having! How greatly God had increased him and blessed him! He remembers that lonely departure from the home country and he cannot help contrasting it with his present prosperity.

11-13. *Deliver me, I pray You, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And You said, I will surely do you good, and make your seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude. And he lodged there that same night; and took of that which came to his hand a present for Esau his brother.* There he is, planning again! And this time, perhaps, since he has prayed over the matter, he is planning more wisely than he did before—intending now to try to appease his brother's anger by a munificent "present for Esau his brother."

14-16. *Two hundred she goats, and twenty he goats, two hundred ewes, and twenty rams. Thirty milch camels with their colts, forty kine, and ten bulls, twenty she asses, and ten foals. And he delivered them into the hands of his servants, every drove by themselves; and said unto his servants, Pass over before me, and put a apace between drove and drove.* In order that there might be time for his brother to look at the present in detail—and see it piece by piece—and so be the more struck with the size of it. This was true Oriental policy and crafty Jacob always had more than enough of something and planning even when it was not done with

wisdom! But, in this case I think it was a wise arrangement, for which he is to be commended.

17-19. *And he commanded the foremost, saying, When Esau my brother meets you, and asks you, saying, Whose are you? And where go you? And whose are these before you? Then you shall say, They are your servant Jacob's, it is a present sent unto my lord Esau: and, behold, also he is behind us. And so commanded he the second, and the third, and all that followed the droves, saying, On this manner shall you speak unto Esau, when you find him.* What care he takes about the whole affair! We cannot blame him, under the circumstances, yet how much grander is the quiet, noble demeanor of Abraham who trusts in God and leaves matters more in His hands! Yet, alas, even Abraham tried plotting and scheming more than once—and failed every time he did so!

20-24. *And say you moreover, Behold your servant Jacob is behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goes before me, and afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept of me. So went the present over before him: and himself lodged that night in the company. And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok. And he took them and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had. And Jacob was left alone.* This was a very anxious time for him, the heaviest trial of his life seemed impending. He was dreading it more than he need have done, for God never meant the trouble he feared to come upon him at all. He was trembling under a dark cloud that was to pass over his head without bursting. No tempest of wrath was to break out of it upon him. However, we must admire Jacob in this one respect, that with all his thought, and care, and planning, and plotting, he did not neglect prayer. He felt that nothing he could do would be effectual without God's blessing. He had not reached the highest point of faith, though he had gone in the right direction—a great deal further than many Christians. He now resolved to have a night of prayer, that he might win deliverance. "Jacob was left alone."

24. *And there wrestled a Man with him until the breaking of the day.* I suppose our Lord Jesus Christ did here, as on many other occasions preparatory to His full Incarnation, assume a human form and came thus to wrestle with the Patriarch.

25. *And when He saw that He prevailed not against him, He touched the hollow of his thigh.* Where the column of the leg supports the body. And if that is disjointed, a man has lost all his strength. It was brave of Jacob thus to wrestle, but there was too much of self about it all. It was his own sufficiency that was wrestling with the God-Man, Christ Jesus. Now comes the crisis which will make a change in the whole of Jacob's future life—"He touched the hollow of his thigh."

25. *And the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint as he wrestled with Him.* What can Jacob do, now that the main bone of his leg is put out of joint? He cannot even stand up any longer in the great wrestling match! What can he do?

26. *And He said, Let Me go, for the day breaks. And Jacob said, I will not let You go, except You bless me.* It is evident that as soon as he felt

that he must fall, he grasped the other "Man" with a kind of death-grip and would not let Him go. Now, in his weakness, he will prevail! While he was so strong, he won not the blessing—but when he became utter weakness, then did he conquer!

27. *And He said unto him, What is your name? And he said, Jacob.* That is, a Supplanter, as poor Esau well knew.

28. *And He said, Your name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel.* That is, A Prince of God.

28. *For as a prince have you power with God and with men and have prevailed.* Jacob was the prince with the disjointed limb—and that is exactly what a Christian is. He wins, he conquers when *his weakness becomes supreme* and he is conscious of it!

29. *And Jacob asked Him, and said, Tell me, I pray You, Your name. And He said, Why is it that you ask My name? And He blessed him there.* There are limits to all human communion with God. We must not go where vain curiosity would lead us, otherwise will He have to say to us, as He did to Jacob, "Why is it that you ask My name?"

30. *And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.* How he must have trembled to think that he had the daring—perhaps his fears made him call it presumption—to actually wrestle with God, Himself, for he was now conscious that it was no mere angel, but, "the Angel of the Covenant," the Lord, Himself, with whom he had wrestled!

31. *And as he passed over Peniel the sun rose upon him, and he limped upon his thigh.* The memorial of his weakness was to be with him as long as he lived. People would ask, "How came the halting gait of that princely man?" And the answer would be, "It was by his weakness that he won his princedom—he became Israel, A Prince of God, when his thigh was put out of joint." How pleased would you and I be to go limping all our days with such weakness as Jacob had, if we might also have the blessing that he thus won!

32. *Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because He touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank.*

—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 AND HIS FORERUNNER
NO. 2818

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 15, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 24, 1877.

"Therefore they sought again to take Him: but He escaped out of their hands, and went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John at first baptized, and there He abode. And many resorted unto Him and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spoke of this Man were true. And many believed on Him there." John 10:39-42.

THE unbelieving and infuriated Jews again and again took up stones to cast at our Lord and here they sought to take Him prisoner, but He escaped from them, apparently with the greatest possible ease. He did this on several occasions. When the men of Nazareth would have cast Him down, headlong, from the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, He passed through the midst of them and went His way. He made His escape, over and over again, in the same wonderful manner, thus proving that He was not in the power of any man. He need not, therefore, at the last, have died unless His death had been in accordance with His own will. He might have appealed to His Father and He would have given Him legions of angels for His deliverance. Or He might, as Elijah did, have called for fire from Heaven to destroy those who sought to arrest Him. His Divine power would never have been at any loss in providing means for His own protection. He might, readily enough, have slain those who came to take Him in the garden—and He might even have come down from the Cross, if He had pleased thus to prove what power He possessed.

Yet He did not so act, but voluntarily laid down His life, according to His own words, "I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father." Let us, then, bless and praise Him for that wondrous, voluntary, substitutionary death upon the tree! It was for our sins that He suffered. There was no reason for His death except that which was found in our dire necessities and in His own great heart of love. Whenever we think of the sufferings of Christ upon the Cross, let us remember how spontaneous was the Sacrifice by which He redeemed us from sin, death and Hell. Blessed, forever blessed, be the name of this willing Friend of guilty men! And let us, in similar fashion, always be ready to serve Him. Let the willingness of Christ bring forth willingness in us—let us not be as bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke, but cheerfully let us take His

yoke upon us and learn of Him. May the Lord grant us Grace, not merely to be willing, but even to be *eager* for His service, as He was eager to serve us, for He could truly say, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it is accomplished!"

Another thought is suggested by our Lord's action. When He was driven from one place by the unbelief and malice of His adversaries, He did not, therefore, retire altogether from His service. If He could not speak to the people in the streets of Jerusalem, He would find a place of audience in the desert beyond the Jordan, but, somewhere or other, He would be seeking the welfare of men. He went about doing good. They could not stop His mouth, whatever they might do. When they, again and again, in one place, took up stones to stone Him, He saw that His testimony would be useless to them, for it had already only increased their condemnation, so He went off to another place, away from those furious persecutors, that others might listen to the message of mercy which they had despised and rejected. Jesus was always working, always teaching, always blessing and, to this day, He is still diligent in His service on behalf of the sons of men. From the highest Throne of Glory He scatters down mercies and favors with both hands, by day and by night, upon us, His unworthy creatures! As He continues thus to serve us, let us continue to serve Him. And if He is unwearied, let us be unwearied, too. If we can do little or nothing for Him in one place, let us find another spot where we can serve Him, but never let us lay down our charge till we also lay down our lives—never let us case to work until we cease to live! May this mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus our Lord!

I. Now to come more closely to the subject of this evening's meditation, the first thing that I see in the text is A FRUITFUL PLACE OF MINISTRY—"Beyond the Jordan." Our Savior preached in the place where John at first baptized, "and many believed on Him there."

It is not every place that is fruitful, for there are some portions of the field, which is the world, that are like the wayside, where the birds of the air come and take away the seed as soon as it is sown. There are other parts where the soil is very shallow—and there the seed springs up only to perish in the heat of the sun. Our Savior had been in many places where He was unsuccessful as a preacher, where He was absolutely rejected of men and His message altogether despised. For when He spoke the Truth of God, they even called it blasphemy and took up stones that they might stone Him as one unfit to live! Christian ministers may have to work in such places, yet they are always glad when they get on the soil that yields a hundred-fold. They are delighted if their Master bids them cast the net where there are great shoals of fish. Our Savior was evidently in such a spot when He was preaching "beyond the Jordan."

Notice about this place, first, that *it was a place of retreat from persecution.* I do not think that we should ever look upon the most violent opposition to the Gospel as anything to be altogether lamented, for, even in this instance, it is just after the Jews have said that Christ blasphemed and have sought to stone or to seize Him, that He is most successful in His preaching! You may regard it as a very safe rule that when the devil roars, it is because he has been hit pretty hard and that whenever there

is the most rage against the Gospel, it is one evidence of the Gospel's growing power! To go and preach in a town, or village, or hamlet and to be scarcely noticed—to deliver your testimony for Christ and yet to produce no visible effect of any kind—is horrible. But if all the hosts of Hell are stirred up against you and men even begin to act despitefully to the preacher, you may take courage and rest assured that something is being done! Depend upon it, there would not be all that stir and uproar unless the Lord's power had gone with His Word to the hearts and consciences of men. We are not to cease our preaching because of opposition, but we are then to be more earnest and zealous than ever—possibly, in another place, as it was in our Lord's case—but still, our testimony for our Lord is to be given somewhere! After the thunderstorm will often be the very best time for sowing the good seed of the Kingdom. It was so in our Savior's experience for He had, there, a most fruitful season after He had met with the most violent and bitter opposition.

If I am addressing any servant of God who has been passing through a season of fierce persecution, let him be encouraged! Brother, when the night is over, the day will be all the brighter because of the blackness that preceded it. So, be hopeful that after the wearing and wearying time of opposition that you have had, you will come into smoother waters and that God will bless you yet more abundantly.

Perhaps another reason why that place was so fruitful was *because it was a retired spot.* It was "beyond the Jordan." It was away from the noise and strife of Jerusalem. Those who were there had evidently traveled a considerable distance with the desire to hear the Savior. In the streets of Jerusalem, Jesus preached to many who did not want to hear. And we must do the same, for we are to preach the Gospel to every creature. But I think we have the best hope of doing good when people take trouble to come to hear us—when they journey for miles to the place of preaching—when they are removed from their ordinary associations and feel that they can, in quiet, listen to the Word. Chrysostom once preached a sermon upon the last verse of my text, dwelling especially upon the word, *"there"*—"many believed on Him *there*." Very singularly he accounts for the larger numbers of women who are converted, beyond the number of men, from the fact that women are more at home than men are, and have more quiet times for reflection and consideration upon the Word. I lay no stress upon that thought, but it has occurred to me, also, and when I met with it in Chrysostom, I thought that there might be some force about it, for we do need quiet times in which we can think of Divine things.

Some of you men are busy all day long—up early in the morning and then right on till late at night. You are hacking and soaring away about your worldly business and you do not get time to sit down and calmly calculate this problem, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Let me persuade you to sometimes go into the desert and rest a while. Surely, Heaven is worth a little thought if it is to be gained! It must be worthwhile to secure the necessary time for thought about how we are to escape from Hell and to be delivered from sin. I think that if you—especially on Sabbath afternoons,

between the morning and evening services—I mean, you unconverted people—would set apart an hour or even half an hour to really look into your case, to come to close dealings with yourselves and your God, we would preach in the evening with very great hope of blessing because such hearers would have come to us prepared and anxious to learn the way of salvation. Do you not know that when you go to a place of worship you will generally catch what you fish for? Some of you come because the preacher is thought to be eccentric—you will, possibly, hear something which will confirm you in that idea. But, if you come because you want to hear of Jesus Christ and to find salvation, you will get what you come for! It is the will of the Lord that those who seek shall find. I think there is something very suggestive in the fact that this fruitful place was a quiet spot away from the crowds and bustle of Jerusalem.

And, again, one reason why our Lord was so successful on this occasion when many believed on Him was, no doubt, that *He had a large congregation.* It is first said that "many resorted unto Him." And then that "many believed on Him." It is a self-evident fact that you cannot have many converts if you do not have many hearers. Hence, we delight to see the House of Prayer crowded. We are glad that when we cast the net we cast it among multitudes of fish. If a man can preach the Gospel to half a dozen people, he ought to do it with all his might—and if God should give him the souls of that half dozen hearers, it will be an abundant reward for him. But if there are any means by which half a dozen *thousands* of people can be brought to hear the Word, we may hope that the converts will be multiplied in equal proportion if God the Holy Spirit is pleased to bless the Word! At any rate, the greater the number of the preacher's hearers, the greater is the likelihood of blessing to a large number of people. This puts an end, I think, to the foolish talk about the finest thought of the age being always delivered to an *elite* company of very few special individuals. If you preach with great thoughtfulness, especially after the style of the modern school of thought, you cannot expect that the multitude will come to hear you. Very well, then, let us not preach in that way, for, "the greatest good to the greatest number" should be the motto of every man who loves his race and desires its highest well-being. Let us endeavor to so adapt our style, if we are preachers of the Word, that the multitude will be willing to hear and will be able to understand—for then we may hope that with the blessing of God, many will be converted.

But, once more, our Lord had met with a fruitful place *because it was a place of fragrant memories.* For what was that spot, "beyond the Jordan," already noted? It was "the place where John at first baptized"—where, in fact, Jesus Himself had been baptized by John! We believe not in the sacredness of places, but, still, where a good man has labored for the Master, there often lingers a holy fragrance which is a means of blessing to others. Many of those people had probably heard John's testimony of his Lord. And the trees by the river's edge, and the flowing stream would always remind them of the Baptist, who there urged them to repent of their sins. Now the good man is dead and buried, but the soil which he had plowed is the better prepared for the Master's seed-sowing.

And the Master knows that He will have all the greater harvest in that place because John has been there before Him. O my Brothers and Sisters, it will be a grand thing for us to have so lived that when we are dead and gone, those who come after us will have all the easier task because of our service for the Savior! You Sunday school teachers are often like John the Baptist—you get the youthful minds ready for the preacher's instruction and you who have, perhaps, been preaching for years without success, may, nevertheless, be John the Baptists to others who will come after you and who may be the means of blessing to those for whom you think you have labored in vain. When I go to some places to preach, I feel that I am sowing upon stony ground, but if the preacher before me has wept over his hearers, and pleaded with them, and prayed for them, I find that they are as ready to drink in the Word as the thirsty soil drinks in the rain when the blessed clouds end the long and terrible drought!

II. Now, secondly, in our text you will see A TESTIMONY TO A DEPARTED MINISTER.

The people said, as they stood where John had preached and baptized, "John did no miracle: but all things that John spoke of this Man were true." Oh, how I hope that you will be able to say this of me when I have gone the way of all flesh! "He did no miracle: but all that he said concerning Christ was true." There are some preachers of whom people will say, when they are gone, "They were not very eloquent. They were not very learned. They were not very refined and they could not do any miracles, but"—oh, that blessed *"but"!*—"but all things that they spoke concerning Christ were true."

Notice the character which the people gave to John, three years, or thereabouts, after he was dead. He was still remembered by them and they bore most satisfactory testimony concerning him. First, *they testified that he spoke concerning Christ.* It was John's business—it was *all* his business here below, to speak concerning Jesus Christ, and he did it so thoroughly that this was the one thing that his hearers recalled after he was gone. He rebuked the Pharisees and Sadducees, but his main work was to testify concerning Him who was to come after him, whose shoe laces he felt that he was not worthy to unloose. Ah, Brothers, there is no ministry that will stand the testing on a sick-bed, or on our death-bed, except that which has been full of testimony to Christ! When there has been a great deal of philosophy and only a homoeopathic dose of Christ in the preaching—just enough of the latter to give it the name of Christian teaching—may God have mercy upon both preacher and hearer! But to preach Christ first, Christ last, Christ midst, Christ *always*—this is what John the Baptist did and this is what all preachers should do. An American gentleman who was here many years ago, came again about 14 or 15 years afterwards and he said to me as he went out, "I see you are still on the old tack." "Yes," I replied, "I intend to be like Casablanca on the burning ship, where his father had told him to stand—and where he meant to remain as long as life should last."

I will preach new doctrine when I find it in the Bible—till then, I will keep to the old! The State of Massachusetts passed a resolution declaring that it would be governed by the laws of God until there was time to

make better ones—and I have passed a resolution that I will preach Christ's Gospel until I have time to find out something better—and that can never be, for it is the only Gospel that can ever meet the needs of the human race! There was no bite from any of the fiery serpents which a look at the bronze serpent could not cure—and this Gospel of God's Grace is the one remedy for all the spiritual diseases to which mankind is heir and, therefore, we will cling to it as long as we live.

John the Baptist spoke concerning Christ and *what he said about Christ was true.* That is the important point, for it is possible for Christ to be preached and yet for the truth about Christ *not* to be preached. His Humanity may be left out, or His Deity may be kept in the background, or there may be lisping and hesitancy with regard to the doctrine of His atoning Sacrifice. And if this is the case, then the ministry will be without power. It used to be said of a certain noted preacher that his doctrine of the Atonement was that Jesus Christ did something or other, which, in some way or other, was connected with our salvation. That cloudy sort of teaching is not preaching Christ in truth! But to declare that He was made a curse for us—that the Lord caused to meet upon Him the iniquity of all who believe in Him. That He, who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him—to clearly preach the definite Substitution of Christ on our behalf—this is to tell the truth about Christ! And I pray that all of us, whether preachers or teachers, may not only speak about Christ, but also, like John the Baptist, speak the truth about Him.

One other thing about John was that *all he said about Christ was the Truth of God." All* things that John spoke of this Man were true." Not merely some things, but "all things." Any part of Christ is precious, but a whole Christ is what the sinner needs. As far as we know Him, we are bound honestly to make Him known to others. And even if we have to do it with but small ability and if, when we die, we have to regret that we had such slender powers, yet shall it be a sweet thought to us if we know that those we leave behind will be able to say, "All things that he spoke concerning this Man were true."

There was one thing which the people did not say, and which they had no need to say, because it was self-evident—that is that *John the Baptist had so preached Christ that they could not forget it.* He had been dead some years, yet they remembered what he had preached about while he was with them. They remembered how he preached it, too—that he preached Christ in truth and that all he said about Christ was the Truth—so that, when the Messiah Himself stood before them, the savor of John's ministry was still fresh upon them. Oh, that it might be our lot, and the lot of all God's servants, to make the Gospel arrows stick as well as strike—and to cause men to carry with them, for many a year, the remembrance of the things which we have spoken unto them while we were yet present with them!

III. Now, thirdly, I am going away from the text in order to notice WHAT THE DEPARTED MINISTER'S TESTIMONY REALLY WAS. What did John say concerning Christ?

Well, first of all, *John said that Jesus was the Son of God.* His testimony was, "I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God." John delighted to extol his Lord—he felt that he was not worthy to take the place of the slave who took off his master's sandals—it was too great an honor for him to be the body-servant of Christ. How sweetly did John speak about Jesus as, "the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father"! Do you all believe that blessed Truth of God of the Sonship of Christ? Do you all believe that the Man of Nazareth was, "very God of very God"? If you do, then trust Him to be your Savior and, doing so, you shall be saved by Him! Let the testimony of John be accepted by you, for it is now borne out by the life of Christ and a thousand proofs besides. Jesus of Nazareth is God in human flesh—trust yourselves with Him and you shall be eternally saved!

John also bore witness to another grand Truth about his Lord and Master, namely, that *He was the Lamb of God.* How plainly he cried to all the people, and afterwards to his own disciples, "Behold the Lamb of God!" Had John the paschal lamb in his mind's eye? Very likely he had. "This," he said, "is the Lamb of God, whose blood is to be shed to preserve His people, just as the blood of the paschal lamb, when it was sprinkled upon the lintel and the two side-posts of the houses in Egypt, saved the Israelites when the destroying angel had unsheathed his terrible sword." O dear Hearers, I would that you would all receive Christ as the great Sin-Offering—the only Preserver and Defender against the destroying angel in the day of God's wrath!

But did John, do you think, have that passage in the 53rd of Isaiah in his mind, "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth"? When he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world," do you not think that he had in his mind that passage, "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all"? It is extremely likely that this was the case. This was a choice topic for John to dilate upon—and we would dilate upon it, too, if we had the time. But, as we have only a few minutes left, we cry to you, "Behold the Lamb of God!" That Jesus, who is now reigning in Heaven at His Father's right hand, suffered in the place of all who will believe in Him. Behold Him! Look unto Him and be you saved. If you trust in Him, you will thereby prove that your sin was laid upon Him—and if so, all that sin of yours has been put away by His Sacrifice of Himself. Why do you not trust Him? May the Holy Spirit bring you to do so, for John's testimony was true when he said that Jesus was the Lamb of God!

John also bore witness, concerning Christ, as *the Baptizer with the Holy Spirit and with fire.* And this, too, is true. Any of you who have trusted Christ, know into what sacred fire He plunges your spirit, so that it refines and purifies your soul and burns up all the dross. He immerses us into the Holy Spirit, so that we are—

"Plunged in the Godhead's deepest sea,
And lost in His immensity."

And, once more, *John called Jesus the Bridegroom.* That is one of His sweetest names. John spoke of himself as the Bridegroom's Friend, or

best man. He was that, but nothing more, so his work was done when the Bridegroom came. O Beloved, the Lord Jesus Christ, by His love to His Church, has proved Himself to be her true Bridegroom! Out of His side was she taken when He fell asleep, even as Eve was taken out of the side of Adam, and to her His love always goes forth, for He says to her, "You are bone of My bone, and flesh of My flesh." For this purpose did He leave His Father, that He might cleave unto His Church, that they two might be one. Truly does Paul write, "Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." This is another grand Truth of God for us to talk about—the union of Christ with His Church—the blessed bonds that bind Him to us, and us to Him, so that we are able to defy the whole universe to "separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

IV. I have thus given you a summary of what John's testimony concerning Jesus was and of which the people said, "All things that John spoke of this Man were true." Now, the last thing I have to speak upon is THE BLESSED RESULT. Our Lord was preaching in a fruitful place. He was following a man who had left a precious memory behind him and that memory was all about Himself. What was the result?

First, *the people standing on that spot, where John had stood, began to consider.* "John said such-and-such about the promised Messiah—this Man exactly answers to the description that John gave. All men acknowledge that John was a Prophet, so what he said concerning Jesus is clearly true and He must, therefore, be the Christ whom God has sent into the world. He must be the Son of God, the Lamb of God, the One who is to baptize us with the Holy Spirit and with fire" and, therefore, after careful consideration, they believed in Him!

Beloved Hearers, have you ever given due consideration to Divine things? It would be worthwhile for you, who are unsaved, not to do any more business until you are saved. You are very "cute" and clever about worldly things, but I tell you solemnly, that you are great fools with regard to your immortal souls. I am certain that if the life of any one of you were, at this moment, in peril from some very dreadful disease, you would not wait long before seeking the best advice concerning it that you could afford. If you were told, while I am preaching, that your house was on fire, you would not stay till I had finished the sermon—you would be off to your home at once, so concerned are you, and rightly so, about your earthly things. Yet your souls are even now abiding under the wrath of God! You dare not say you do not believe that—yet you do not really believe it, or you act in a way which implies that you do not! Suppose your breath were to stop for one minute, where would you be? Where would you be if you had to ask in vain for a drop of water to cool your parched tongue? Every instant life is in jeopardy—let only one of the ten thousand strings of this poor harp but snap—and harp strings often do snap—and the soul must appear before its God—unready, unwashed, unclothed, forever lost! O Beloved, do as these people "beyond the Jor-

dan" did—begin to consider, see whether Christ is not the Son of God, and the Lamb of God—and if He is, believe in Him! Trust Him with your souls and so find eternal salvation!

Further, having considered, *these people did believe on Jesus.* That is to say, they did accept Him as the Lamb of God and the Son of God. They did receive Him as the Bridegroom of their hearts, they did believe that He would baptize them with the Holy Spirit and with fire—and so they were saved. Will not the same result follow this service? Will not some of you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, who is so worthy of confidence—yes, who *demands* that we believe in Him, for this is what He says, "He that believes not shall be damned"? It is said, in our text, "*Many* believed on Him." I will be thankful if only two or three believe on Jesus Christ, yet I cannot be content unless *many* believe on Him. He is so true that it is a grievous crime to doubt Him! He is so abundantly able to save that it is the greatest folly not to trust Him!

It sometimes puzzles me how God can have such patience with unbelievers. When He has given His only-begotten Son to bleed and die for the guilty, and He says, "This is My well-beloved Son, bleeding and dying for you, only trust Him"—if men say that they will not—what can be conceived more horrible than that? And what clearer proof can there be of the desperate malignity of the human heart that it will not even accept the Son of God, Himself, when He comes dressed in robes of love to save mankind?

I finish with the last word of my text—"Many believed on Him *there*," that is, on the spot where He then stood and preached. I would to God that many would believe on Jesus Christ in this Tabernacle—*there* in that area, or in *that* aisle, or up in the *galleries*. Alas, many say, "We will go home and think about it." Do not do that! Believe on Him *there*. I know how apt you are to indulge in idle chat on your way home. I know how, at the supper table, too often the Word which you have heard is driven away by the foolish talk which is unfit for the Sabbath. The devil only wants you to wait, for he knows that he can then come and steal away the good Seed of the Kingdom. But if the Lord should give you the Grace to decide for Him at once—if you were to believe on Jesus *now*—what joy there would be among the angels and the spirits of just men made perfect! They would "ring the bells of Heaven" and rejoice over lost ones found! What peace there would be in your own heart and what thankfulness and delight there would be among the people of God when they heard of it! You Christians, try to have a quiet, earnest talk with the unconverted, if you can, before they get away from this building. It may be that they will be led by you to believe on Jesus here and now. God grant that it may be so, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 3:1-12; JOHN 1:15-37; 3:22-36.

We are going to read three passages relating to John the Baptist's testimony concerning Christ.

Matthew 3:1-4. *In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent you: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the Prophet Isaiah, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare you the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leather girdle about his loins; and his food was locusts and wild honey.* Everything connected with John the Baptist was in harmony with his message. He was the preacher of repentance, so the place where he preached was most suitable—it was in the wilderness where there was nothing to distract his hearers' attention, as there would have been in crowded cities. His dress was striking and everything about him, even down to the food that he ate, went to show that he was the rough pioneer preacher preparing the way for his Master. John did not teach the fullness of joy and peace—that was left for our Lord Jesus to proclaim—but John came to prepare the way of the Lord by preaching repentance.

5. *Then went out to him, Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan,* There seems to have been, about that time, a widespread anticipation of the coming of the Messiah, so, no sooner did the news come that a Prophet was preaching in the desert, than great multitudes went out to hear him.

6-8. *And were baptized of him in the Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance.* Did he not speak after the style of the Prophet Elijah? Yet those bold speeches of his were not at all stronger than the evils of the age required. When the self-righteous Pharisees and the skeptical Sadducees, the Ritualists and the "modern thought" men of that day, came to him to be baptized, he welcomed them not, but bade them, "bring forth fruits meet for repentance," evidences of a change of heart and life.

9. *And think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham for our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones.*—In the bed of Jordan, where he was baptizing—

9. *To raise up children unto Abraham.* John bade them boast not of their descent from Abraham, yet that was the great thing in which they did glory! They despised the Gentiles as so many do outside the true fold. Note how John the Baptist really preaches the Gospel to us indirectly while he is denouncing these people's confidence in their carnal descent. Regeneration is "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

10. *And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.* Other teachers came, as it were, only to lop and prune the trees, but the time had come for the felling of those that were fruitless. John did this and so did our Lord Jesus Christ, for His preaching dug up the very roots of sin, superstition and evil of every kind.

11, 12. *I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire: whose fan is in His*

hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Now let us turn to the Gospel according to John where we have another account of the ministry of John the Baptist.

John 1:15. *John bore witness of Him, and cried, saying, This was He of whom I spoke, He that comes after me is preferred before me: for He was before me.* He was not before John in the order of human birth, yet He was truly before John, for He had an eternal pre-existence, as He was none other than the uncreated Son of God!

16-21. *And of His fullness have all we received, and Grace for Grace. For the Law was given by Moses, but Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ. No man has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him. And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who are you? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Are you Elijah? And he said, I am not. Are you that Prophet? And he answered; No.* As they meant, "Are you, literally, the Prophet Elijah risen from the dead? "John said," "I am not." "Are you that Prophet of whom Moses foretold?" "And he answered, No." John gave short, sharp answers to these cavilers. He was not a man of dainty words and polished periods, especially in dealing with such people as they were.

22, 23. *Then said they unto him, who are you that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What say you of yourself? He said, I am the voice.* Not, "the Word"—Christ is that, but John was "the voice."

23-37. *Of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the Prophet Isaiah. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why do you baptize, then, if you are not that Christ, nor Elijah, neither that Prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there stands One among you, whom you know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe laces I am not worthy to unloose. These things were done in Bethabara beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing. The next day John saw Jesus coming unto him, and said, Behold, the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world. This is He of whom I said, After me comes a Man which is preferred before me: for He was before me. And I knew Him not: but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come to baptize with water. And John bore record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I saw, and bear record that this is the Son of God. Again the next day John stood with two of his disciples, and looking upon Jesus as He walked by, he said, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard Him speak, and they followed Jesus.* In the third chapter of the same Gospel, we have yet another testimony by John the Baptist concerning Christ.

John 3:22-29 *After these things came Jesus and His disciples into the land of Judea, and there He tarried with them, and baptized. And John*

was also baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized. For John was not yet cast into prison. Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purification. And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, He that was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you bore witness, behold, the same baptizes, and all men come to Him. John answered and said, A man can receive nothing except it be given him from Heaven. You yourselves bare me witness that I said I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before Him. He that has the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: therefore in this, my joy is fulfilled. "I have introduced the Bridegroom and, henceforth, it will be my part to gradually disappear from the scene."

30. *He must increase, but I must decrease.* As fades the morning star when the sun itself arises, so was it the joy of the herald of Christ to lose himself in the supreme radiance of his Lord's appearing!

31-34. *He that comes from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaks of the earth: He that comes from Heaven is above all. And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no man receives His testimony. He that has received His testimony has set to his seal that God is true. For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God: for God gives not the Spirit by measure unto Him.* Did not the Holy Spirit descend and remain upon Him—and that without measure or limit?

35, 36. *The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. He who believes on the Son has everlasting life.* He has it now and he can never lose it, or else it would not be everlasting. He has a life that must exist forever and ever.

36. *And he that believes not the Son shall not see life.* He shall not even know what spiritual life is! He shall not be able to understand it, or to form any idea of it. While he is an unbeliever, he is blind to spiritual things. What a dreadful sentence that is—"He shall not see life."—

36. *But the wrath of God abides on him.* God is always angry with him because he has rejected God's own Son and refuses the great salvation.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—331, 381, 550.

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A CAUTION FOR SIN-SICK SOULS
NO. 2819

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 22, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, EARLY IN THE YEAR 1861.

"When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then Ephraim went to Assyria, and sent to King Jareb: yet he cannot heal you, nor cure you of your wound."
Hosea 5:13.

THERE is a tendency, in the heart of man, to want something to look at rather than something to trust to. The children of Israel had God for their King and a glorious King He was. Where else was there found such impartial justice, such tender compassion for the poor, or such perfect righteousness in every statute that was ordained and every sentence that was enforced? But they said, "No, let us have a king whom we can see—a king whose pomp and magnificence shall dazzle our eyes, even though he will take our sons to be his bond slaves and our daughters to be his confectionaries. Let us have a king that we may see the gaudy glitter of his crown with our eyes and hear the sovereign mandate from his throne with our ears." God granted them that request.

Their sole allegiance was due to that almighty King whose superlative Glory admitted of no natural similitude. The Lord Jehovah was the God of Israel, a God always ready to forgive their sins, to hear their prayers and to seek their welfare. But the children of Israel said, "Not so! Let us make a king to judge us like all the nations—and let us set up gods after the fashion of the Gentiles, that our hands can handle and that our eyes can behold! Let us have blocks of wood and stone. Let us have the carved images of the heathen." Neither would they rest till they had set up for themselves in every high place, gods that were not gods. For this the Lord chastised them—He gave up their lands to famine and their habitations to the spoiler. He brought enemies from far countries to lay them waste, so that the State became sick and the whole nation impoverished. Then the people of Ephraim opened their eyes and looked to their condition.

But when Judah saw himself to be wounded, what course did he pursue? There was God waiting to help him when he returned to his allegiance. There was Jehovah ready to heal all his distresses, to give him back all that had been laid waste and to restore to him everything that the spoiler had taken! But, no, the arm of Jehovah was not enough for Judah—Judah must rely upon a force that could look imposing in its array. "Oh," said the people, "let us send to the king of Assyria and let him

furnish us with tens of thousands of soldiers, and aid us with his mighty men so we shall be safe! Thus will our State recover itself." But if they had trusted in God, my Brothers and Sisters, how secure they would have been! Mark what God did for them in the days of Hezekiah. Their enemies came upon them in great numbers—Hezekiah prayed before the Lord. And it came to pass, *that night*, God sent forth the blast of His nostrils and their foes were utterly destroyed! When the men of Judah arose early in the morning, "behold, they were all dead corpses!" As often as they trusted in God, they found immediate succor and their enemies were put to confusion!

But not so was their heart stayed in its confidence. No, they cannot rely upon the unseen arm. They must have men and men's devices. They must have something they can *see*. Unless they have the spear, the sword and the shield of the Assyrian state, they can feel no sense of security. They went to the Assyrian king—they sent to king Jareb, "yet could he not heal them, nor cure them of their wound." How foolish they were to hope he could, for, as soon as they sent their ambassadors to the king of Assyria, he flattered himself while he spoke to them, "Oh, you want help, do you? I will send you some soldiers to help you." Remember that their houses had been stripped of all the gold and silver they contained to give a present to the king of Assyria. "I will send you soldiers to help you" he said to them—and then he whispered to himself—"After they have helped you, they shall help themselves!" And so they did. When they had come and, for a little while, had fought for the people of Israel and set them free, then they turned round upon them and carried them captive and spoiled them of all they had! This comes of trusting in man. "Cursed be the man that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm; but blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord and whose hope is in the Lord."

Looking at this fallacy of a nation as illustrative of a common tendency of mankind—and using my text as the picture of a sinner in a certain peculiar state of mental anxiety, I shall observe, first, *the sinner's partial discovery of his lost estate.* Secondly, *the wrong means which he takes to be cured of his evil.* And then I will endeavor to direct you, as God shall enable me, to *the right means of finding healing and deliverance* through the Atonement and obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I. We have in our text somewhat of A PICTURE OF THE SINNER WHEN HE HAS PARTIALLY DISCOVERED HIS LOST ESTATE.

Mark, *it is but a partial discovery*. Ephraim felt his sickness but he did not know the radical disease that lurked within. He saw the local ailment, but was ignorant of the organic derangement of his very vitals. He only perceived the symptoms! He was uneasy, he felt pain, but the discovery did not go deep enough to show him that he was actually dead in trespasses and sins. "He saw his sickness and Judah saw his wound." Yes, he saw his wound—it smarted and, therefore, his eyes were drawn to the spot. But he did not know how deep it was. He did not know that it had pierced to the heart, that it was, in fact, a death-blow—that the whole head was sick, that the whole heart was faint and that, from the crown of the head even to the sole of the foot, it was all wounds, bruises

and putrefying, festering sores! There was but a partial discovery of his lost estate.

How many men there are who have got *just far enough to know there is something the matter with them!* They little reckon that they are totally ruined, though they do feel that all is not quite right with them. They are conscious that they are not perfect, not even up to their own low standard of rectitude—hence they begin to be uneasy, albeit they still seem to think they can make themselves better and that by degrees of reformation and daily prayer they will become superior to what they are. They have not yet learned the Doctrine of the Fall, the deep depravity of mankind, the total perversion of the human heart. They have only gotten so far as some modern ministers who speak of man as being a little marred, but not entirely broken—as having had a fall and become somewhat damaged, and rather spoiled as to outward beauty, though not altogether ruined, or incapable of raising himself up and recovering his strength. In fact, the fashionable phrase that has been recently coined is, "the *lapsed* state of men." Depend upon it, when men use *Latinized* words to express their meaning, they do not mean much! The Fall of man is full and entire—and when people frame certain phrases of rather uncertain significance instead of talking honest English—they show a disposition to dispense with the bare facts. I know there are some sinners brought so far as to find themselves undone and to feel convinced that unless some change takes place they are not fit for the Kingdom of Heaven. But they have not as yet seen the fountains of the great deep of their depravity broken up. They have not been taken into the chambers of imagery and shown the abominations of their own hearts! They still cling with some hope to their own devices.

However, I would remark that even this, *though it is but a partial discovery of their state by nature, is not without its good effects.* When a man gets this far, the first good sign in him is that he cannot speak against religion. While he is at peace with himself, he calls religious men hypocrites—he can rail at the things of God and despise and trample them underfoot. But the man who is like Ephraim, in our text, will not be very anxious to find fault with others. His philosopher's tongue has been plucked out and he is now a little more gentle in his speech as he sighs for something in religion that he would like to have. "Oh," he says, "I do not now find fault with the good folk who are always praying and singing. Would to God I could become like they are! Would that I had as they have—an interest in the blood of Christ!" So far, so good.

Such men, again, are generally thoughtful. I have known many a man who, before he came into this state, was a very daredevil and never thought anything with regard to his soul and eternity. Yet, when brought to know his sickness and his wounds, he has become not only thoughtful but serious, until some of his former companions have noticed it and called him, "Old Sobersides," or some such epithet, and laughed him out of countenance. They tell him he is a saint. The man says, "I wish what you are saying was true." They tell him, "You are beginning to be religious." "Yes," he says, "I wish I were really so." Some man once called me *a saint* as I went along the street and I turned round and said I wished I

could make him prove his words. I would certainly like to be one! Such is the condition of a man when he begins to discover, though it is but partially, his lost estate. He is thoughtful. He cannot laugh as he did. He does not now shut his eyes, throw the reins upon the neck of his lusts and let them rush madly on down to the Pit, but he tries to curb them and hold them in with bit and bridle, for he knows that all is not right within him.

Such a man, too, has another good trait, another hopeful feature in his case—that he begins to attend to the things that belong to the peace of his soul. You now see him coming into the House of God be it Chapel or Church—to hear the Word preached. He never cared for that before. He worked so hard all the week that he was not able to go out on a Sunday—but now he feels he must go. He must be by the side of Bethesda's pool. Even though the angel stirs not the water, he feels a kind of satisfaction while he is lying at the edge of the healing pool. He longs to be saved and, therefore, he is found in the Way, hoping that God may meet with him.

Such a man, too, you will find, takes no pleasure in sin. If he is asked by his worldly companions to go into the haunts of vice where once he went, even should he go, he comes away and says, "It was the dullest evening I ever spent. No enjoyment whatever does it yield me. God has turned the sweet wine of my memory into bitter gall. 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.' I can find no comfort in sensual pleasures."

Have I been depicting the state of one who is here present? I hope I have and I pray God that what I shall be able to say will, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, be instrumental in leading such an one to the true remedy for his soul-sickness.

II. But when the man is thus partially awakened to know his lost estate, HE USUALLY BETAKES HIMSELF TO THE WRONG MEANS FOR DELIVERANCE—"Then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb."

A sinner, when he finds himself lost, usually at first thinks, "*I will make myself better*, I will be diligent in religious observances—I will attend to every ceremony, I will keep my tongue from evil and my life from speaking guile. I will restrain my steps from evil haunts, my hands from evil deeds." And so he thinks within himself that all his sins will be forgiven and that he shall have rest for the sole of his feet. Be it known, once and for all, that all this is a vain and useless effort to work out a radical cure in the soul of man! All that man can do apart from faith in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ is utterly in vain! Let him do his best and strive to the very uttermost—not one inch has he proceeded on the road to Heaven! He has done mischief instead of doing anything meritorious. He has pulled down instead of having built up!

O you that are now hoping, while you are under conviction, that you will get relief by works of your own, let me remind you that *you are undertaking a long task* which will tax your endurance. The men mentioned in our text went a very long way to the king of Assyria—it was a wearisome journey they took, while God, who was near at hand, was forgotten! How long do you suppose it would take you to work out your own salva-

tion by your own good works? Why, my Friends, you may bend your knees till your joints grow stiff. You may work till there is no flesh upon your bones. You may weep till there is no moisture in your body from which to draw a tear and you may persevere incessantly in every exercise of body and mind—trying fresh postures and trifling with fresh problems—but you will find yourselves not half a league nearer eternal life than when you left the life of sin you used to like—

"Not the labors of my hands
Can fulfill Your Law's demands—
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone—
You must save and You, alone."

If a criminal should get it into his head that he could climb up to the stars by going up the steps of a treadmill, he would be about as rational as when a poor sinner thinks of getting to Heaven by his own good works! Tread, tread, tread—up, up, up—but never one inch higher! As old Matthew Wilks used to say, "You might as well hope to sail to America on a sere leaf as hope to go to Heaven by your own doings." This is not the way, Man, and run ever so fast in it, if it is not the right road, it will not bring you to the right end! If a man takes the road to the right when he needs to go to the left, he may run as fast as a race horse, but he will but lose his labor and find out that he is a fool for his pains.

And it is not only a very long task, but *it is a very expensive one.* If you would have salvation by the works of the Law, you must give body and soul up—all you have—hope and joy and comfort included. I used to live near some persons who regularly attended mass early every morning and I noticed how straight they used to look down the face. I thought they had good reason to be gloomy if they were trying to reach Heaven by their own righteousness. It is enough to put any man out of countenance if he has to stand before God and justify himself! We might put our hands upon our loins and roll in the dust in despair if we had no hope but in our own merits. Go and look for cooling streams in the arid desert. Cast about for fresh water to drink in the midst of the sea. Seek shelter on the mountaintop where the hurricane is spending its fury and then crave for comfort in the Law! Go and visit Sinai, you that seek to be saved by your own works. Look at it—shrink, tremble and despair! Behold, the mountain is altogether on a smoke while God proclaims His holy Law! If it melted like wax of old, how much more, now, after you have broken the commandments and incurred the penalty—now that God comes not to proclaim the Law—but to execute His fierce anger upon the lawbreakers?

"Well," says one, "but suppose we do our best, will not that suffice?" My Friend, God requires from man, if he would be saved by his works, *perfect obedience.* Nothing but perfection can be acceptable to a perfect God. One wrong *thought*, one evil *desire*—not to say anything of one wrong *act*—will effectually shut any man out of Heaven if he desires to go there by his own works! That one sin at once puts up an impenetrable barrier across that meritorious way to Heaven which is known by the common name of, "the Law." If you can be perfect and have kept the pre-

cepts from your youth up, and shall do so till your dying day—then might there be salvation by works. But if there is *one* flaw, then is that road to Heaven effectually stopped up so that no human foot can ever tread it!

And, once more, let me remind you, O Man, when you try to be saved by your works, *you presume that your enemy will prove to be your friend!* "And who is my enemy?" you ask. Why, Moses. The Law of God is sworn against you. It has become your enemy and do you go to your enemy to help you? It is a device of Satan to try and draw poor sinners away from the path of faith into the path of Law. Remember how John Bunyan graphically describes it? Poor Christian, with the burden on his back, is going to the wicket-gate with the light above it and, all of a sudden, a very good-looking gentleman meets him and says, "It is a dangerous journey you are going, you had better turn aside to the right there. There is a town there known as the town of Legality, where lives a very skillful physician who will soon help you off with your burden. And if he is not at home, he has got a very good lad who will do almost as well as his master. Go there and you will soon get cured." Away went poor Christian! Nor had he gone far before he found that he had come to the foot of Mount Sinai and the mountain hung right over the way. And there stood Christian. And while he was looking up, presently the mountain began to shake, the thunder to roar and the lightning to flash—and he fell down upon his face and said, "I am undone, I am undone!" Then came Evangelist and showed him the right way once more.

Just so, Sinner, if you trust to the works of the Law, you will have to cry out, "I am undone, I am undone." Mr. Morality cannot cure you—he may put on a little poor man's plaster and make your wound worse, and tie it up, and bandage it a little, but he can never relieve your pain, or recover your sore. It will go on bleeding, notwithstanding all the balsams he can apply. No hand can heal a sin-sick soul but the hand that wounded it, even the hand of God, through the Person of Jesus Christ our Lord!

It is astonishing, after all the Gospel preaching in England, how deeply rooted is this constant fallacy of going to king Jareb for cure! Not very long ago, having engaged to preach at a seaport town, I arrived some hours before night and, as I was standing by the riverside, I thought I would like to go down the river in a boat. So, hailing a waterman, I went with him and, while sitting in the boat, wishing to talk with him about religious matters, I began by asking him about his family. He told me that the cholera had visited his place and that he had lost no less than 13 of his relatives, one after another, by death. So I said, "Have you, my Friend, a good hope of Heaven if you should, yourself, die?" "Well, Sir," he said, "I think as how I have." "Pray tell me, then," I said, "what is your hope, for, of a good hope no man need ever be ashamed." "Well, Sir, I have been on this here river, I think, for these 25 or 30 years, and I don't know that anybody ever saw me drunk." "Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" I replied, "is that all you trust to?" "Well, Sir, when the cholera was about and my poor neighbors were bad, I went for the doctor for 'em, and was up a good many nights. And I do think as how I am as good as my neighbors."

Of course I told him that I was very glad to hear that he had sympathy for the suffering and that I considered it far better to be charitable than to be churlish, but I did not see how his good conduct could carry him to Heaven. "Well, Sir," he said, "perhaps it will not. I cannot be often going to church, but I think, when I get a little older, I shall give up the boat and take to going to church, and then, I think, that will be right—won't it, Sir?" "No," I said, "certainly your resolutions will not renew your heart. And should you ever perform them, they will not purge your soul from its sinfulness. Begin to go to church as soon as possible, but you will not be an inch further, if you think that by attending the sanctuary you will be saved." The poor man seemed perfectly astounded while I went on knocking down his hopes, one after another. Then I put the question, "You have sometimes sinned in your life, have you not?" "Yes," he said, "I have." "On what ground, then, do you think your sins will be forgiven?" "Well, Sir," he said, "I have been sorry about them and I think they are all gone—they do not trouble me now."

Trying to awaken his conscience, I said, "Suppose you were to go and get into debt with the grocer where you deal, and you should say to her, 'Now, mistress, you have a score against me. I cannot pay for these goods, I am sorry to say, but I'll tell you what I'll do—I'll never get into your debt again.' Why, she would say that was not the way she did business and do you suppose that is the way in which God does business, or that He is going to strike out your debts because you say you will not run deeper into debt?" "Well, Sir," he said, "I should like to know how my sins are to be forgiven. Are you a parson, Sir?" In reply, I said, "I preach the Gospel, I hope, but I do not go by the name of a parson. I am only a Dissenting minister." I told him how the Lord Jesus Christ had paid the debts of sinners. How those that reposed in Him and rested in His blood and righteousness would find peace and mercy. And the man was delighted and he said he wished he had heard that years ago. "But, to say the truth, Master," he added, "I had not felt quite easy, after all, when I saw those poor creatures taken away to the graveyard. I did think there was something I needed, but I did not know what it was."

I tell you this little personal incident because I see here a great many working people and I know they delight in a little homely dialog. It is not what we do or devise, the religious rites we observe, or the romantic aims we aspire to, the self-satisfaction we encourage, or the sufferings we endure, that can lead us to the land of the Light of Good! Not all your uprightness, however plausible, or your honesty, however rigid you may be, will carry you to Heaven! Your good works are good enough in themselves, good enough in your generation—but they will never do for a foundation to rest upon. Do not run away and say something like the foolish man who went to a place where there was a house being built and, seeing the chimney pots standing there, he took them and laid them in the trench to make the foundation.

"What are you doing?" said one of the workmen. "Why, laying the foundation." "What, with the chimney pots?" "I did not know that it was wrong," he said. "Well, take them away—they won't do for a foundation." "Oh!" said the other, "you are finding fault with them." "No, I am not find-

ing fault with them, but with the place where you put them. They are good enough on the top, but they won't do at the bottom." So with good works—they will do at the top, but they will not do at the bottom! As a foundation for the soul to rest upon, nothing will suffice but the righteousness of Christ and His finished work. This is our hope of salvation! Our good works are good enough afterwards, when God the Holy Spirit, by His Grace, works faith, love and all other good things in us.

III. WHAT, THEN, IS THE WAY OF SALVATION?

Whoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary he should know that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came down from Heaven and was, for our sin, Incarnate in human form, born of the Virgin Mary, lived a life of sanctity and of suffering and, at last, this glorious Son of God—this grief-stricken Son of Man—became obedient even unto death. In the garden He wrestled and shed, as it were, great drops of blood in the prospect of the coming terrors of His death-struggle. To the Cross He was nailed, amidst shame, ignominy and scoffing. There He endured incredible pain, pangs of body and agony of soul. He hung there, through the thick darkness, three hours and, at last, when the appointed time was come, when He had suffered all, when the full chastisement of our sin had been laid upon Him and the iniquity of us all had received its dreadful retribution at His hands, He cried, "It is finished!" Thus He gave up the ghost, was laid in the tomb and then arose from the dead on the third day and ascended to Heaven.

Now, if you would be saved, my Friend, it is necessary that you should believe in Him who was the Son of God and the Son of Man, and that you should believe in your heart these things of Him—First, that He is a Divinely-ordained Savior, able to save all those that come to God through Him. You must believe, likewise, that He is willing to save and that He will save those that seek salvation, believing and trusting in His power. When you have believed this, you have gone a good part of the way toward that saving faith which shall bring you into a state of Grace. It is by acting upon this belief, by casting yourself simply on the merits of His blood and of His perfect righteousness as the ground of your acceptance before God, that you shall find peace. No man can be saved if he does not trust his soul in the hands of Christ. We must give up ourselves from our own keeping into Christ's keeping saying, "Lord, take me, save me, make me what You would have me to be and then, when Your Father shall require my soul at the Last Day, stand as my Surety and bring me, perfect and spotless, into His Presence."

I must add one thing more—there must be what the old divines call a recumbency—a leaning on Him, a dependence on Him. But here I must warn you that some people have an idea that if they get faith in Christ, it matters not how they live, or what they are. Now, be it understood, once and for all, we are saved by *faith*—not by works! But we must have good works *if we are really saved*. You know that faith is not only leaning on Christ, but *obeying* Christ. Suppose there is a man who says to me, "You have committed such-and-such an offense. You are in such-and-such difficulties, but if you will implicitly trust me and leave the matter entirely in my hands, I will see that you come through all right." Well

now, if I get to meddling with it, that will prove I do not trust him! But, by-and-by, he comes to me and says, "My dear Friend, are you trusting me wholly?" "Yes," I say, "I am reposing all my trust in you." Suppose he says, "I want you to look over this document, which you must sign, and then I shall want you, on a certain morning, to be at such-and-such a place." What if I answer, "I shall do no such thing! I will not sign the deed, nor meet you by appointment." "Then," he says, "you are not trusting me." "I am leaning on you and trusting you," I say. "Well," he says, "unless you do what I tell you, your faith is not genuine faith, neither are you trusting in me at all."

Now, if you are perfectly trusting Christ, your next question will be, "Lord, I am trusting to be saved by You, but how will You have me be saved?" "Oh," says Christ, "I will save you, but you must break off those old habits." "Oh," you say, "Lord, assist me with Your Grace and I will renounce them all." "Well," says Christ, "and if you would be saved, I will have you, in the next place, attend to My ordinances. Come forward and make a profession of your faith. Be baptized. Unite yourself to the Church visible. Receive the Lord's Supper." But you say, "No, Lord! I will do no such thing." "Well, then," He says, "you are not trusting Me because whatever I tell you to do, you ought to do it."

You may have heard the good illustration which Mr. Cecil gives of faith. His little child was standing, one day, at the top of a dark cellar. She was in the light and he was down below in the cellar. "My dear child, jump down and I will catch you," he said. And the child, without a moment's thought, sprang into the father's arms! Now that is one kind of faith. That is when we are enabled so to trust Christ that we do, so to speak, venture our souls on Him, risk all with Him. But mark, that is not the complete picture of the faith of saints. This kind of faith some people profess to have, but their lives do not bear out their profession and, therefore, there must be something else to make it clear. And Mr. Cecil gives another illustration through the same little girl. "I said to her, one day, as she had a necklace of beads, 'My dear child, you know I love you and you would do anything I told you. Take those beads off and throw them into the fire.' She did so at once." Now, the first faith was the faith of daring, venturing herself. But the second proved her faith to be true and genuine, when she could obey at such a cost. To a large extent, faith and obedience are really one, and it is useless for you to say that you believe in Christ as your Savior if you do not obey Him as your Lord. Some try to do so, but their faith is worthless. But when we can unite unwavering trust with implicit obedience, we prove that we are really trusting in Christ—and then we are safe.

O my dear Hearer, if I have puzzled you instead of making the Truth of God plain, I can say I did not intend to do so. I would have you to understand, if you are troubled on account of sin, that God requires nothing of you but what He gives you. He requires nothing but that you should depend for all on Christ. That is all He asks. Do it. Oh, may His Holy Spirit enable you to do it now!

Let me tell you a parable which shall illustrate faith. There were two children, according to the fable, walking with their father along a narrow

ridge. On either side there was a dark, deep precipice. One of the dear children put his hand inside the father's hand and his father grasped it. The other put his little fingers round his father's hand and took hold of his father's hand. It was not long before, in the midst of the thick darkness, the children grew weary. And the child who had taken hold of the father's hand perished. But the child who had put his hand into the father's hand and let the father take hold of it, was carried safely to the end. Now, put your hand inside the hand of Christ and when He bids you obey Him, don't take it away! Give yourself wholly up to Him to be His—come life, come death, for better or for worse—to be His to trust and His to obey, being from this time forth His forever!

Oh, may God the Holy Spirit lead us to do this! It is easy enough when the Hoy Spirit enables us, but it is hard enough when our human nature kicks against it. May Sovereign Grace subdue our hearts and teach us to depend on Christ—and no more foolishly attempt to work out our salvation by impossible means! I can only pray that God will bless this brief, hurried discourse, and to His name shall be the glory, through Christ Jesus. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 1:1-20.

Verse 1. *The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.* During the time in which Isaiah prophesied, the worship of God was, upon the whole, maintained in Judah. Yet, prosperous as the times appeared to be, there was visible to the eyes of the Lord much iniquity. He who saw not as man saw, but who looks beneath the surface and into the hearts of men, saw that the condition of the people was exceedingly unsatisfactory. Do not forget that these upbraiding words were spoken during the reigns of comparatively good kings. Try to imagine how the Lord must have felt towards the people who lived in the reigns of bad kings.

2, 3. *Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel does not know, My people do not consider.* God's own people were worse than the brutes that perish! They had no gratitude towards their Maker and Preserver. Am I not addressing many persons of the same kind, who have little or no thought concerning Him who made them and who supplies all their needs? God seems here as if He were tired of appealing to His people, so He speaks to the heavens and the earth, as if He knew that even inanimate things would be more capable of feeling than hardened Judah was!

4. *Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.* If I am now addressing any who have backslidden from God, let them take these words of His to heart—He observes how you have forsaken Him. He

feels grieved at your provoking Him. He mourns over your going backward from Him. May you be moved by the Holy Spirit to mourn, too!

5. *Why should you be stricken anymore? You will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.* One of God's ways of bringing people to Himself is by chastisement and affliction. He had tried that method upon Judah—He had used His rod so long that, at last, He exclaimed, "Why should you be stricken anymore?" What is the good of My sending any more affliction upon you? Now, whenever the rod is of no more use, there will be a sharper instrument to follow! When men can no longer be chastened for their good, the axe of execution is ready to be brought forth. What a sorrowful description is here given of the people of Judah and their land!

6-8. *From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.* The Lord had allowed invaders to pillage the land until it was almost reduced to a desert, yet, even then, the people did not, and would not, turn unto their God! It is a terrible thing when sickness, or loss of property, or frequent bereavements do not bring men to their knees. Unsanctified afflictions prophesy certain condemnation to us. "He, that being often reproved hardens his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

9. *Except the LORD of Hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.* The state of the country, even under godly kings, had become so bad that if there had not been a remnant according to the election of Grace, there would have been no help for the land and its inhabitants—and they would have been burnt up like Sodom and Gomorrah.

10-15. *Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom, give ear unto the Law of God, you people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me, says the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of ram, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the brood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When you come to appear before Me, who has required this at your hand, to tread My courts? Bring no more vain oblation; incense is an abomination unto Me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot! Away with it, it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moon and your appointed feasts My Soul hates: they are a trouble unto Me, I am weary to bear them, and when you spread forth your hands, I will hide My eyes from you: yes, when you make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.* It is very possible for people to be outwardly very religious and yet really to be very wicked. The fact is that the multiplication of rites and ceremonies, the observance of forms, feasts, fasts, new moons and all the rest of mere external ritual—may rather indicate an increase of sin than an increase of anything else! Often, in proportion as men's hearts get further and further away from God, they have more and more of outward ritual, more

Roman rags on the priest's back, more smoking incense, more gorgeous architecture! The more of all the externals of religion, the less they have of the internal and eternal. If a man is conscious that he needs something in the shape of godliness and he knows that he has none of it in his heart, he often tries to get it outside. But this is what God says—

16, 17. *Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doing from before My eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well.* Repentance, practical change of life, renewal of heart, the giving up of evil, the following of right—this is what the Lord approves. Otherwise, all your fripperies and trickeries of worship are loathsome to Him. Do you think your finest music is sweet to the ears of Him who listens to the angels' everlasting songs? Do you imagine that you can build temples worthy of Him who made the heavens and the earth? What cares He for temples made with hands? He despises all material things where the heart goes not with them—but purity, holiness, true spiritual worship—these are the things in which He delights!

17. *Seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.* This is better than all your incense, or the fat of rams and he-goats.

18. *Come now, and let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be a white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.* This, too, is what God loves—confessed sin, pardoned by His infinite mercy and Grace.

19, 20. *If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land: but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD has spoken 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.

CHRIST BEFORE ANNAS
NO. 2820

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, MARCH 1, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 26, 1882.

"Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus and bound Him and led Him away to Annas first: for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, who was the high priest that same year...The high priest then asked Jesus of His disciples and of His doctrine. Jesus answered him, I spoke openly to the world; I taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, where the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why do you ask Me? Ask them who heard Me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said. And when He had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answer You the high priest so? Jesus answered him, lf I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why do you strike Me?" John 18:12, 13, 19-23.

NOTE the words in verse 13—"and led him away to Annas first." This man, Annas, has not become so infamous as Pontius Pilate because his name did not happen to be mentioned in the Creed, but, in some respects, he was even more guilty than the Roman governor. He was one of those who handed over our Lord to Pilate and he is included in the judgment, "he that delivered Me unto you has the greater sin." It must not be forgotten that he was first in trying the Savior—let him have the full benefit of it—"*They led him away to Annas first."*

Who was this man to whose palace the Lord Jesus was first conducted? He was a man who had been high priest actually for a time and had, for some 50 years, been regarded as high priest by the Jews, while members of his family, one after another, had in turns nominally held the office. The high-priesthood had been degraded from its permanence to become little more than an annual office and hence the Evangelist significantly says of Caiaphas that, "he was the high priest that same year." But Annas would seem to have been secretly regarded by the Jews as the real high priest and respect to him in that capacity was the more easily offered because, according to Josephus, five of his sons and his son-in-

law, Caiaphas, had succeeded him in the sacred office. To him, then, it was due that the victim of the priests should be first taken. He shall have this mark of distinction—"they led him away to Annas first." The Sacrifice of God, the Lamb of His Passover, the Scapegoat of the Lord's Atonement shall be brought before the priest before He is slain.

The house of Annas was united to that of Caiaphas and it was proposed to detain the prisoner there till the Sanhedrin could be hastily convened for His trial. If He should be brought into the palace of Annas, the old man would be gratified by a sight of Jesus and by conducting a preliminary examination, acting as deputy for his son-in-law. Without leaving his own house, he could thus indulge his malice and have a finger in the business. Priestly hate is always deep and unrelenting. Today none are such enemies of Christ's holy Gospel as those who delight in priestcraft—and it is not without prophetic meaning that our Lord must be led as a prisoner, first to a priest's house—"they led him away to Annas first." Not in the soldiers' barracks, nor in the governor's hall, but in the high priest's palace must Jesus meet with His first captivity! There it is that Christ in bonds seems not altogether out of place—

"See how the patient Jesus stands,
Insulted in His lowest case!
Sinners have bound the Almighty hands,
And spit in their Creator's face."

Annas bore a very promising name, for it signifies *clement* or *merciful*, yet he was the man to begin the work of ensnaring the Lord Jesus in His speech, if He could be ensnared. He examined Him first in a semi-private manner, that, by cunning questions, he might extract from Him some ground of accusation. Under pretence of mercy, he turned inquisitor and put his Victim to the question. This priest, whose name was clemency, showed the usual tender mercies of the wicked, which are proverbially cruel. When Jesus is to be ill-treated by His servants, there is usually a pretence of pity and compassion. Persecutors are grieved to feel forced to be harsh—their tender spirits are wounded by being compelled to say a word against the Lord's people! Gladly would they love them if they would not be so obstinate! With sweet language they inflict bitter wounds—their words are softer than butter—but inwardly they are drawn swords.

If I read aright the character of this man, Annas, he was one of the Savior's bitterest enemies. He was a Sadducee. Is not this the "liberal" side? Do we not reckon Pharisees to be the straitest sect of the Jews? Why he should have been so bitter against the Savior is pretty clear, since, if Pharisees, in their multiplication of ceremonies and self-righteousness, hate the Christ, so also do the Sadducees in their unbelief and rejection of the great Truths of Revelation. Here, Ritualism and Rationalism go hand in hand and the free-thinker, with all his profession of liberality, usually displays none of it toward the followers of the Truth of

God. The Broad Church is usually narrow enough when the Doctrine of the Cross is under discussion! Whether this Sadducee had an interest in the sales that were effected in the temple and whether, as some suppose, he was greatly irritated and touched in a very tender point, namely, in his pocket, when Jesus overthrew the tables of the money-changers and the seats of them that sold doves, I cannot tell. But, certainly, for some reason or other, Annas was among the first of our Lord's persecutors, not only in order of time, but also in point of malice. The wealthy latitudinarian has a fierce enmity to the Gospel of Christ Jesus and will be found second to none in hunting down the adherents of Christ.

Did the military tribune and his cohort stop at the house of Annas because he had been at the bottom of the business and Pilate had ordered them, for the time, to do the will of the high priest and his father-in-law? Was this long-headed old gentleman the counselor of the conspirators? Did the force of character which kept him to the front for half a century, make him a leader at this juncture? Is it possible that they called at the house of Annas to hand over their Victim that Judas might receive the blood money? At all events we hear no more of the traitor as being in the company of those who had seized upon his Lord.

At any rate, the Lord is led to Annas, *first*, and we feel sure that there was a motive for that act. Annas, in some sense, had a priority in the peerage of enmity to Jesus—he was malignant, cruel and unscrupulous enough to be premier in the ministry of persecutors. In all matters, there are first, as well as last, and this man leads the van among the unjust judges of our Lord. He was a favorite of the first and most detestable of the Herods and a friend of Pilate, the governor, and so, a fit ringleader in procuring the judicial murder of the Innocent. All hope of justice was gone when the Holy One and the Just was delivered into those cruel and unrighteous hands! He was as determined as he was cold-blooded—and a lamb might as well look for favor from a wolf as Jesus expect candor from the old deputy high priest. For many a long years he had held his own by flattering Herod, the Roman and the Jew—and he set about the work of mastering the Nazarene with cool determination and deep subtlety, hoping to pave the way for the men of the Sanhedrin who were even then being mustered to do the deed of blood on which their hearts were set.

In the house of this man, then, who is very properly called the high priest, having quite as good a right to the title as Caiaphas had, we see these two things. First, we see *our Lord under examination.* And, secondly, we see *our Lord wrongfully struck.*

I. First, let us, tenderly, lovingly, adoringly, look at OUR DIVINE MASTER UNDER EXAMINATION.

My first remark is that *this examination was informal and extrajudicial.* Jesus was not yet accused of anything, so far. No judge had taken his place upon the judgment seat, neither were any witnesses called to give evidence against the Prisoner. It was a sort of private examination, held with the view of extorting something from the Captive which might afterwards be used against Him. You know how strongly and how properly our law forbids anything of the kind and, though it may not have been contrary to Jewish law, it was certainly contrary to the eternal laws of right and wrong! A prisoner should not thus be questioned with the object of entangling him in his speech and making him incriminate himself. If there is no charge formulated against him, let him go his way. If the entries on the charge sheet are not completed, let him be remanded, but let him not be set before one of his most cruel foes to be questioned to his own detriment!

This is what was done in our Savior's case when He was brought before Annas. And I think that I know many who treat Him, at this time, quite as badly. They ask questions about Him and make enquiries concerning Him, but they do not do it honestly and sincerely, or according to the rules of justice. You know how captious unbelievers often are, how they pick up any misquoted text, or half a text torn from its context, and say that they are enquiring about Christ, when they are not doing it either judicially or as they would wish to be questioned were they themselves under examination! I fear that the bulk of those who quibble at the faith of Christ, do it not as honest men, nor as they would wish to have their own characters investigated. The last book which some of them think of reading is the New Testament—and the last thing that they try to understand is Christ's true Character. And one of the last things that they will ever listen to is a full and fair statement of what His Gospel really is. Still, to this day, the representatives of Annas are here and there, and almost everywhere, questioning the followers of Christ with the design of finding out something to jeer at, something which may be hawked about as a discrepancy, or held up as obsolete and inconsistent with the spirit of this wonderful century of which I hear so often that I am utterly sick of it—and long for the time when the 19th Century shall go down to its ignoble grave!

Next, *this questioning of Christ was one-sided.* "The high priest then asked Jesus of His disciples and of His doctrine." Why did he not ask Him about Himself—who and what He was—and enquire especially concerning His miracles and His whole course of life? Why did not Annas enquire, "Did You raise the dead? Did You open blind eyes? Did You heal the lepers? Did You go about doing good?" Oh, no, there were no questions about any such things—they were all passed over as of no importance!

The questions began with the weakest point of all, or that which men have often regarded as the weakest—he "asked Jesus of His disciples." Can a leader help the follies and weaknesses of his followers? I suppose Annas put his question thus, "Where are Your disciples? "Ah, there was Peter down there in the hall, but Christ could not call him up to witness for Him. John was probably somewhere in the background, but the rest had forsaken their Lord and fled. Annas, no doubt asked, "Who are these disciples of Yours? Where did You pick them up?" I dare say he knew that they were men of Galilee, mostly plain fishermen, and he meant to cast a slur upon Christ on that account. If he had known more about those disciples, he might have put a great many questions which would have reflected but little honor upon the religion of Jesus.

This is just as men do now—they ask concerning Christ's disciples. I do not deny that it is quite fair to enquire what is the influence of Christianity upon the men who believe it, but, oftentimes, that one point is thrust so prominently into the front that the wonders which Christ, Himself, worked, are thrown into the background—and the investigation thus becomes one-sided. We are quite willing that Christ, Himself, and His work—all that has been, all that is to be, all His designs and purposes—should be examined. But, for the most part, men search for that which they think to be the weakest point of assault and they say, "Look at So-and-So, one of Christ's disciples. And look at So-and-So, one of His ministers! See what divisions there are in the churches," and so forth. Yes, but surely, if Christ is examined at all, He deserves to have a full and fair examination—it should not be upon only one point. Blessed be His name, it matters not upon what point He is examined! He always has His answer ready, and a glorious one it is! If men were really willing to know the Truth of God, they would take an all-round view of Him and look at Him from this point and from that—and then judge Him.

Further, *this examination* was very disorderly, for the high priest asked Christ "of His disciples and of His doctrine." Now, logically, the enquiry should have been, first, concerning His doctrine and then with respect to His disciples—first as to His teaching and then as to the people influenced by it. But men like Annas put their questions anyway—upside down, the first last and the last first—so that they may secure some accusation against Christ. Now, if any man will sit down quietly and really study the life, Character and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, we shall be delighted to hear what he has to say about it, but let him study it in due order. Let him not pick out this, and leave out that, and put everything out of gear, so as to make a monster of Him. Let Him be looked at after the same manner as one would look at any other religious teacher, or as we might examine the character of any man brought before a court of law. I ask those, if there are any such now present, who have spoken

harshly of our blessed Lord and Master, to do themselves the justice and to do Christ the justice, to adopt another course and to examine Him as they would wish to be examined themselves, if their character and their designs were called in question.

Annas did not so, for *his examination of Christ was concerning His disciples and His doctrine.* With regard to His disciples, our Master said nothing. He had been saying much about them to His Father and, in His almighty love and wisdom, He could have said much, then and there, concerning His disciples if He had chosen to do so, but He did not and therein He proved His wisdom. All through the Scriptures we find comparatively little said concerning God's people. The record is mostly of their faults and their failings. The reason for that is that this is not the day of their manifestation. That day comes on apace and, "when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." Annas thought that Christ's followers were a set of fanatics—ignorant, unskilled, worthless people—the lower orders. The catacombs tell us, as we read the rude inscriptions there, how few of those godly folk, of whom the world was not worthy, were men of education—the most of them were evidently plain, humble, common people. Our Lord Jesus Christ has no great reverence for earthly rank or grandeur—He loves the man, but cares little for the garb he wears—and of the poorest saints it is true that "He is not ashamed to call them brethren."

It is a mercy for us, who are on Christ's side, and who have been despised in consequence, that, in the Resurrection, there will also be a resurrection of reputations as well as of bodies. There will be a bestowal of honor that has been denied here and of credit that has been refused on earth. God has said it, so it must be true, "Light is sown for the righteous," and their glad harvest time shall surely come! And then the glory will forever blot out the shame and derision which may have been poured upon the faithful for the sake of Jesus Christ their Lord and Master. As yet, we will not ask Him concerning His disciples, but that is the point that the adversary harps upon. Therefore, O you disciples of Jesus, watch and pray, and seek to be like your Master! Pray to be kept from the evil which is in the world and, as for the rest, if men despise you, count that as part of the bargain upon which you have entered—a bargain which shall, in due season, fill you with eternal bliss!

Annas also asked Christ concerning His doctrine—what it was that He taught those who listened to Him. I will not go into that matter, for I want to speak at some length upon *the answer which Christ gave to Annas.* He first protested that it was not fair for Him to be thus questioned in private as to what He had said in public. The proper thing was to ask those who had heard Him, "for," He said, "'I spoke openly to the world. I

always taught in the synagogue, and in the temple.' I chose the most public places for My teaching. I had no hole-and-corner gatherings, no little conventicle in which I urged My followers to sedition. No, 'I spoke openly.' The heavens heard Me. On the side of the hills, I proclaimed My message. By the seashore, I spoke to all who gathered around Me. Multitudes were often present at My services—they know what I said, and they could bear witness concerning it if they were asked to do so."

There was great openness about Christ. There was an utter absence of anything like the Jesuitical plan of saying one thing and meaning another, or using expressions that had double meaning in them. It is true that our Lord did not explain to the great mass of the people all that He said to them, for they were so stupid that they would not receive it. But, at the same time, there was nothing that His hearers really needed to know that He concealed from them. He carried His heart where all might read it and even in His common teaching to the multitude, there was, if they had but had eyes to see it, all that He taught to His disciples in the most private place. There was no wish, on His part, to keep back any Truth of God that ought to be made known to those who gathered to hear Him.

I have heard it said that there are certain Truths in God's Word which it is better for us not to preach. It is admitted that they are true, but it is alleged that they are not edifying. I will not agree to any such plan! This is just going back to old Rome's method. Whatever it has seemed good to God's wisdom to reveal, it is wise for God's servants to proclaim. Who are we that we are to judge between this Truth of God and that and to say that this we are to preach, and that we are to withhold? This system would make us to be, after all, the judges of what Christ's Gospel is to be! It must not be so among us, Beloved—that would be assuming a responsibility which we are quite unable to bear. I believe that it is because the Doctrines of Grace have been too much kept from the pulpit, that the pews are getting so empty. Leave the Doctrines of Grace out of the preaching and you have left the marrow and fatness out of it! What is there to make the people rush to your houses of prayer and crowd them, if there is no preaching of the Election of Grace—no declaration of Particular Redemption and Effectual Calling, no proclamation of the blessed Final Perseverance of the Saints? If you leave these glorious Truths out of your preaching, you have put on the table nothing but the horseradish and the parsley—the roast is conspicuous by its absence!

Some people say that these things are to be talked of among the saints, but must not be preached to sinners. Oh, say not so! Every Doctrine of God's Word is good! Every Truth in the Bible is precious! The omission of any one part of it, willfully, and with design, may so impair the whole of our testimony that, instead of being like Hermon, "wet with dew," our ministry will be like the accursed Gilboa, upon which no dew

descended. Whatever the Lord has taught you by His Spirit, my Brother, tell to others! According as you have opportunity, reveal to them what God has revealed to you. Remember how Christ Himself charged His disciples, "What I tell you in darkness, that speak in light; what you hear in the ear, that preach upon the housetops." And, today, the sublime and majestic Truths of God which cluster around the Sovereignty of God are as much to be proclaimed as the softer, most tender and apparently more winsome words which tell of infinite mercy to the chief of sinners! *All truths are to be preached in due proportion*—there is a time for this, and a time for that—and none must be omitted. There is a particular stone which is to be the key of the arch, and another which is to go on this side, another lower down and yet another still lower down—and the omitting of any one stone, because it does not happen to be of what we reckon to the orthodox shape for usefulness, may spoil the whole bridge and it may come down with a crash! Oh, that we may so build in our teaching that our building will last throughout eternity! At the end of our ministry, may we be able to say, "I have kept back nothing; all that Christ taught me, I have taught to others and so I have made full proof of my ministry." Christ was able to appeal to those who had heard Him and who could tell what His testimony had been. May God give us Grace to imitate Him in this respect!

Our blessed Lord answered Annas by referring him to His public life and teaching. There was no need for any other defense. We cannot imagine anything more convincing. No eloquence of speech or forcibleness of argument could have completely put the wily adversary out of the field. The inquisitor, himself, was so ashamed and, for the moment, so confounded, that a zealous official struck Jesus with his open hand. The innocent, unabashed face of the persecuted Nazarene was thus slapped because His simple defense had silenced His cruel opponent! What a wonderful answer it was! How it commends His whole Character to us and makes Him seem to be even more truly majestic than ever!

I am sure there is not one of us who would dare to say of our lives, at least not so unreservedly, what Jesus could truly say of His. Our Lord's life was emphatically lived among men. He was no recluse. From early morning to the last thing at night, He was associated with men and, therefore, all that He did was done before the eyes of men. That "fierce light that beats about a throne" always beat about Him. He was constantly being watched—every word that He uttered was remembered. Again and again, His enemies endeavored to catch Him in His speech. He could scarcely be allowed a moment's leisure when He might relax, like one at his own fireside. He was always before the Argus-eyes of the ungodly world who would see faults where there were none, and who, if

there had been the least speck of blame, would have magnified it and published it to the ends of the earth!

Moreover, our Lord was by no means a silent Man. He spoke and spoke often. Witness the Books that we have by way of record of that quiet life of His—and the things that He said and did were far more than those that are recorded, for John says, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written, everyone, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." Yet there was never any act or word of Christ's in which friend or foe could find a single speck of sin at all. He could even challenge Satan, himself, to find a flaw in His life—"The prince of this world comes, and has nothing on Me."

His speech, too, was not only very frequent, but it was also very plain. He spoke so simply that even little children could understand Him. I should think there was never one person in His audience who could truthfully say that he could not comprehend what the Preacher meant. And yet, though they could all tell what His meaning was, they could not honestly find fault with that meaning.

Another thing that is worthy of observation is that He spoke frequently under great provocation. Yet He never lost His temper, nor spoke unadvisedly with His lips. You and I know that if we ever lose our temper, we are apt to say all manner of unwise, foolish and wicked words—but our blessed Savior never sinned in that way, however great was the provocation to which He was subjected. He was also often misrepresented and our tendency is, when men speak falsely of us, to go beyond the bounds of truth or prudence in replying to them. Our Lord Jesus never did that. The pendulum of the great clock of His wonderful life never swung too far either one way or the other. You have not to correct any one saying of the Savior by what He said at some other time—all His utterances are the absolute Truth of God, whether taken separately, or taken together. Even the false witnesses who were bribed to bring accusations against Him, altogether failed to find anything that could be laid to His charge!

It must not be forgotten, also, that our blessed Master frequently spoke in the midst of turmoil. He did not always have such a quiet, orderly assembly as we have when we gather for public worship—He had to speak, often, amidst the clamor of the angry mob and the opposition and even the maledictions of those who hated Him. Yet, even under these trying circumstances, He spoke so that He could fearlessly challenge them all to find fault with anything that He had said in their hearing. Our Lord had spoken to all sorts of characters—bad, good and indifferent—and there was especially one who betrayed Him, who had heard many of His most secret speeches. Judas had been with Him in His retirement and had listened to His words when only the favored few had been present,

yet there was no single sentence or syllable that even he could plead in extenuation of his great crime in betraying his Lord.

II. I have spoken at such length upon this first part of my subject that I have very little time left for the second portion, namely, OUR LORD JESUS WRONGFULLY STRUCK—"When He had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by, struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answer You the high priest so?"

His answer was a very simple one and a very proper one in all respects, yet, at the same time, it must have been a very stinging one if Annas was the kind of man that I think he was, for our Savior seemed to say, (you may read it between the lines), *"I* am not plotting in secret against another man's life. *I* have not talked with another man with the object of entangling him in his speech. *I* have not been a conspirator, but I have spoken publicly in the synagogues and taught in the temple, in the very center of the place of concourse—but in secret I have said nothing." This must have been a very sharp rebuke to Annas, if any conscience was left in the wretched man! So one of the lackeys that stood around the hierarch struck Christ and said, "Answer You the high priest so?"

Now, in the first instance, Christ met with the opposition of a so-called enquiry. But here He had the vulgar opposition of persecution. Alas, there are still many who never enquire about Christ at all, but they decide against Him and then they begin to persecute wife, child, friend, neighbor, or whoever it may be that is on Christ's side! And, often, they strike him as this officer struck our Lord. This was a most cowardly act, for Christ was bound and helpless. Yet we have the same sort of conduct in our own day. It does seem to me a wretched thing that if some people choose to go through the streets singing hymns, they are pelted with stones and mud while their own hands are bound. They cannot turn round and fight their assailants, for their Christianity has tied their hands—and the cruel mobs know it. If these men want to fight, why do they not find some fellows like themselves, walking through the streets, and attack them and then see what will come of it? They are afraid to do that, for, to this day, persecution is always against men whose hands are bound. If our religion taught us to answer sharply and to give cuff for cuff, and kick for kick, it would be all fair—but when we are commanded not to resist evil and our very faithfulness to Christ prevents our replying to the foul language that is used against us, it is brutally cruel that we should be thus persecuted. Read all history through and see whether some have not degraded themselves utterly beneath contempt by burning men who would not have touched a hair of their heads—and putting to death poor men and women who could not have done them any injury and who never wished to do so. That is the story of Christ and His fol-

lowers all the way through—first, to be questioned by people who do not want to know the Truth and, next, to be persecuted by people who really have not anything to say against them.

To the man who thus wrongfully struck Him, our Savior said, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why do you strike Me?" We also may say to those who wantonly strike Christ's followers. "Why do you do it? Has Christianity done any harm to manhood in general, or to you in particular?" What has been the force that has broken the power of tyrants? At the bottom, in many countries, it has been the Word of God that has made men free. In our own times, what ended the slave trade and set the Negro free? What is it that, today, is the most potent force against the drunkenness of our land? Surely, nothing but the Gospel of Jesus Christ! Have we, as Christians, any aim, in all the world, of which anyone can accuse us? Are we doing mischief to our fellow men? Do we teach drunkenness, or lust, or oppression? Do you hear from us anything about robbing you of your birthright, or injuring you in any way whatever? No, you know that it is not so! Our war is for peace. Every blow that we strike is against blows. If we have to denounce anything, we do most of all denounce denunciation—and if we are bitter at all, most of all are we bitter against bitterness, envy, malice and all uncharitableness!

Oh, that we could always give to our persecutors such an answer as our blessed Master gave to the officer who struck Him, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why do you strike me?" There are times when we dare not say that, but we would rather say, "If I have spoken evil, do not remember it, do not bring it to my recollection. If I have spoken evil, try to forget it, or, at least, if you remember it, repeat it not to another, for I am afraid that I may have said much that might stain my profession and grieve my God." I think that if we had our choice as to whether we would be slapped on the face, or have our own words brought up as witnesses against us, we would, each one, say, "If I have spoken evil, do not bear witness of the evil, but much rather slap me than bear witness against me."

Yet it is not always so. There are times when, in conscious integrity, or concerning certain words or acts of ours, we can challenge any man to find fault with us. But, taking the whole range of our lives, in public and in private, most of us would be loath to ask for such a test as that. When our adversaries persecute us, we might say to them, "Ah, if you really knew all that we have been, you would not so much persecute us for our goodness, but punish us for our badness." When I have been slandered, I have often said to myself, "Ah, they have spoken a lie against me, but if they had known me better, they might have said quite as bad a thing as that and yet have only spoken what was true." There is not one man liv-

ing, who is in his right mind, who would like to have all his thoughts written down, or all his words and acts recorded. We have often wished that half our words could be blotted out with our tears—and then the other half would have to be washed with that precious blood of Jesus before we could, ourselves, endure it.

Now, I think that all this of which I have been speaking to you, ought very much to endear the Master to us and it will do so if we remember and believe that God "has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Here is a Lamb that is fit for sacrifice. The high priest and all his officers may examine it as much as they please—they will find that it is perfect. There is not a blemish in it. There is no redundancy and there is no omission. There is neither speck nor spot of sin in Christ—we cannot find any fault in Him. Whether we look at Him within or without, in His youth, or in His childhood, or in His Manhood—in His life or in His death—in His speech or in His silence, in His feelings, or in His thoughts, or in His acts—He is good, and only good—and blessed be His holy name forever and ever! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—289, 274, 268.

[In closing his discourse, Mr. Spurgeon intimated that he had intended also to speak, in that sermon, upon Annas sending Christ bound to Caiaphas, but that he had been obliged, through lack of time, and the importance of that topic, to leave it to be dealt with in another discourse. This will be the one to be published for reading on Lord's-Day, March 15th, and will be entitled, "*Christ in Bonds.*"—Sermon #2822, Volume 49—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

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

"UNTIL HE FINDS IT"
NO. 2821

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 8, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 28, 1877.

"Until he finds it."
Luke 15:4.

IT was not just anybody who went after the sheep that was lost—it was the person to whom the lost sheep belonged. Our Savior said, "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost, until he finds it?" The man was not a hunter, looking after wild game that was not his, in order to make it his by capturing it, but he was a sheep-master—one who owned the sheep, going out to find what was already his own property. This is one of the great secrets that explain the care of the Good Shepherd—in looking for the lost sheep, He is caring for that which is His own. He says of them, in His great intercessory prayer to His Father, "Yours they were, and You gave them to Me." Long before this world was created, or stars began to shine, even in the eternal ages of the past, God had given to His beloved Son a people who were then and there His by His Father's gift. In the fullness of time He redeemed them and so they became doubly His. Yet they were His, in plan and purpose, from eternity! They were, therefore, His when they wandered away from Him and His while they strayed further and yet further off from Him—yes, they were always His wherever they went! This Truth of God is well put by the writer of the lines we have so often sung—

"'Lord, You have here Your ninety and nine,
Are they not enough for You?'
But the Shepherd made answer, 'This of Mine
Has wandered away from Me
And although the road is rough and steep,
I go to the desert to find My sheep.'"

That wandering sheep did not belong to anybody else but that particular sheep-master. If any other man had taken it into his fold, he would have had no right to do so. If anyone had caught it and slain and eaten it, he would have been a thief for it was not his sheep. It belonged to the man who owned the other 99 sheep and it was because it belonged to him that he went after it. He would not have gone to seek another man's sheep—he sought it because it was his own. And, in like manner, Christ has come into the world to seek His own. He Himself said, "The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep." And the Apostle Paul wrote, "Chr-

ist loved the church, and gave Himself for it." The main object and design which He had in coming to this earth was to seek His own. His great redemptive work has brought some good to all men, but it was more especially intended for the benefit of the household of faith. As Paul wrote to Timothy, "We trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those that believe." The great purpose of His coming is in order to seek His own, whom His Father has given to Him—that none of them may be lost at the last.

Remembering this great Truth, we shall now consider these four words, "Until he finds it." "Until" is something like a boundary mark set up to indicate a turning-point. And we shall first consider *the dark side of this, "until,"* and then come over into *the bright side of it.*

I. Looking, first, on THE DARK SIDE OF THIS, "UNTIL," we will try to answer two questions. First, where is the sheep until the Shepherd finds it? Secondly, where is the Shepherd until He finds it?

First, then, *where is the sheep until the Shepherd finds it?* Mark, dear Friends, the pronoun in our text, "until *He* [speaking of Christ] finds it." It is the Shepherd who finds the lost sheep. True salvation comes to the sinner by Jesus Christ finding him. You and I, if we are very earnest in seeking the souls of others, may readily find the lost ones, for they are all around us—perhaps in our own families, possibly they nestle even in our bosoms. We know well enough where the lost ones are, for we cannot walk the streets of London, or the lanes of country villages without discovering them. If we ask the city missionary where we can find those that are most evidently lost, he will tell us where they live in whole colonies! He knows where any quantity of them may be found. Now, our finding of them may be a means to an end, but it is only a means. The end must be *Christ's finding them*, if they are really to be saved. Otherwise, it will not be of much use for the schoolmaster to find them. Though it may do them some good and be a temporal advantage to them, it will not be much good for the blessings of civilization to find them, or for them to be lifted up out of poverty. All these processes may be useful in their measure, but, as far as the eternal salvation of the lost is concerned, it all depends upon Christ finding them. He, the unique Man, the all-glorious God, must come into contact with them through His Spirit and claim them as His own—for, until that happens, they will remain in the sad, sad state of which I am now going to speak. I like that idea of the Chinese convert who, when he was applying for Baptism and membership at San Francisco, and was asked, "How did you find Jesus" answered, "I no find Jesus at all—He find me." It is almost unnecessary to add that he was accepted upon such a testimony!

Where, then, are lost sinners until Christ finds and saves them?

Well, first, they are in a very careless state. They are here compared to sheep, partly because of their stupidity, but also because of their aptness to wander. A sheep thinks nothing of wandering—it is sport to him to have his liberty. Perhaps he enjoys himself all the more in being free from the pen and the fold. The sheep does not think at all about the shepherd seeking him. The shepherd has wide-open eyes for the sheep, but the

sheep, while he is wandering, has no eyes for the shepherd. The shepherd is pursuing him, hot foot, over hill and dale, but the sheep is carelessly eating what little grass it is able to find, thinking only of the present and making itself as happy as it can without a thought of the future. This is still the condition of the great mass of our fellow men. Until Christ finds them, they are thoughtless, careless, indifferent about eternal things. Oh, that they could but be led to *think*, for thoughtfulness is oftentimes evidence that He has found them! But they decline to think. "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? How shall we be clothed?"—these are the questions that interest them! Their chief concern is, "to kill time," though, indeed, they have no time to lose—to hurry away the hours which are already far too fleet—this seems to be their principal occupation. Just as the sheep cannot think and will not think, so neither will the sinner—he will continue in his carelessness, indifference and brutishness until the Savior finds him.

More than this, the sheep, until it is found by its owner, is very apt to wander further and yet further away, just as sinners go on from one sin to another. It is not the nature of sin to remain in a fixed state. Like decaying fruit, it grows more rotten—the corruption is sure to increase and spread. The man who is bad today will, to a certainty, be worse tomorrow. Every week that he lives he adds some new evil habit to all that he had before, until the chain, which at first seemed but a silken cord, becomes, at last, an adamantine fetter in which he is held fast so that he cannot escape. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, it is impossible to say how far men will wander away from God! If restraining Grace is not brought to bear upon them, they will certainly go to unutterable lengths of infamy and guilt. Possibly someone who is here now is wandering further and yet further away. My Friend, let me remind you that you can do, today, what you could not have done seven years ago. You laugh now at things that would have made you shudder then—and language which made your blood run cold when you first left your mother's knee, has now become habitual with you. Yes, and certain tricks in trade, which you oftentimes condemned at the first, have now become your regular practice. Ah, yes, the wandering sheep keeps on straying further and further away—it will not come back to the fold of its own accord, but will continue to wander until the shepherd finds it.

And, until then, the sheep is in a sad condition all the while. It dreams of happiness by wandering, but it finds none. A sheep is not a proper animal to run wild. It is unable to take care of itself as a great many wild creatures can do. As corn, which is but educated grass, seems to yield a harvest nowhere but where man sows it, so a sheep seems to be entirely dependent on man. If it would do well, it must be under a shepherd's care. A sheep running wild is out of its element—it is in a condition in which it cannot flourish or be happy. And a man without God, and without Christ, cannot possibly be blessed. You may think you can do as well without God as with Him, but as soon might a lamp burn without oil, or the lungs heave in life without air—as well might you attempt to live without food as for your soul to truly and really live without God! The

very best of you, if you are without Christ, are simply great ruins—like some dilapidated castle, or abbey which you sometimes see—there may be enough of the ancient building remaining to let us guess what it once was, and what it might again be if the original builder could come back and restore it to its pristine glory, but as it is, it is an utter ruin and bats and owls make their home there.

So is it with you if you are without Christ. Your heart is nothing but a cage of unclean birds. Your mind is full of doubts and forebodings. You are often unable to sleep because of your dread of the future. And when you come to die, then will your desolation be most evident, for, away from God you are like a fish out of the water, or like a diver, under the water, cut off from the supply of air which is essential to his life. The creature cannot do without the Creator! God can be blessed without us, but we cannot be blessed without Him!

We shall realize that the wandering sheep is in a sad condition if we only think of the loss to itself through its straying—but there is far more than that involved in its wandering. There is, also, the loss to the shepherd. That is the blessed mystery underlying our Savior's words. The main loss was that of the shepherd—it was that fact that moved him, as the owner of the lost sheep, to seek after it until he found it. And this made him rejoice so much when he did find it, for he could not bear the thought of losing it. To be lost to Christ may, perhaps, seem to some of you who are careless and thoughtless, to be but a trifling matter. If the wandering sheep could have spoken, it might have said, "I do not want to belong to the shepherd. I know that he values me and that he is seeking me because I am his, but I do not care about that." No, poor sheep, but, if you had been the shepherd, you would have cared and, poor Sinner, if you did but know even a little of what Christ feels, you, also, would begin to care about your own soul! Oh, it is such joy, such bliss as I cannot describe, for anyone to be able to say, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." It brings tears to my eyes even as I repeat those familiar words and meditate upon their meaning.

What a blessing it is to belong to Jesus! I do not know a sweeter song than this, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His." To belong to Jesus, to be one of the sheep in His flock, to know that He is my Shepherd and that I follow Him because I recognize His voice, oh, this is Heaven upon earth! This is the beginning of the joy of Heaven itself! I wish all of you knew it, but, alas, many of you are like the sheep that was lost to the shepherd. If he counted up the 99 and rejoiced that they were safe, yet he heaved a sigh as he said, "I have lost one sheep out of my hundred," and he could not bear the thought of losing even one of them. In the same way, some of you are, as yet, lost to Christ and lost to the great Father who is in Heaven—and that is very sad.

There was also another sad thing, namely, that the sheep was in constant danger. It was away from its natural protector. It was subject to weariness, drought, hunger, disease—and it was in continual danger from predators. It might die for need of care. It would, certainly, at last, perish altogether and be torn by the foul creatures that would feast upon

its carcass. In like manner, a sinner without a Savior is always in danger—as I have already shown you—in danger of still worse sin, in danger of death, in danger from the devil, in danger of "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." Oh, the terrible danger of every unregenerate man! If I see a child almost run over in the street, it curdles my blood—does it not have a similar effect upon you? When you see a man knocked down in the road, even though he gets up and walks away, you feel troubled lest he should be hurt. Do you feel like that when you think about the souls of men that are in a far more terrible danger—in jeopardy of the wrath of God which abides upon them even now, and which will abide upon them forever in that dread place of torment, "where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched"? Pity the poor sheep until the shepherd finds it, for its condition is most sad! And, poor unconverted Sinner, we would also pity you until the Savior finds you, for your state is terribly sad, too.

Now I turn to the second question—*Where is the Shepherd until He finds the wandering sheep?* Ah, Brothers and Sisters, you know well enough where He is! He is seeking His sheep which is lost and He will keep on seeking until He finds it. He is very skillful in following the tracks of the wanderer, just as some shepherds seem to be able to train their sheep almost as a bloodhound will follow a trail. It is wonderful how Christ follows the track of some people. I have known them go from place to place, yet the Good Shepherd has never been far away from them. When they were children, He sought them in the hymns they learned, in their teachers' earnest admonitions, in their mother's entreaties and their father's prayers. When they became young men and young women and shook off their former instructors, the Good Shepherd still followed them by many a helpful book and many a holy remembrance which they could not shake off. When they went into business—and neglected the Sabbath and forsook the house of God—the Good Shepherd still tracked them by affliction, by Christian neighbors, by the very sound of the church bell, by the death of old companions and in a hundred other ways.

It may be that some went off to America, or Canada in the hope of escaping from the influences of religion, but it was no use. You remember the backwoodsman who had begun to make a log hut and had not finished before up rode a Methodist minister with his saddlebags? With an oath the settler said, "Why, I have moved a dozen times to get away from you fellows, but wherever I move, one of you is sure to come to me." "Yes," said the good man, "and wherever you go, you will find us. If you go to Heaven, you will find us there. And if you go to Hell," he added, "I am afraid that you will find some Methodist preachers even there. You had better give in, for we shall always be after you." If you are really one of Christ's sheep, something of this sort will happen to you and, wherever you may wander, you will find Christ is still after you! If you go to the uttermost parts of the earth, He will follow you. If you land at some far distant port where you think you may indulge without restraint in vice, even there the Divine Love of Christ will nurse you. I know one who now

preaches the Gospel, who was on board a ship at Shanghai and, that very night, a Prayer Meeting was being held in the College on his behalf, as his brother was one of our students. And while they were praying, the Lord struck him down, turned him from his sins almost without any visible instrument—and he returned home and confessed his faith in Christ! The Lord Jesus is well acquainted with sinners' tracks and He will pursue them until He finds them!

Notice what blessed perseverance the shepherd manifests—"Until he finds it." There is the wandering sheep, toiling up that steep hill. So up that hill goes the shepherd. Why does he climb like that? Because the sheep has gone that way and he must follow it till he finds it. Now it has gone down the other side and across that green morass where, if a man should slip, he might sink and lose his life. Yes, but the shepherd will go after that wandering one till he finds it. Day after day, from the rising to the setting of the sun and all through the night, nothing can stop the shepherd's feet until he has his sheep that was lost, safe upon his shoulders! And how blessed is the perseverance of the Savior that He will not take our rejection as a final refusal, but still gives us fresh proclamations and invitations of Grace! Again and again He sends out His servants to bid the sinner come to the Gospel feast—not only on the Sabbath, but on week-days as well, the voice of Wisdom cries aloud, "Turn in here and feast upon the bounteous provision of redeeming love." There are none so persevering as Christ is—"He shall not fail nor be discouraged," but shall press on in His earnest search for His lost sheep until He finds it!

A man who is seeking lost sheep must display great wisdom because it is very difficult to find the tracks of the sheep. And the Divine wisdom which was displayed when some of us were brought to God will cause us everlasting wonderment! It is a marvelous thing that sometimes a man's sin, though it looks as though it must damn him, has been part of the very means by which he has obtained salvation. I knew one who never recollected having told a lie until, upon a certain occasion, he was caught unaware and said what was untrue. And then he was covered with such shame and confusion of face that he saw all his boasted self-righteousness melt away and he went and humbled himself before God and so found peace and pardon! Some have allied themselves to evil companions who seemed likely to lead them further into sin, yet, before long, those very companions have been converted and have been the means of leading them to the Savior! Christ will have His sheep, somehow or other. He will lay hold of them and if they will not be brought in one way, they shall be in another! Some have been found by Him in the darkest dens of infamy. His all-piercing eyes have been able to see them even there. Some have been won by gentleness and kindness—others by terror and distress. But, in one way or another, with wondrous perseverance, Jesus seeks the lost until He finds them! And He will never give up the search until the last of His wandering sheep is brought back to the fold.

Where is the Good Shepherd until He finds His sheep? Why, He is in a state of discontent, with yearning heart and troubled brow. If you say to Him, "Good Shepherd, why did You not go home to Your Father when first the Jews sought to stone You? Why did you not ascend in splendor from amidst the ungodly throng?" He will tell you that He could not give up seeking His sheep till He found them by redemption and that now He must still continue yearning over sinners until He finds them. Do you not sympathize with Him in this feeling? If you are a true follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, you cannot be at ease while souls are being lost! I fear that it would not matter in the least to some professors whether a whole nation was lost or saved! They would be just as comfortable, whatever happened. But they who have the spirit of Christ and are in sympathy with Him, have hearts of compassion so that the loss of any one sinner fills them with dismay—and the penitence of any one sinner makes their heart rejoice with exceeding joy! May we always cultivate that spirit!

II. But now I must turn to THE BRIGHT SIDE OF THAT LANDMARK, "UNTIL." I am going to ask the same questions as before, but will put the second first and the first second.

First, then, *where is the Shepherd when He finds His sheep?* I can answer this question, for I remember where He was when He found me. The first sight I had of Him was a very vivid one. Where was He then? Well, He was just where I was! The sheep and the Shepherd stood together—but Christ was where I ought to have been by reason of my sin. Christ was accursed because I was cursed by my sin. Christ was made sin because I was a sinner, that I might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Oh, what a sight was that—Christ in my place! I have preached about it many years, yet it always makes me wonder just as it did at the first. What an overwhelming thought it seemed, and yet how full of joy! O poor Soul, if you would have a true sight of Christ, see Him suffering, dying, forsaken of His God and full of agony because the chastisement of your peace was upon Him!

The Shepherd was also standing over the lost sheep—not merely near it, but looking down upon it. How pleased, how delighted, He was to have found His sheep which was lost! Well do I remember when I saw my Lord looking down upon me with eyes of unspeakable love. I could hardly believe He could ever have loved me so—it seemed to be almost incredible! What could He see in me to love—a poor sheep with torn fleece, footsore and weary—and not worth the trouble He had taken to find me? When a queen picks up a pin, it is nothing in comparison with Christ taking me up and caring for me! For some great emperor to fall in love with a milkmaid may not be anything amazing, for she may have as sweet a face as ever graced any empress, but as for us sinners, there is no beauty in us that Christ should desire us! By nature, we were full of evil and by practice, too, we became even worse—yet Jesus loved us and, as a shepherd rejoices over the wandering sheep that he finds and brings home, or as a father rejoices over his lost child whom he has found, or as a young man rejoices over his bride, so did the Lord Jesus rejoice over us when He found us—

"And all through the mountains
And up from the rocky steep,
There arose a cry to the gate of Heaven
'Rejoice! I have found My sheep!'
And the angels echoed around the Throne,
'Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own!'"

We also saw Him, at that time, as bearing the marks of the toil and travail which He had endured on our behalf. There are the tokens on the shepherd's face, and on the shepherd's hands and on the shepherd's garments, of the rough way that he has trodden. If the sheep could but know, it might read, in the very look of him, the price that he had to pay for its recovery. And so, dear Friends, was it with us when Jesus saved us. We looked up and saw Him with His face stained with the spit of men, His head encircled by the crown of thorns, His body covered with the bloody sweat and His hands, and feet, and side all pierced! And as we looked, we loved Him because He had first loved us, and loved us so wondrously!

One thing more about the shepherd when he found the lost sheep, he was grasping it, for I guarantee you that there was not a moment between his getting near it and his grasping it. "No, no," he seemed to say, "you will not get away from me again. I have caught you, and I will hold you fast." Do we not remember the grip that Christ gave us when He first found us? We were apprehended by Him whom we now have apprehended. We were held fast by Him whom now we hold fast by faith and love. We felt, then, as if a strange power had seized us—not that we resisted it, for we rejoiced in it. We were led, with full consent against our own will—that is, against our old will—but with a new will which we felt put within us by that blessed hand which had laid hold of us and which would not let us go!

But *where was the sheep when the shepherd found it?* Why there was but an instant and the sheep was on the shoulders of the shepherd! And what does that indicate but that when Christ finds me, then He bears me and all that is upon me, upon His shoulders—all my diseases, all my sin, and all my sorrows are laid upon Him! We rightly sing—

"I lay my sins on Jesus,"

but I think we ought also to sing—

"***I lay myself on Jesus."***

All that I am, and all that I have, all is there! Of Benjamin, Moses said, "The Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between His shoulders." That is where we are, between the shoulders of the Divine Shepherd of souls! Christ underneath us bearing all our weight—the weight of sin, the weight of sorrow, doubt, fear, and care and whatever else there may be upon us.

What about the sheep now? Well, it is resting—not as it will rest, by-and-by, when it will lie in the Shepherd's bosom in yet sweeter fellowship, but, even now it is resting. It has not to carry itself back to the fold. It is a long way, but neither the Shepherd nor the sheep will get weary. It is a toilsome way, full of dangers, but those boils and dangers are for the Shepherd rather than for the sheep. We are right in singing—

for now that He has found us, we are under His protection. No wolf can come near us now, or, if he did, he would be quite unable to hurt us. The sheep that is found is perfectly secure in the Good Shepherd's grip. It could not stray away even if it could. If it struggled to get free, He would grip it all the more firmly. So, Beloved, was it with us—when Christ took us on His shoulders, He held us fast and He will not let us go.

On whose shoulders was the sheep? It was on the shoulders of the rejoicing one who had found it and you and I belong to the Christ who is glad to find us! I wonder which was the happier of the two, in the feast, when the younger son came home—the son or the father? I think the father was and, certainly, of the shepherd and the sheep, the shepherd was the happier—and yet the sheep, in being found, must have participated in the shepherd's joy. Do you not remember how, when you were saved, you nestled down under the wings of the Eternal? I love to see the little chicks beneath the feathers of the hen, peeping out with such sweet contentment and a sense of perfect security expressed in their twinkling eyes. Had they been away from their mother's wings, they would have been afraid, but, under their mother's protection, they did not seem at all alarmed. So have I cowered down beneath the wings of God, trusting to that blessed promise, "He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust." O Beloved, it is a blessed thing to know that we are held in the grip of a strong Christ, with great joy in His heart which is the proof of the value that He sets upon us, and the love which He bears towards us!

So you see that there is a great deal in these four words, "until he finds it." Where are you now, my Friend? Are you still lost? What a joy it is to think that the Good Shepherd is still seeking lost sheep! But, if you have seen Christ near you, oh, that you may, by His Grace, this very hour, be caught up by His pierced hands and laid upon His everlasting shoulders and so be carried to the heavenly fold! The Lord grant it! This is what you need and what you must have if you are really to be saved. You must be "saved in the Lord." Christ Jesus must save you—it must be by His blessed hands and His almighty power that you must be rescued from danger and saved from going down to the Pit. May He soon find all of you who are lost and carry you on His shoulders all the way to the eternal fold above, for His dear names sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 17.

Verse 1. *These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to Heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come.* That tremendous hour which was the very hinge of history—that hour in which He must suffer, bleed and die—to pay the ransom price for His people—"Father, the hour is come."

1. *Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You.* In the endurance of the Cross there was a mutual glorification. It was the time of the Savior's humiliation and yet, in a certain sense, He was never so glorious

as when He died upon the tree. Then, too, He glorified His Father, vindicating Divine Justice and manifesting Divine Love.

2. *As You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.* Christ, by His death, had power given Him over all flesh—that is the universal aspect of it. But there was a special purpose hidden within it—"that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him."

3. *And this is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.* Do you really know the only true God and Jesus Christ, His Son? Have you been brought into such familiar acquaintance with God as to accept Jesus Christ as your Savior? Then you have eternal life and you may rejoice that you have a life like that of God, Himself, which can never die!

4. *I have glorified You on the earth; I have finished the work which You gave me to do.* What a blessed thing that our Savior was able to say this just before His death! Oh, that you and I may be able to utter some humble echo of this speech when we come to the end of our lives! This is indeed a life worth living!

5. *And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.* "Take Me up from earth again. Clothe Me again with that glory which, for a while, I have laid aside."

6. *I have manifested Your name unto the men which You gave me out of the world: Yours they were, and You gave them to Me; and they have kept Your word.* What high praise this was of Christ's disciples! "They have kept Your word." Poor creatures that they were, they often turned aside from the right path. They were oftentimes very ignorant and very willful, yet the Lord knew that their hearts were right towards Him and that they willed to learn, and desired to believe. So He saw in them what was often hidden, even from themselves, and He testified to His Father, "They have kept Your word."

7, 8. *Now they have known that all things whatever You have given Me are of You. For I have given unto them the words which You gave Me.* Every preacher of the Gospel should see to it that this is true concerning himself. When we pass on to the people the words which God has given to us, we supply them with real spiritual fool and so we glorify God. But if we only give them our own words, we do but mock their hunger and we dishonor God. Our blessed Master, though quite able to speak His own original thoughts, kept to the words of His Father—let us be careful to imitate His example.

8, 9. *And they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from You, and they have believed that You did send Me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me; for they are Yours.* There was a special request in Christ's prayer, now that He was nearing the end of His earthly life. He concentrated His intercessions upon the chosen people for whom He was about to shed His blood.

10, 11. *And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world,*

and I come to You. The disciples were going to be left alone and Christ's tender heart made Him lessen the pain of the separation by offering this great petition on their behalf.

11. *Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one, as We are.* This was as though He had said, "You have given them to Me, My Father, to become My bride. And now I am about to die and return to You, I give back this bride of Mine into Your charge. Take care of her, I pray You, till I can come back again and receive her unto Myself." There is such holy unity between these Divine Persons of the Godhead that the Father first gives the elect to Christ and then Christ commits the elect into the Father's keeping.

12, 13. *While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name: those that You gave Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. And now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in them.* Are you dull and sad today? Does anything depress your spirits? It is not according to your Savior's mind that you should be unhappy. It is His will and purpose that His joy should be fulfilled in you. Ask for a sip from His cup of joy at this moment—one drop of His joy will make the dullest to be bright and the saddest to be glad!

14. *I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.* He was a stranger here and His people are also strangers and foreigners. We are not so much to be unworldly as to be *other*-worldly. We belong to another world, to another Kingdom, even the Kingdom of Heaven!

15. *I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the Evil One.* "Keep them in the world to battle with the Evil One. Make them the salt that prevents putrefaction and let them not lose their savor, let them not be contaminated by the evil in the midst of which they dwell."

16, 17. *They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Your truth: Your word is truth.* It looks as though our Lord almost anticipated that question of Pilate, "What is truth?" Here is His answer—"Your word is truth."

18. *As You have sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.* Christ was the Sent One and every Christian is also sent. All Believers should be missionaries, sent forth upon a mission to bless the sons of men.

19, 20. *And for their sakes I sanctify Myself that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word.* Christ knew that His Church would grow. He did not merely pray for the little handful of disciples who were with Him there, but He prayed for all who, in later years, would believe on Him.

21. *That they all may be one.* That is the great prayer of Christ. There are not two churches, but one Church. Christ is not the Head of two bodies—He has but one mystical body. There is but one Bridegroom and

there is but one bride—that bride is His indivisible Church. Hence His prayer, "That they all may be one."

21. *As You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that You have sent Me.* Can the world believe in Christ till His Church becomes more manifestly one? I fear not, so let us, each one, aim at the true unity of the one Church of Jesus Christ. There are some who aim at this by separating themselves from everybody else, but I do not see how they promote unity in that way. I clearly and painfully see how they increase divisions and multiply strife wherever they go. But let us, Beloved, to the utmost of our power, promote the unity of the body of Christ.

22, 23. *And the glory which You gave Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are One: I in them, and You in Me.* Do you understand this wonderful union? Jesus Christ in you—"I in them." And then the Father in Christ—"and You in Me."

23. *That they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them, as You have loved Me.* This is a wonderful Truth of God—that the Father loves the Church even as He loves Jesus Christ, His Son. When shall the world ever know this till the unity of the Church is more clearly seen?

24-26. *Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which You have given Me: for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O Righteous Father, the world has not known You, but I have known You, and these have known that You have sent Me. And I have declared unto them Your name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them.* Oh, for a blessed fulfillment of that prayer in our experience this very moment, for Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—410, 377.

—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 IN BONDS
NO. 2822

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 15, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 28, 1877.

"Now Annas had sent Him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest."
(The Revised Version says, "Annas therefore sent Him
bound unto Caiaphas the high priest").
John 18:24.

OUR only subject, on this occasion, is CHRIST IN BONDS—the Son of God as an Ambassador in bonds, a King in chains—the God-Man sent, bound—to take His trial in the court of the high priest, Caiaphas.

It seems to me that this binding of our Lord shows, first, something of fear on the part of His captors. Why did they bind Him? He would not attack them. He had no desire to escape out of their hands, yet, they probably thought that He might break loose from them, or in some way outwit them. Alas, that men should ever have been thus afraid of Him who came alone from Heaven, neither bearing arms nor wearing armor—who came to injure none, nor even to protect Himself against the harm that any might inflict upon Him—at first, lying as a Babe in a manger and all His life exhibiting rather the weakness of His Manhood than its strength! Yet His adversaries were often afraid of Him. So it still is—there is a latent, secret conviction in the minds of men that the Christ is greater than He seems to be. Even when they attack Him with their infidel weapons, they never seem to be satisfied with their own arguments, so they are continually seeking fresh ones. To this very day the ungodly are afraid of Christ and, often, their raging against Him resembles the noise made by the boy who, when hurrying through the graveyard, whistles to keep his courage up!

They also bound Christ, no doubt, to increase the shame of His condition. Our Savior said to those who came to arrest Him in the garden, "Have you come out as against a thief, with swords, and with staves to take Me?" And now they bound Him fast as though He were a thief—perhaps tied His hands behind His back with tight cords, to show that they regarded Him a felon and that they were not taking Him into a civil court where some cases of law might be pending, but they already condemned Him by the very act of binding Him! They treated Him as if He were already sentenced and not worthy to stand, a free Man, and plead for Himself before the Judgment Seat. Oh, what a shame that the Lard of Life and Glory should be bound—that He, whom angels delight to wor-

ship—that He who is the very sun of their Heaven should yet be bound as though He were a malefactor, and be sent away to be tried for His life!

We may also look at this matter of the binding of the Savior as an increase of His pain. I suppose none of you have ever been bound as our Lord was at that time. If you had been, you would know the discomfort and pain which must attend such action. John tells us that in Gethsemane, "the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound Him." He had scarcely risen from His knees—and the bloody sweat was like fresh ruby dew upon Him—yet these men "bound Him and led Him away to Annas first." I do not find any indication that His bonds were unloosed by Annas, or that He had even a moment's relief or relaxation granted to Him. But, with the cruel ropes still binding Him fast, He was sent across the great hall into the other wing of the palace in which Caiaphas resided.

"Annas sent Him bound unto Caiaphas." Then this, surely, must have been done in very wantonness of malice. I have already said that they seemed to have some sort of fear that their Captive would, after all, escape from them. Yet they might, readily enough, have banished that fear from their minds. There was no need to bind HIM! O cruel persecutors, look into His face! If you are resolved to lead Him away to His death, you may lead Him like a sheep goes to the slaughter. He will not even open His mouth to upbraid you! There was no need to put any bands upon One so gentle as He was. Out of very wantonness, I say, they must have done it, that they might express their hatred by every conceivable method, both in the little details and in the great end at which they were aiming all the while—namely, to put Him to a most painful death. Ah, me, how shamefully was our blessed Master maltreated in this inhospitable world! Men had often been regicides and we need not wonder at that when we think what tyrants they were who were thus slain—but these men were turning to *deicide*—putting to death the Son of God, Himself! And before they did it they heaped upon Him every mark of scorn and dishonor that was possible, that they might cause Him to die with opprobrium as well as with pain.

You who love your Savior will think with tender sympathy of how He was bound by these wicked men. My special objective is to try to find out what are the lessons which we may learn from the bonds of Christ.

I. The first lesson is this. From the binding of our dear Redeemer, I learn a lesson concerning sin. THE BONDS OF CHRIST TEACH US WHAT SIN WOULD DO TO GOD IF IT COULD.

The unregenerate heart, in its enmity against God, would treat Him exactly as the men of 1900 years ago treated the Son of God. What was done to Jesus is just what man would do, if he could, to the Lord God of Heaven and earth, Himself. "What?" you say, "would men bind God?" Ah, Sirs, they would do much more than that if they could, but they would certainly do that! They would annihilate God if they could, for, "the fool has said in his heart, No God"—that is to say, "No God for me!" He would kill God if it were possible. There would be no gladder news to many men who are living today than for them to be informed, with absolute certain-

ty, that there was no God at all! All their fears would be at once silenced by such tidings. As for us who love and trust Him, all our joys would be gone and our worst fears would be realized if God were gone. But, as for the ungodly, it would be the best news that was ever rung out from church steeples if they could be assured that God was dead! They would kill Him if they could, but, as they cannot kill Him, they seek to bind Him.

Observe how they try to do this *by denying His power*. There are many men who say that they believe in God, yet what sort of god is it in whom they believe? It is a god who is fettered by his own laws. "Here is the world," they say, "but let not anyone suppose that god has anything to do with the world." They seem to have a theory that somehow or other it got wound up, like a great clock, and it has been going on ever since! Their god has not even been to see it—indeed, the probability is that he cannot see! Their god does not see and does not know anything—he is not the living God. They pretend to pay Him the compliment of saying that there may be some great first cause—they do not know even that, for certain, because they do not know anything. We live in an age in which the man who professes to be a learned man, calls himself "an agnostic"—a Greek word which, in the Latin, signifies, "an ignoramus." That is, when you get to be a very clever man, then you become an ignoramus, knowing nothing at all! Such people go crowing, all over the world, that they do not know anything at all! They do not know whether there is any God at all, or if there is a God, they do not know that He has anything to do with the world. They say that it is going on just on its own. Their god may set worlds going if he pleases, but he has nothing do with them afterwards.

Ah, Beloved, the truth is that God's Laws are simply the ways in which He acts. There is no force in the world apart from God. All the potency of attraction is simply because God lives and pour His energy into the matter that attracts. Every moment it is God who works in all things according to the good pleasure of His own will. Omnipotence is, in fact, the source of all the potency that there is in the universe. God is everywhere and, instead of being banished from the world, and the world going on without Him, if God were not here, this planet, the sun, moon and stars, would retire into their native nothingness as a moment's foam subsides into the wave that bears it and is gone forever! God alone IS. All the rest—call them what you please—are appearances that come out of His ever-existing power. God IS. The other things may be or may not be, but God IS. Well did David write, under the Spirit's Inspiration, "God has spoken once; twice have I heard this: that power belongs unto God." But that is not the kind of god that the ungodly want—they want one whose hands they can bind so as to make him powerless!

Especially will they do this *with regard to Providence*. "Look," they say, "you Christian people pray and you are foolish enough to believe that because you pray, God hears you and sends you the blessings that you ask for." It is assumed that we are fools, but, I think, it is a mere assumption! Probably these gentlemen who are so generous in disposing of their epithets, may be giving away what really belongs to them! We are fools,

so they say. These men of culture, the thinking people—at least they are the people who call themselves by these high-sounding names and, having done so, to prove that their culture has made perfect gentlemen of them—they call all the rest of us, and especially all Christians, fools! Well, we are not anxious to contend with them as to that matter, and we are quite satisfied to take the position that we do take—and to be called fools—because we believe that God does hear and answer our petitions! Even when these people are willing to acknowledge that there is a god in Providence at all, his hands are tied so that he can do nothing! Well, as far as I am concerned, I would as soon believe in a god made out of the mud of the Ganges, or in the fetish of the Hottentot, as bow my knee to a god who could not hear and could not answer me!

Some unbelievers talk of a god whose hands are bound *so far as the punishment of sin is concerned*. "Men will die like dog," so some of these doggish men say. "God will not punish sin," say some sinners who imagine that they have prepared a dunghill for themselves to fall upon whenever God shall fling them out of the window as utterly worthless! They imbibe ideas that are contrary to the Truth of God about the Most High in order that they may be able to sin with impunity. But, whatever they may think or say, let us rest assured that there *is* a God and that He is a God before whom everyone of us must appear to give an account of the deeds done in the body, whether they are good or whether they are evil. We may be quite certain that although, in His long-suffering, He may patiently wait a while before punishing iniquity, yet His hands are not bound and He will lift them before long! And when He raises a hand to strike the man who has broken His laws, He will do it so effectually that the sinner shall know that, truly, there is a God who will not pass by transgression, or wink at sin when it remains unrepented of! Let us, then, be always happy to hear our testimony that God cannot be bound, but let us always expect to see unconverted men, in one way or another, attempting to bind the hands of the Most High as these sinners in Jerusalem bound the Christ of God.

Some people think that God ought to do this and He ought *not* to do that. And the moment you begin to reason with them, they do not refer to what the Scriptures say, but they have a preconceived notion as to what ought to be done or not done. That is to say, you could tie His hands so that *He must do what you judge to be right.* But if He judges any particular course to be right and it does not meet your tastes, then, straightway, you will either have no god at all, or else a god that shall be handcuffed by your reason and held in bonds to do your bidding! In the Person of our blessed Master brought from Gethsemane with His hands tightly bound, we see an exact picture of what wicked men would always do with God if they could, and what they actually do to Him, spiritually, in their own minds and hearts. God save us from being guilty of such a sin as that! Oh, that the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ may cleanse that sin away if it lies as a load upon the conscience of anyone whom I am now addressing!

II. Secondly, we have here A LESSON OF LOVE.

Our Lord Jesus was sent away, bound, by Annas to Caiaphas, but, before they bound Him, there were other bands upon Him. *Christ was bound by the cords of love* and who but Himself had bound Him thus? Of old, or before the earth was, His prescient eye foresaw all His people and their sin—and He loved them and He gave Himself to them, then, in the eternal purpose. And often did He look through the vista of the ages upon the men and women who were yet to be born and, with a near and dear love to each one of them, He pledged Himself that, for them, He would bear the shame and the spitting—and that He would even die in their place that He might redeem them unto Himself. So, when I see our Divine Master thus led to the judgment seat, I grieve over the bonds of cord with which men tied Him, but my heart exults over those invisible bands with which He bound Himself on purpose, by covenant, by oath, by Infinite, Immutable Love that He would give Himself to be a ransom for His people!

Then, following upon those cords of love, if you look closely, you will see His love again displayed in that *He was bound with our bonds*. We, dear Friends, had sinned against God and so had incurred the sentence of Infallible Justice. And now that sentence must fall upon Him! We ought to have been bound, but Christ was bound instead of us. If you and I had been bound with despair and hopelessly led away to that prison from which none shall ever escape—if this had been the moment when we were commencing to feel the torments of the Hell which our sins deserve—what could we have said? But, lo, in our place Jesus is led away to bear the wrath of Heaven! He must not lift His hands in His own defense, or raise a finger for His own comfort, for He is bearing—

"That we might never bear
His Father's righteous ire."

III. But now, thirdly, learn here A LESSON OF GREAT PRIVILEGE.

Our Lord Jesus Christ was bound and there flows from that fact its opposite—*then His people are all free*. When Christ was made a curse for us, He became a blessing to us. When Christ was made sin for us, we were made the righteousness of God in Him. When He died, then we lived. And so, as He was bound, we were set free. The type of that exchange of prisoners is seen in the fact that Barabbas was set free when the Lord Jesus Christ was given up to be crucified. And still more in His plea for His disciples in the garden, "If therefore you seek Me, let these go their way." It is with wondrous joy in our hearts that we sing—

"We were sore in bondage bound,
But our Jesus set us free."

Do you think we, dear Friends, use our liberty as we should? Do we not, sometimes, pray to God as if we were tongue-tied and had the bonds upon our tongue? Do we not go to the great coffers full of Grace and, instead of helping ourselves, as we have the right to do, we stand there as if our hands were bound and we could not take a single pennyworth of the abundant fullness that is laid up there for us? Sometimes when there is work to be done for Christ, we feel as if we were in bonds. We dare not stretch out our hands—we are afraid to do so—yet Jesus has set us free! O Believer, why do you go about as if you still wear shackles on your an-

kles? Why do you stand like one who is still in bonds? Your freedom is sure freedom and it is righteous freedom. Christ, the great Emancipator, has made you free and you are "free indeed." Enjoy your liberty! Enjoy access to God! Enjoy the privilege of claiming the promises which God has given to you! Enjoy the exercise of the power with which God has endowed you! Enjoy the holy anointing with which the Lord has prepared you for His service! Do not sit and mope like a bird in a cage when you are free to soar away! I can conceive of a bird that has been in a cage for years—the cage may be all taken away—every wire of it and yet the poor thing has been so accustomed to sit on that perch inside the cage, that it takes no notice of the fact that its prison is gone! And there it sits and mopes. Away with you, sweet songster! The green fields and the blue sky are all your own. Stretch your wings and soar away above the clouds—and sing the carol of your freedom as though you would make it reach the ears of the angels! So let it be with your spirit, and with mine, Beloved! Christ has set us free! Therefore let us not go back into bondage, or sit still as though we were in prison—let us rejoice in our liberty this very hour and let us do so all our days!

IV. The fourth lesson from the binding of Christ is A LESSON OF OBLIGATION.

This may seem like a paradox in contrast with the previous lesson, yet it is equally true. Beloved, was Jesus bound for you and for me? *Then let us be bound for Him and to Him.* I rejoice in the sweet inability that results from perfect love to Christ. "Inability?" you ask. Yes, I mean inability. The true child of God "cannot sin, because he is born of God." There are many other things that he cannot do. He cannot forsake His Lord, for he says with Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." He cannot forget his obligations. He cannot withhold his time, his strength, his substance from His Lord. He cannot become an earthworm and a money-grabber. He cannot wed his soul to any other, for Christ has espoused him to Himself as a chaste virgin. There are times when the child of God says, with Nehemiah, "Should such a man as I flee?" Or, "How can such a privileged individual as I am indulge in such-and-such a sin?" The ungodly sometimes jeer at us and say, "Ah, you cannot do such-and-such! We can." And we reply, "We have lost no power that we ever wished to have, but we have gained the power of concentrating all our force upon righteousness and the Truth of God. And now our heart is bound too fast to Christ for us to go after your idols. Our eyes are now so taken up with the sight of our Savior that we cannot see any charms in the things with which you would bewitch us. Our memory is now so full of Christ that we have no desire to pollute the precious stores that lie therein by memories of sin."

Henceforth we are crucified with Christ and that brings to us a blessed inability in which we greatly rejoice! Our heart may stir, perhaps, a little, but our hands and feet are fastened to the wood and cannot move. Oh, blessed is the inability when, at last, neither heart can love, nor brain can think, nor hand can do, nor even imagination can conceive anything that goes beyond the sweet circle of a complete consecration to

the Lord and absolute dedication to His service! Come, then, you angels of the Lord, and bind us to Him! Let this be the prayer of every Believer—"Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." Let nothing ever tempt us away from our Lord. You may count the cost of all Egypt's treasure and then let it go—and it shall vanish like a dream, for there is nothing in it—

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

and these shall remain with you who are bound to Christ—with Him to live, and for Him to die, if necessary. So, whenever we see Christ in bonds, let us pray that we, also, may wear His bonds and be just as much bound as He was. "O God," let every Christian say, "I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid. You have loosed my bonds, now bind me to Yourself and to Your blessed service once and for all!"

V. The last lesson is one which I pray that we may all learn whether we are saints or sinners. It is A LESSON OF WARNING.

Dear Friends, I have tried to picture, though I have done it in a very feeble way, Christ being bound with cords. And now I want to very solemnly say to all of you—Do not bind Christ with cords. Beware, you who are unconverted, that you never bind Christ. You may do so *by not reading His Word*. You have a Bible at home, but you never read it—it is clasped, laid away in a drawer with your best pocket handkerchiefs. Is it not so? That is another picture of Christ in bonds—a poor shut-up Bible that is never allowed to speak with you—no, not even to have half a word with you, for you are in such a hurry about other things that you cannot listen to it! Untie the cords—let it have its liberty! Commune with it sometimes. Let the heart of God in the Bible speak to your own heart. If you do not, that clasped Bible, that shut-up Bible—that precious Book hidden away in the drawer—is Christ in prison and, one day, when you little expect it, you will hear Christ say, "Inasmuch as you did this to the greatest of all My witnesses, you did it unto Me." You kept Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah and all the Prophets in prison! And all the Apostles and the Master, Himself, you bound with cords and you would not hear a word that they had to say! Let not that be true of any one of you, dear Friends.

There are others *who will not go to hear the Word*. They do not attend any place of worship. They may have dropped in here once, but, as a rule, they never go anywhere to worship God. Here in London people live in the street where there is a soul-saving ministry, yet many of them never cross the threshold of the House of Prayer. In some streets, not one in a hundred ever darkens the doors of the place where God's people gather for worship. Is not that tying Christ's hands? How can the Gospel get to people who will not hear it—absolutely refuse to listen to it? They are really gagging our blessed Master and that is even worse than binding Him with cords! They thrust a gag in His mouth and make Him hold His tongue, as far as they are concerned. Some of them, if they could, would gag the messenger as well as His Master, for they do not want him. "Trouble us not," they say. "Are you come to torment us before the

times." And so they bind Christ and send Him away, just as Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas.

There are some who both read the Bible and go to hear the Gospel, but they tie Christ up, all the same, by prejudice. Some people can never get a blessing through certain ministers because they have made up their minds that they will not be profited by them. You know how they come, with some preconceived notion, and though an angel from Heaven were to speak, they would pick holes in whatever he might say because of the prejudice which exists in their minds. Probably they can give no better reason for their antagonism than the person gave who did not like Dr. Fell—

"I do not like you, Dr. Fell,
The reason why, I cannot tell.
But this I know and know full well,
I do not like you, Dr. Fell."

I have known men bind Christ in another way, *by delaying their decision*. They have heard a sermon and have felt its power—their soul has been impressed by it—but their chief idea has been to try to escape from Christ, or to bind His hands, if possible. I think I have told you before that once, when I was preaching in the country, the gentleman with whom I stayed, suddenly got up, towards the end of the sermon and went out. And a dear friend who had gone with me, followed him outside and asked him, "what brought you out here?" He replied, "If I had stayed there another five minutes, I would have got converted. Mr. Spurgeon seems to treat me just as if I were made of India rubber—he squeezes me into any shape he likes—so I was obliged to come out." "But," my friend said, "might it not have been a great blessing to you if you had been converted?" "Well, no," he replied, "at least, not just now. I have some things in prospect that I really should not miss, so I cannot afford to be converted just now."

There are others who do not act quite like that, but the result is the same. They say, by their actions, if not in so many words, "Now, Lord, I am going to tie You up for a little while. I mean to give heed to You, by-and-by. I hope Your blessed hand will be laid upon me for my salvation, but not just now, please—not just now." Such people always use silken cords, but the binding is just as effective as it would be if they took an ugly pair of handcuffs, such as a policeman pulls out for a thief. The man says, "Permit me, Lord, to tie Your hands for just a little while—another month, perhaps—possibly another year." Oh, that accursed procrastination! How many have been ruined to all eternity by it! It is the bond that binds the hands of Christ, the Savior, who say, "Now is the day of salvation."

Other men bind the hands of Christ *by seeking pleasure in sin*. After having been impressed under a sermon, they go straight to some ungodly meeting place—a bar, perhaps, or the next day they go into society where every serious thought will, in all probability, be stamped out as men stamp out a fire! And what is this but binding the hands of Christ? I know some—I tremble as I think of them—who persistently do that which they know will prevent them from ever feeling the power of the Word of

God. Oh, that, by some means, they could be wrenched out of their present position and be carried right away where the Truth of God might influence them so that they might be led to Jesus' feet! I think I hear someone say, "That is a shocking way to bind Christ's hands." Then mind, my Friend, that you do not fall into that sin!

Now, in closing I need to speak to the Lord's own people for just a minute or two.

Do you not think, Beloved, that you and I have sometime tied Christ's hands? You remember reading this sentence, "He could not do many mighty works there"? His hands were tied, but what tied them? Finish the quotation—*"because of their unbelief."* Are there not many churches where they have tied the hands of Christ because they do not believe He can do any mighty works there? If the Lord Jesus Christ were to convert 3000 people, at one time, under their pastor's preaching, what do you think the deacons and elders of that church would probably say? "Well, we never thought that we would see such excitement as this—to think that it should have come into our place of worship! We must be very careful. No doubt these people will be wanting to join the church. We shall have to summer them and winter them—and try them a good deal—we do not like such excitement." Ah, Sirs, you need not trouble yourselves with any such expectation! God is not likely to give such a blessing to you—He never sends His children where they are not wanted and, as a rule—until He prepares His people to receive the blessing, the blessing will not come.

Do you not think, also, that *a minister may very easily tie the hands of Christ?* I am afraid I have done so, sometimes, without meaning to. Suppose I were to preach some very fine sermons—I do not do that, mark you—but just *suppose* I were to preach some very fine sermons that went right over people's heads? And what if a good old woman were to say, "I would not have the presumption to understand it, but it was very wonderful"—do you not think that I would be tying Christ's hands with garlands of flowers? And may we not come into the pulpit and talk a lot of theological jargon, and use words which are appropriate to us in the classroom, but quite misunderstood, or never understood at all by the mass of the people? Is not that tying Christ's hands?

And when a preacher is what they call very "heavy"—by which is not meant that he is weighty—but dull! Or when he is very cold and heartless, and preaches as if he were working by the piece, and would be glad to get it all over—when that is the case, do you not think that Christ's hands are tied? Have you never heard sermons of which you might fairly say, "Well, if God were to convert anybody by *that* discourse, it certainly would be a miraculous kind of miracle—something altogether out of the common way of miracles, for He would be using an implement that was positively calculated to produce just the opposite effect—and making it accomplish His purposes of Grace"? I have heard such sermons, now and then, to my great sorrow. And you Sunday school teachers must take care that you do not so teach as really to be hindrances to your scholars rather than helps, for that is to tie the hands of Christ—and to lead Him

into your class like Samson—bound to make sport for Philistines than to get honor to Himself. May we all have the Grace given to us to avoid such an evil as that!

And do you not think, dear Friends, that we who love Christ bind His hands *when we are cowardly and retiring, and never say a word for Him?* How can the Gospel save sinners if it is never spoken to them? If you never introduce Christ to your companions—never put a little book on your friend's table, never try to say a word about the Savior to him—is not that tying Christ's hands? The next thing to having no Christ at all is for the church to be silent concerning Him! It is an awful thing to contemplate what it would be if there were no Savior, but what difference is it if there is a Savior, but men never hear of Him? Come, you very timid people, do not excuse yourselves any longer! "Oh, but," says one, "I always was of a very timid disposition." So was that soldier who was shot for running away in the day of battle! He was guilty of cowardice and was put to death for it. If you have been, up to the present time, binding the Master by your retiring spirit, you should at once come forward and declare what Christ has done for you, that, with unbound hands, He may do the same for others!

And do you not think that *whenever we are inconsistent in over conduct*—especially in the family—we tie the hands of Christ? There is a father praying for his children that they may live before God. Five minutes later, listen to Him! Why, his boys hate the sight of him! He is such a tyrant to them that they cannot endure him. There is a mother, too, who is praying God to save her daughters. She goes upstairs and pleads very earnestly for them. Yet she comes down and lets them have whatever they ask for and never says a word by way of checking them in their evil courses! She acts like a female Eli to everyone of them—is not she tying the hands of Christ? What can she expect but that God, who works according to rules, will be more likely to let her unkind kindness influence her girls for evil, than to answer her prayers for their conversion? Let us be *holy*, dear Friends, for then we shall, by faith, see the holy God freely moving and working among us—and doing great deeds to His own Glory! So may He do, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: BY *JOHN 18:12-14, 19-26; MARK 14:53-65; LUKE 22:63-71; 23:1.*

The passages which we are about to read from three of the Evangelists, make up a continuous narrative of our Lord's trial before the high priest.

First, John gives us an account of our Savior's appearance before Annas, of which I need not say much, as I recently preached upon it. [Sermon #2820, Volume 49—CHRIST BEFORE ANNAS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at http://www.spurgeons.org.]

John 18:12-14. *Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound Him, and led Him away to Annas first; for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year.*

Now Caiaphas was he which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.

19-21. *The high priest then asked Jesus of His disciples, and of His doctrine. Jesus answered Him, I spoke openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, where the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why ask you Me? Ask them which heard Me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.* What an admirable answer that was! Whatever He might have said about His doctrine, they would have twisted into a ground of accusation against Him, so He simply said, "Mine has been public teaching, open to all. I was not found in holes and corners, secretly fomenting sedition. I spoke in the streets; I spoke in the synagogue; I spoke in the temple; ask those who heard Me to tell you what I said." What more convincing answer could He have given?

22-24. *And when He had thus spoken, one of the officers, who stood by, struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answer you the high priest so? Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why do you strike Me? Now Annas had sent Him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest.* So there we see Him standing—bound before Caiaphas—the acting high priest for that year. Now follow the narrative as given by Mark.

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. And 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.* We may regard what was said to Jesus, by Annas and Caiaphas, as a sort of unofficial preliminary examination and, meanwhile, their fellow conspirators were scouring the streets of Jerusalem to gather together the members of the Sanhedrim—and also searching among the slums in order to find witnesses who could be bribed to give false evidence against Jesus.

55. *And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put Him to death; and found none.* A pretty court that was, occupied in seeking for witnesses who might enable them to condemn to death a Prisoner against whom no charge had yet been formulated!

56-59. *For many bore false witness against Him, but their witness agreed not together. And there arose certain ones and bore false witness against Him, saying, We heard Him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. But neither so did their witness agree together.* It was a rule that they should be examined separately, but there had not been time for them to be coached as to what they were to say, so one contradicted the other and it looked as if the trial must break down.

60. *And the high priest stood up in the midst.* Losing all patience, he stood up, in a furious rage at the way things were taking.

60, 61. *And asked Jesus, saying, Do You answer nothing? What is it which these witness say against You? But He held His peace and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him, and said unto Him, are You the Christ? The Son of the Blessed?* This time, according to Matthew's

account, the high priest said to Jesus, "I command You by the living God that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God." Being thus, as it were, put upon His oath, the Savior felt compelled to answer. He could not remain silent when such a great and important question was at stake.

62-65. *And Jesus said, I am: and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven. Then the high priest tore his clothes, and said, What need we of any further witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy: what do you think? And they all condemned Him to be guilty of death. And some began to spit on Him, and to cover His face, and to buffet Him, and to said unto Him, Prophesy: and the servants did strike Him with the palms of their hands.* Perhaps we have the same narrative in Luke. Possibly, however, he gives us a continuation of the sad story—it is difficult to say which is the case.

Luke 22:63-71. *And the men that held Jesus mocked Him, and struck Him. And when they had blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face, and asked Him, saying, Prophesy, who is it that struck You? And many other things blasphemously spoke they against Him. And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together and led Him into their council, saying, Are You the Christ? Tell us. And He said unto them, If I tell you, you will not believe: and if I also ask you, you will not answer Me, nor let me go. Thereafter shall the Son of Man sit at the right hand of the power of God. Then they all said, Are You, then, the Son of God? And He said unto them, You say that I am. And they said, of what need we any further witness? For we ourselves have heard from His own mouth.*

Luke 23:1. *And the whole multitude of them arose, and led Him unto Pilate.*

HYMN FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—426, 291, 806.

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

ONE TROPHY FOR TWO EXPLOITS
NO. 2823

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 22, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, IN THE SUMMER OF 1861.

"For by You I have run through a troop; and by
My God have I leaped over a wall."
Psalm 18:29.

IT sometimes puzzles the unenlightened Believer to find that the Psalms often relate both to David and to David's Lord. Many a young Believer has found himself quite bewildered when reading a Psalm—he has scarcely been able to make out how a passage could be true of both David and of the Lord Jesus Christ, "our superior King." This he cannot understand. But he who has grown far enough in Grace to understand the meaning of conformity to Christ sees that it is not without a high and heavenly design that the Holy Spirit has presented to us the experience of Jesus in that model of experience through which David passed.

My dear Brothers and Sisters, we all know as a matter of doctrine, but we have not all proved as a matter of sweet experience that we are to be like our Head. We must be like He upon earth, like He despised and rejected by man in our generation. We must be like He, bearers of the Cross. Yes, we must not shrink, in any way from what is meant by being crucified with Him and buried with Him in order that we may know, in later days, how to rise with Him, how to ascend with Him and how to sit with Him upon His Throne. No, I will go further—even in this life the Believer is to have a conformity to Christ in His present glories, for we are even now raised up together with Christ and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus! In Him, also, we have obtained the inheritance, for we are complete in Him who is the Head of all principality and power. There is such a conformity between Christ and His people that everything that is said of Christ may, in some measure, be said of His people. Whatever Christ has been, they should be or have been. Whatever He has done, He has done for them and they shall do the like, after some fashion or other. Whatever He has attained unto, they shall also enjoy. If He reigns, they shall reign, and if He is Heir of a universal monarchy, they shall also be kings and priests unto God and shall reign with Him forever and ever!

Thus the riddle becomes solved, the parable is expounded, the dark saying of David's day shines clearly in Gospel light! You can see not only how it is possible that the same Psalm can relate to David and to David's

Lord, but that there is a Divine mystery and a most rich and precious lesson couching beneath the fact that the Holy Spirit has chosen to set forth the doings, the sufferings and the triumphs of Christ under the figure or model of the doings, sufferings and victories of the son of Jesus! You will not, therefore, be surprised to hear me remark that this text has relation to Christ and the Believer, too. The doings and triumphs of Jesus must, accordingly, first engage our attention and, in the second place, observe that we have here a picture of the wondrous doings of faith when the Believer is enabled to triumph over every earthly ill and over every human opposition—"By you I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall."

I. Let us take the first sentence WITH REGARD TO CHRIST.

"*By You I have run through a troop."* How accurately Christ's enemies are here described! By their number they were a troop. The Captain of our salvation, although single-handed in the combat, had to fight with a legion of foes. It was not a mere duel. It is true there was but one on the Victor's side, but there was an innumerable host in antagonism to Him. Not only the Prince of Darkness, but all the powers and the principalities thereof came against Him. Not merely sin in the mass, but sin in daily temptations of every kind and sin of every shade and form—not only from earth a host of human despisers and human opponents, but a yet greater host from the lowest depths of Hell! These, from their number, are well compared to a troop.

Nor does this expression merely describe their number, but also their discipline. They were "a troop." A crowd of men is a great number, but it is not a troop. A crowd may be far sooner put to route than a troop. A troop is a trained company that knows how to march and marshal itself—and to stand firm under attack. It was even so with Christ's enemies. They were a crowd and a mob, but they were also a troop, marshaled by that skillful and crafty leader, the Prince of Darkness. They stood firm and were well disciplined in a close-knit body—they were not broken. As though they were but one man, they sustained the shock of Christ's attack and marched against Him, hoping for victory. In such a character, His opponents still appear. However well you might discipline a crowd of men, yet they would not become a troop unless they also had been trained for warfare. A troop means a body of well-disciplined men, all of them prepared to fight and understanding how to make war. Thus, all Christ's enemies were well trained. There was the archfiend of Hell, who, in hundreds of battles against the Lord's elect in the olden time, had gained a thorough knowledge of all the weak points of manhood and understood how to temper his attack—and wherein lay the greatest chances of victory. After him, came all the fiends of the Pit—and these were all well exercised, each of them mighty, of giant stature like Goliath—all of them strong to do great exploits with any man less than God, however mighty that man might be!

And as for sin, was it not a mighty thing? Were not our sins, all of them, mighty to destroy? The least one among the sins that attacked

Christ would have been sufficient to destroy the human race and yet there were tens of thousands of these—well disciplined, ranged in order—and all thoroughly prepared for battle. All these came on in dread array against our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It was a troop! I have not exaggerated this description, for Calvin translates this term, "a wedge," for, in his day it was customary, in battle, for the soldiers to form themselves into a wedge-shape, so that when they attacked the enemy, the first man made an opening, though he fell. The next two advanced and then after them the three, and as the wedge widened, it broke the ranks of the enemy. So it seems as though the Holy Spirit would here describe the regular and well-directed attack which the enemy of man's soul made upon Christ. He came against him in settled order. It was no rush of some wild Tartar host against the Savior—it was a well arranged and well-regulated attack—and yet, glory be to His name, He broke through the troop and ran through them more than a conqueror!

Another old and eminent commentator translates the term, "troop," by the old Greek term, "a phalanx," to show again how strong, how mighty, how great and powerful were the enemies of Christ. It will often be of excellent use to us, for the stimulation of our faith and for the excitement of our gratitude, if we remember the might of the enemies of Christ. When we undervalue the strength of His enemies, we are apt to underestimate His Omnipotence. We must go through the ranks of His foes and look His ghastly opponents in the face. We must march through the long lines of our sins and look at the hideous monsters—and see how mighty they are and how powerless all human strength would have been to resist them. And then we shall learn, in an ample measure, to estimate the might and the majesty of the glorious Son of God when all unarmed and unassisted, He ran through the troop and put them all to the rout!

Several different eminent expositors of God's Word give other interpretations of this sentence, each suggesting a fresh meaning and helping to bring out that which is certainly true, if not the precise meaning. One good translator says this verse might be rendered, "By you I have run to a troop," and takes this to be the sense. Our Savior is represented to us as not waiting till His enemies came to Him, but running to them—willingly and voluntarily resigning Himself to their attack. He did not wait till Judas came to the upper room and salute Him in the chamber as He sat at supper. Neither did He tarry on His knees in that terrible agony of His in the olive grove, but He went forth to meet Judas. Judas had come forth with swords and with staves to take Him as a thief, but He sought not to make His escape. "Jesus went forth and said unto them, Whom do you seek?" Thus did He manifest both His willingness to undertake our redemption and also His courage in facing the foe. There was, at one time, a human fear which seemed as if it would hold Him back from the battle, when He said, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." But this once expressed, the Holy One of Israel anointed Him with fresh courage and to the battle He went with quick but majestic

steps! He would not wait till they rushed on Him, but He would take the initiative and begin the fight. See the conquering Hero rush to the fight and dash through the troop! And look what Divine mercy, what holy courage is here found in the Lord Jesus Christ—that He ran to our enemies!

But our version has it, "I have run *through* a troop," and this is also exceedingly accurate, if you couple with it the idea which you will find in the margin of your Bibles—"By You have I broken through a troop." Christ made a dash at His foes. They stood firm, as if they would not flinch before Him, but His terrible right hand soon found for Him a way. They imagined, when His hands were nailed to the Cross, that He was now powerless, but in weakness was He strong! The bowing of His head, which they perhaps thought to be the symbol of His defeat, was but the symbol of His victory and, in dying, He conquered! In suffering He overcame. Every wound that He received was a deathblow to His enemies and every pang that tore His heart was as when a lion tears the prey and Christ, Himself, was tearing them when they thought that they were tearing Him! He ran through a troop.

It will do your souls good if you have imagination enough to picture Christ running through this troop. How comparatively short were His sufferings! Compare them with the eternal weight of punishment and misery which we ought to have endured. What a stride was that which Jesus took when He marched right through His enemies and laid them right and left, and gained to Himself a glorious victory! Samson, when he grasped the jawbone of an ass, slew his thousand men and said, "With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men." He did it all in haste and then threw away the jawbone, as if it were but little he had done. And even so, our mightier Samson, meeting with the hosts of sin, death and Hell, laid them all in heaps and then, crying out, "It is finished," He seemed as strong and mighty as if He had not endured the fatigues of the fight, or suffered the horrors of death and was ready, if they required it, to meet them all again and give them another defeat!

There is yet another version—"By You I have run *after* a troop." After our Savior had met and fought with His antagonists and conquered them, they fled. But He pursued them. He must not simply defeat them but take them prisoners. There was Old Captivity. You know his name. He had been the oppressor of the human race for many and many a day—and when Christ routed him, he fled. But Jesus pursued him and, binding him in adamantine chains, "He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men." He pursued the troop and brought back old Satan in chains, bound him in fetters, slew grim Death and ground his iron limbs to powder—and left his enemies no more at large to wander where they would, but subject to His Divine power and to His Omnipotent sway. He ran *after* a troop and took them prisoners.

Perhaps, however, the most striking thing in our text is the combination of those two little words, "by You." What? Did not Christ fight and obtain the victory by His own innate strength? Did not the Son of God,

the Redeemer, find strength enough within Himself to do all that was necessary for us? It would not be heterodoxy if I were to assert that it was so. Indeed, it is clearly pointed out to us in the fact that, as the Servant of God and as our Redeemer, He is continually spoken of as being strengthened, assisted and animated by His Father and the Holy Spirit. Especially will you notice this in the Gospel according to Mark. The Evangelist Mark speaks of Christ, through the whole of his Book, as a Servant. Each of the Evangelists has a distinct view of Christ. Matthew speaks of Him as a King, Mark as a Servant, Luke as a Man and John as God. Now, in reading through Mark, you will observe, if you take the trouble to read it carefully, the recurrence of such phrases as this, "And *immediately* the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness." This follows close on His Baptism, when the Holy Spirit descended on Him as a dove. And then, when He came up to Nazareth, we read that, as a Servant, Christ needed anointing as well as any other. So, when He begins to preach, His text is, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted." Now, I take it that this is a very eminent instance of the condescension of our Divine Master, that He in all things was made like unto His brethren and, as they are utterly powerless without the Holy Spirit, and without the Father's drawing, can do nothing, so Jesus Christ did, as it were, divest Himself of His own Divine Power and, as our Brother, He fraternized even with our infirmities. Thus He was strengthened, helped and assisted by His Father and by the Holy Spirit. Hence, it is strictly accurate to remark that even Christ, Himself, could subscribe to this sentence, "By *You* I have run through a troop."

Does this seem to you, Beloved, to lower your view of the Person of Christ? At first sight it may seem so. But think again—there is much rich consolation here. O my Soul, learn that you have not only God the Son to be your Helper, but that you have God the Father and God the Spirit also! Oh, it is sweet to see that in Redemption, itself, where we are too apt, with our poor blind eyes, to see but one Person of the Trinity—in Redemption, itself, the Triune Jehovah was engaged! If this is not the view of the work of Redemption which is commonly taken, I am sure it is Scriptural. It is true that the Son paid the penalty and endured the agony. But, still, it was His Father who, while smiting Him with one hand, sustained Him with the other. And it was the Spirit who, wrapping Him about with zeal as with a cloak and inflaming His soul with Divine ardor, enabled Him to dash through His enemies and become more than a conqueror! This sweetens Redemption to me. The Father and the Holy Spirit are also engaged and interested on my behalf. Our Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel—the Lord of Hosts is His name! We may say of the three Persons of the Divine Trinity that each of these is our Redeemer because they have all brought to its full completion the grand work of our redemption from the power of sin, death and Hell. "By You have I run through a troop." My Soul, lift up your eyes before you turn from this passage and see all your sins forgiven in the Person of Christ. Look here

and behold the old dragon's head broken! See Death pierced through with one of his own shafts. See how the old serpent drags along his mangled length, writhing in his agony, for the Lord Jehovah is our strength and our song. He also has become our salvation and in Him, and through Him and by Him, we have broken through a troop and are more than conquerors!

Let us now turn to the second sentence, "*By My God have I leaped over a wall."* How is this to be understood? I think that David, if we take this as alluding to David, is here described as having stormed and taken some strongly-armed and well-walled city. He had, by the power of God, taken the strong place from the inhabitants of Jebus and so he had leaped over a wall. But we are not now speaking of David, but of Christ. In what sense can we say that Jesus Christ has leaped over a wall? I must be allowed to be figurative for a few minutes. The people of the Lord had become the slaves of Satan and, in order that they might never more escape from his power, he had put them into his stronghold and had walled them round about that they might be his perpetual captives.

There was, first of all, the tremendous bulwark of sin gathering strength from the Law of God, with its ten massive towers mounted with ten hundred pieces of ordnance, in the shape of threats of destruction! This wall was so high that no human being has ever been able to scale it—and so terrible that even the Omnipotence of God had to be exercised before it could be removed. Next to this there was a second rampart—it was the rampart of diabolical insinuation and Satanic suggestion. Satan had not only allowed the Law to stand so as to keep the soul in despair, but had added to this his own determination that he would not leave a stone unturned might he but keep the human race in his own power. Thus Hell made the second rampart, while it seemed as if Heaven had built the first. Outside thereof was a deep ditch and then another mound, called human depravity. This, as we must observe, was as difficult to be stormed as either of the others. Man was desperately set on mischief. He would be a sinner, let what might be said to him or done for him. He would seek greedily with both hands to work out his own destruction and that love of destruction, which was in his heart, constituted one of the great barriers to his salvation.

Christ Jesus came and He leaped over all these walls! He came and in your Redemption He broke through the Law. No, He did not break through it—He mounted it, He scaled it! The Law of God stands, to this day, as fast and firm as ever—not a stone has been taken down, not one of its castles has been dismantled—there it stands in all its awful majesty, but Christ leaped over this. He paid the penalty, endured the wrath and so He took His people out of the first ward of the Law. Whereas, after this came a second—the wall of Satan's determination to keep them prisoners. Christ, our Lord and Master, dashed this into a thousand pieces, springing the tremendous mine of His Covenant purposes and throwing the whole mass into the air—and there it was destroyed, once and for all—no more to hold the people of God in captivity and bondage!

The last wall which He had to leap in order to get His people thoroughly free and bring them out of the stronghold of sin and Satan, was the wall of their own depravity. This, indeed, was hard work to storm. Many of His ministers went up to the stronghold and tried to storm it, but they came away defeated. They found that it was too strong for all human battering-rams. They hammered at it with all their might, but there it stood, resisting the shock and seeming to gather strength from every blow that was meant to shake it. But, at last, Jesus came, and using nothing but His Cross as the most powerful battering-ram, He shook the wall of our depravity, made a breach, entered it and let His people out into that liberty wherewith He had made them free! Oh, how sweet it is to think of Christ thus leaping over the walls! He would have His people. He came down to earth and was with them in all their misery and took upon Him all their sin. He determined to enter in and save them from the dungeon. He made His own escape and brought them with Him. He not only came, Himself, through sin, and death, and Hell, triumphant, but brought all His children on His shoulders, as AEneas did his old father Anchises. The whole generation of the elect was redeemed in that hour when Christ leaped over every wall!

Thus have I tried to expound to you the text as relating to the Person of our blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I would only repeat once more the remark that in this verse, it is said, "By My God have I done it." As Mediator, in His official capacity, and in His service for our redemption, He received the strengthening aid of His Divine Father and He could truly say, "By My God have I leaped over a wall." It will do you good, O Believer, if you will often stay and look at your Savior accomplishing all His triumphs! O my Soul, what would you have done if He had not broken through a troop, if He had not routed your foes? Where would you have been? You would at this hour have been the captive of sin death and Hell. All your sins would now be besetting you, howling in your ear for vengeance. Satan, with all the hosts of Hell, would be now guarding you, determining that you should never escape. Oh, how joyous is this fact, that Christ has once and for all routed them and now we are secure! Then, my Soul, what do you think, what would you have done if He had not leaped over a wall? You would have been dead this day, shut in within the rampart of your own hard heart, or within the stronghold of Satan and with the mighty fiends of Hell you would have been trebly guarded and trebly enslaved. Now your fetters are all broken, as "a monument of Grace, a sinner saved by blood," lift up your heart, and your hands, and your voice, and shout for joy and gladness, "He has broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder." He has leaped over a wall and brought you out of your prison-house!

II. This brings me now to the second part of my discourse and I must ask your patience and pray again for the assistance of the Holy Spirit that in this, especially, Christ's people may find a word of edification. We are now to regard our text as being THE LANGUAGE OF THE BELIEVER.

He can say, "By You I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall."

I shall divide my text after another fashion on this second point. I shall note, first, with regard to the Believer, *how varied are his trials!* Sometimes it is a troop of enemies. At another time, a wall of difficulties. When a man has one labor to accomplish, he soon begins to be skillful in it. If he is to be a soldier and fight a troop, at length he learns how to get the victory. But, suppose that his labors are varied—after fighting a troop, he has to go clambering over a wall—then you will see the critical situations by which he is embarrassed. Now, this aptly pictures the position of God's people—the Spirit is continually varying our trials. There are no one day's trials that are exactly like the trials of another day. We are not called to one undeviating temptation, or else it would cease to have its force, but the temptations are erratic—the darts are shot from different directions and the stones come from quite opposite quarters.

This is well set out in one of the Lord's parables. He speaks thus of the trials of the righteous—There was a certain wise man who built his house upon a rock, and the rains descended—trials from above. And the floods came—trials from beneath. The winds blew—mysterious trials from every quarter—and they all beat upon that house and it fell not. Trials of every shape attend the followers of the Lamb. The archers come against us and we repel their fiery darts. The company of swordsmen come and we rebuke them. And then the slingers sling their stones against us and then the company of spearmen, so that we must be armed at all points and ready for every kind of attack. Our Savior in this was like to us. He says to us in one place, "Dogs have compassed Me"—that was bad enough. "Strong bulls of Bashan have beset Me round." That was not all, "they gaped upon Me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion." Only fancy that! A man has to fight with dogs and then with bulls—and then with lions—and yet, this is just the Christian's state!

We cannot guess, from the trials of the past, what will be the trials of the future. We think it is to be all fighting, but we are mistaken. Some part of it is to be climbing over this or that wall. I have known God's people, sometimes, try to break through a wall and to climb over a troop. This is very absurd. If they had a troop of spiritual enemies, they have tried to climb over them and endeavor to escape them. At another time, they have had a difficult trial, like a wall, and they have been so headstrong that they must try to go through it. Ah, we have much to learn. Some things we must fight *through*, others we must climb *over*. It is not always right for the child of God to let his courage get the better of his discretion. Let him have courage for the troop, to run through them, and discretion for the wall, and not try to run through that, or he will break himself in pieces. There are exercises and trials in various ways. The Believer's trials, how varied they are!

And, next to this, *how unflinching is his faith!* There is the troop, he runs through them. There is the wall, he leaps over it. He finds that his

faith is sufficient for every emergency. When his God is with him, there is no difficulty too great for him. He does not stop to deliberate. As for the troop, he runs through that and then there is the wall at the other end—he takes a leap and is over that! So, when God strengthens our faith, when the Holy One of Israel is with us and the might of Omnipotence girds our loins, difficulties are only the healthy exercises of our faith! God will exercise faith. There is not a single grain of faith in the breast of any living Believer that is not exercised. God will not allow it to sleep—a sleeping faith, a dormant faith—I do not believe such a thing exists! If you have faith, my Brother, expect labor, for, as surely as God gives faith, He will put it into the gymnasium and make it exercise itself—sometimes dashing at a troop and then trying its limbs another way, no more to exercise its arm in fighting, but its legs in climbing over a wall. We have all sorts of exercises to keep our faith in order that we may be ready for any emergency, whatever it may be. Some men seem as if they only had to meet one form of trial. They remind me of the Indian fakir—he holds his arm straight up—that is the triumph of his strength! Now God does not exercise a Believer's limbs till they grow stiff, but He exercises them in every way, that they may become supple, so that, come what may, he is ready to achieve any exploit.

With faith, how easy all exploits become! When we have no faith, then to fight with enemies and overcome difficulties is hard work, indeed, but when we have faith, oh, how easy our victories! What does the Believer do? There is a troop—well, he runs faith, then, to fight with enemies and overcome difficulties. There is a hard wall, what about that? He leaps over it! It is amazing how easy life becomes when a man has faith. Does faith diminish difficulties? Oh, no, it increases them, but it also increases our strength to overcome them. If you have faith, you shall have trials, but you shall do great exploits, endure great privations and get triumphant victories! Have you ever seen a man made mighty through God? Have you ever seen him in an hour of desertion? He goes out, like Samson, to meet the Philistines. "Oh," he says, "I will shake myself as at other times." But his locks have been shorn and when the cry is raised, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson," he shakes his limbs with vast surprise, makes a feeble fight and loses his eyes. They are put out, and he returns in blindness.

But, when God is with him, see what the Believer can do! They have woven the seven locks of his head with a web, and he just carries the loom away. Soon they bind him with seven green ropes that have never been dried, but he breaks them as easily as fire burns twigs. All things are possible, to him that believes—no, not only possible—but easy when God is with him! He laughs at impossibilities and says it shall be done, for faith can do all things. "By You I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall."

And yet, though the victories of faith are thus easy, we must call to mind that *these victories always are to be traced to a Divine source*. That man who takes the credit of his victories to himself has no faith, for faith

is one of the self-denying Graces. Faith called a parliament of all the Graces and passed a self-denying ordinance. It decreed that whatever any of the graces did, it should give all the glory of it to God. Christ once upon a time took the crown off His head and put it on the head of Faith. "When was that?" you ask. Why, Christ healed the poor woman and, therefore, it was He who deserved the crown, but, He said, "Your faith has saved you, go and sin no more." He thus put the crown upon Faith. What was the reason? Why, because Faith always puts its crown on the head of Christ! True faith never wears its own crown. It says, "Not unto me, Lord, but unto Your name be all the glory." This is the reason why God has selected Faith to achieve such mighty victories, because Faith will not allow the glory or honor to cleave to its own wings, but shakes off all self-praise, just as Paul shook off the viper into the fire. Faith says, "No, no, give me not thanks, or praise, or honor. I have done nothing." Faith will have it not only that it does nothing, but that Christ, who dwells in it, has done it all.

And now, my dear Friends, there is one consolation with which I will close this sermon. The Psalmist says, "By You I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall." I think, if he were here at this time, he would permit me to add, "and by my God *shall* I leap over a wall, and by You *shall* I break through many a troop." What faith has done once, by its God, it can do again. We have met Satan once in the battlefield and when he chooses to attack us once more, that old Jerusalem blade that once gave him a bitter blow, is ready to give him another! That shield, which once caught his fiery darts, is still unbroken and still prepared to receive another shower of them when he chooses to hurl them! Martin Luther, you know, often used to defy Satan to battle. I care not to do that, but he used to say, in his strange, quaint way, "I often laugh at Satan and there is nothing makes him as angry as when I attack him to his face and tell him that, through God, I am more than a match for him. I tell him to do his worst and yet I will beat him. And I tell him to put forth his fury and yet I will overcome him." This would be presumption if done in our own strength. It is only faith in the Grace of God that can enable us to say so. He that has made God his refuge need fear no storm, but, just as sometimes in Christmas weather, the wind and snow and storm outside make the family fire seem warmer, and the family circle seem happier, so the trials and temptations of Satan do sometimes seem to add to the very peace and happiness of the true Believer while he sits wrapped up in the mantle of godly confidence—

"Let cares like a wild deluge come,
And storms of sorrow fall.
May I but safely reach my home,
My God, my Heaven, my All."

And when we know that we shall reach our Home, even the storms or the tempests matter but little. Come, poor Believer, pluck up your courage! I have tried to give you some strong meat—feed upon it. As the Lord Jesus Christ had a troop to face and broke through them, so shall you! Even as He overcame, so shall you overcome. Did He enter Heaven and is there a

long cloud of witnesses streaming in behind Him—everyone a warrior? So, if you are His warrior, you shall be one of that long stream! You, also, shall wear a crown and wave the palm, and sing a song of victory, and talk of triumph purchased through the blood of and achieved through faith in the Lamb!

And, dear Friends, what may we expect if we do this? What may the fainting ones expect if the power of God rests upon them? They may expect that when "the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall," their power—the power that they have received from God—shall become the more conspicuous. The promise is, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles." That is the first thing we shall do. We who were faint and feeble and lying among the pots shall be, "as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold," and we shall mount above the clouds in an ecstasy of holy joy! Power will be given us to look the sun in the face even as the mighty eagle does.

But we shall do more than that—"They shall run, and not be weary." "But," you say, "running is not so noble an action as flying." That is what *you* think—that is what young people naturally think, for they are anxious to fly high—but, as you grow in Grace, you do not care so much for flying. You are content to move more soberly here below. You run at a quick pace and if God's power is really resting upon you, you are not weary.

But you shall advance yet another stage, for the promise ends thus—"They shall walk, and not faint." "But," asks someone, "is that advancing—going from running to *walking*?" Yes, it is. You do not read much in the Bible about running with God, but you do read a good deal about walking with God. That expression means that you go at a good steady pace in which a man may continue all his life. It is the lad who runs in his play, but older people, who are attending to the business of life, are not runners, but walkers—and they get over the ground at a good solid pace. Now, if the power of God rests upon us, we shall sometimes take the eagle's flight—away we shall go, far beyond the experience of ordinary Christians and get up there among the sublimities. But, if God's power is upon us, we shall also be eager to be employed in His service and shall rush forward with holy impetuosity and flaming zeal. But, better still, if the power of God is on us, we shall learn how to plod on in our daily life in obedience to the will of God, whether it is in the domestic circle, in the common round of business, or in the service of the Lord. We shall, in fact, make our whole life a continual progress towards Heaven through the Grace and power of God. So may it be to each one of you and in your experience may the Lord fulfill His ancient word, "He gives power to the faint," for His dear Son's sake!

I must pause one moment while I address myself to those who know nothing of God and nothing of Christ. Well, my Hearers, you have a troop, too, and you have your walls of difficulty. But you have no God to help you! Whatever trials the Believer has, he has a God to fly to. "Look,"

said a poor woman to a lady who called to see her, "look, ma'am, I'll show you all I'm worth. Do you see that cupboard, ma'am? Look in." "Yes," said the lady, who looked, and saw but little, "but there is nothing in it but a dry crust." "Well," continued the woman, "do you see this chest?" "Yes, I see it, but it is empty," was the reply. "Well," she said, "that is all I am worth, ma'am, but I have not a doubt or fear with regard to my temporal affairs. My God is so good that I can still live without doubts and fears." She knew what it was to break through a troop and leap over a wall!

Now, perhaps there are some of you with cupboards just as empty as that poor woman's—but you cannot add, "I have a God to go to." O miserable creature—miserable if you are rich, thrice miserable if you are poor—to be like a packhorse in this life, carrying a heavy burden and then not to be unloaded at the grave, but to have a double burden laid upon you! O poor men and women without Christ—with the few comforts which you have in this life, with its many privations, with its hunger, thirst and nakedness, oh, that you should not have a better world to go to! Above all, it seems a miserable thing that you should go through poverty here to a place where a drop of water shall be denied you to cool your burning tongue! If Christ is precious to the rich on earth, you must think that there is a peculiar sort of relish with which the poor man feeds on the Bread of Heaven!

"But," you ask, "may I not have a hope of Heaven?" Assuredly, my Friend. Do you long for Christ at this moment? Then He longs for you! Do you desire to have Him? Then He gives you that desire! Come to Him, for the message of the Gospel is, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."—

"None are excluded hence but those
Who do themselves exclude."

The invitation is free. May many accept it! Oh, that some of you may be led to go to your houses, now, and on your knees ask for forgiveness of sin and seek that you may become the children of God through faith in the precious blood once shed for many for the remission of sins! Amen.

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"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!" Matthew 27:29.

IT is a shameful spectacle where cruelty uses its keenest instrument to cut, not into the flesh, but into the very spirit, for scorn, contempt, insult and ridicule, are as painful to the mind and heart as a scourge is to the body—and they cut like the sharpest lance. These Roman soldiers were a rough body of men—fierce, courageous, terrible in battle, uncouth, untaught, uncivilized, little better than barbarians. And when they had this unique King in their power, they made the most of their opportunity to torment Him. Oh, how they laughed to think that He should call Himself a King—this poor, emaciated creature who looked as if He would faint and die in their hands—whose blessed visage was marred more than that of any of the sons of men! It must have seemed to them a sorry jest that He should be a rival to imperial Caesar, so they said, "If He is a King, let us clothe Him with royal purple," and they flung over His shoulders a soldier's tunic. "As He is a King, let us plait Him a crown," and they made it of thorns. Then they bowed the knee in mock homage to the Man whom His own people despised, whom even the mob rejected and whom the chief men of the nation abhorred. It seemed to them that He was such a poor, miserable, dejected Creature that all they could do was to make fun of Him and treat Him as the butt for their utmost ridicule.

These Roman soldiers had in them, as men, a spirit which I sometimes grieve to see in boys at this present day. That same cruel spirit that will torture a bird or a beetle, or hunt a dog or cat simply because it looks miserable and because it is in their power—that was the sort of spirit that was in these soldiers. They had never been taught to avoid cruelty. No, cruelty was the element in which they lived. It was worked into their very being! It was their recreation. Their grandest holiday was to go and sit in those tiers of seats at the Coliseum, or at some provincial amphitheatre and watch lions contending with men, or wild beasts tearing one another in pieces. They were trained and accustomed to cruelty—they seemed to have been suckled upon blood and to have been fed on such food as made them capable of the utmost cruelty—and, therefore, when

Christ was in their hands, He was in a sorry case, indeed. They called together the whole band and put a purple robe upon Him and a crown of thorns upon His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed their knees before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Then they spat upon Him and took the reed from His hand, and struck Him on the head.

Now we will leave those Roman soldiers and the Jews that had a hand in persecuting Him, for he that delivered Him unto them had committed even greater sin. Neither Pilate nor his legionaries were the chief criminals at that time, as we well know. From this incident in our Lord's life, I think we may learn, first, *lessons for the heart.* And, secondly, *lessons for the conscience.*

I. First, we have here A SET OF LESSONS FOR OUR HEART.

Beloved, we begin with this one. Where I see the great Substitute for sinners put to such shame, scorn and ridicule, my heart says to itself, *"See what sin deserves?"* There is nothing in the world that more richly deserves to be despised, abhorred, condemned, than sin! If we look at it aright, we shall see that it is the most abominable thing, the most shameful thing in the whole universe. Of all the things that ever were, this is the thing which most of all deserves to be loathed and spurned. It is not a thing of God's creating, remember—it is an abortion—a phantom of the night which plucked a host of angels from their thrones in Heaven, drove our first parents out of Paradise and brought upon us unnumbered miseries.

Think, for a minute, what sin is, and you will see that it deserves ridicule for its folly. What is sin? It is rebellion against the Omnipotent, a revolt against the Almighty. What utter folly that is! Who shall hurl himself against the bosses of Jehovah's buckler and not be dashed in pieces? Who shall rush upon the point of His spear and hope to vanquish Him? Laugh to scorn such folly as that! Under that aspect, sin is the apex of folly, the climax of absurdity—for what power can ever stand up against God and win the day?

But, further, sin deserves to be scorned because it is a wanton attack upon One who is full of goodness, justice and truth. Note that evil thing that assails the Most High and brand it so that the mark of the iron shall abide on it forever! Set it up in the public pillory and let all true hearts and hands hurl scorn upon it for having disobeyed the perfect Law of God, angered the generous Creator and Preserver of men, done despite to Eternal Love and infinite damage to the best interests of the human race! It is a ridiculous thing because it is fruitless and must end in being defeated. It is a shameful thing because of its wanton, malicious, unprovoked attack upon God. If you will look back a little and consider what sin attempted to do, you will see the reason why it should be shamed for its audacity. "You shall be as gods," said he who was the mouthpiece of sin—but are we, by nature, like gods? Are we not more like devils? And he who uttered that lie—even Satan—did he succeed as he expected when he dared to rebel against his Creator? See how his former glory has vanished! How are you fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning, and how is your brightness quenched in everlasting night! Yet sin,

speaking through the lips of Satan, talked about being a king and of making all of us kings—but it has only degraded us to the dunghill and to utter beggary! Yes, to worse than that—to death and Hell! What spitting, sin deserves! If it is to be crowned, let it be crowned with thorns! Bow not your knee to it, but pour upon it all the scorn you can! Every true and honest heart in Heaven, among the angels and the glorified spirits, and on earth, among sanctified men and women, must look upon sin as a thing worthy of unspeakable contempt. May God make sin as contemptible in our sight as Christ appeared to be to the Roman soldiers! May we scoff at its temptations. May we scorn its proffered rewards. And may we never bow our hearts to it in any degree whatever, since God has set us free from its accursed thralldom!

That is the first lesson for our hearts to learn from the mockery of our Savior by the soldiers—see what a contemptible thing sin is.

Learn, next, my dear Brothers and Sisters, *how low our glorious Substitute stooped for our sake*. In Him was no sin either of nature or of act. He was pure, entirely without spot before God, Himself, yet, as our Representative, He took our sin upon Himself. "He was made sin for us," says the Scripture most emphatically. And, inasmuch as He was regarded as being the sinner, though in Him was no sin, it naturally followed that He should become the object of contempt. But what a wonder that it should be so! He, who created all things by the word of His power and by whom all things consist—He who counted it not robbery (not a thing to be grasped) to be equal with God—sits in an old chair to be made a mimic king and to be mocked and spat upon! All other miracles put together are not equal to this miracle! This one rises above them all and out-miracles all miracles—that God, Himself, having espoused our cause and assumed our Nature, should deign to stoop to such a depth of scorn as this!

Though myriads of holy angels adored Him, though they would have gladly left their high estate in Heaven to smite His foes and set Him free, He voluntarily subjected Himself to all the ignominy that I have described—and much more which is utterly indescribable—for who knows what things were said and done in that rough guard-room which holy pens could not record, or what foul jests were made, and what obscene remarks were uttered, which were even more shocking to Christ than the filthy spit which ran down His blessed cheeks in that time of shameful mockery? Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, you cannot imagine how low your Lord stooped on your account! When I hear any say that they have been so slandered for His sake that they cannot endure it, I have wished that they knew what He endured on their account. If we stood in the pillory and all mankind hooted at us for a million million years, it would be as nothing compared with the wondrous condescension of Him who is God Over All, blessed forever, stooping as He did for our sake!

That is the second lesson for our hearts to learn.

Then let me say to you very tenderly, wishing that some other voice could speak of it more effectively—see how your Redeemer loved you. You know that when Christ stood by the grave of Lazarus and wept, the Jews said, "Behold how He loved him!" Ah, but look at Him there among those

Roman soldiers—despised, rejected, insulted, ridiculed! And then let me say to you, "Behold how He loved us—you and me—and all His people!" In such a case I might quote the words of John, "Behold, what manner of love!" But this love of Jesus is beyond all manner and measure of which we can have any conception. If I were to take all our love to Him and heap it up like a vast mountain. If I were to gather all the members of the one Church of Christ on earth and bid them empty their hearts, and then fetched out of Heaven the myriads of redeemed and perfected spirits before the Throne of God, and they added all their heart's love. And if I could collect all the love that ever has been and that ever shall be throughout eternity in all the saints—all that would be but as a drop in a bucket compared with the boundless, fathomless love of Christ to us that brought Him down so low as to be the object of the scorn and derision of these wicked men for our sake! So, Beloved, from this sad scene let us learn how greatly Jesus loved us and let each one of us, in return, love Him with all our heart.

I cannot leave this set of lessons for your heart without giving you one more. That is, *see the grand facts behind the scorn*. I do believe—I cannot help believing—that our blessed Master, when He was in the hands of those cruel soldiers and they crowned Him with thorns, bowed before Him in mock reverence and insulted Him in every possible way, all the while looked behind the curtain of the visible circumstances and saw that the heartless pantomime—no, tragedy—only partially hid the Divine reality, for He was a King, even then, and He had a Throne and that crown of thorns was the emblem of the diadem of universal sovereignty that shall, in due season, adorn His blessed brow. That reed was to Him a type of the scepter which He shall yet wield as King of kings and Lord of lords. And when they said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" He heard, behind that mocking cry, the triumphant note of His future Glory, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! And He shall reign forever and ever!" For when they mockingly bowed the knee to Him, He saw all nations really bowing before Him and His enemies licking the dust at His feet.

Our Savior knew that these ribald soldiers, unconsciously to themselves, were setting before Him pictures of the great reward of His soul-travail. Let us not be discouraged if we have to endure anything of the same sort as our Lord suffered. He was not discouraged, but remained steadfast through it all. Mockery is the unintentional homage which falsehood pays to truth. Scorn is the unconscious praise which sin gives to holiness. What higher tribute could these soldiers give to Christ than to spit upon Him? If Christ had received honor from such men, there would have been no honor in it to Him. You know how even a heathen moralist, when they said to him, "So-and-So spoke well of you yesterday in the market," asked, "What have I done amiss that such a wretch as that should speak well of me?" He rightly counted it a disgrace to be praised by a bad man—and because our Lord had done nothing amiss, all that these men could do was to speak ill of Him and treat Him with contumely, for their nature and character were the very opposite of His. Representing, as these soldiers did, the unregenerate, God-hating world,

I say that their scorn was the truest reverence that they could offer to Christ while they continued as they were!

And so, at the back of persecution, at the back of heresy, at the back of the hatred of ungodly men to the Cross of Christ, I see His everlasting Kingdom advancing and I believe that "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be exalted above the hills," and that "all nations shall flow unto it," even as Isaiah foretold that Jesus shall sit upon the throne of David, and that of the increase of His Kingdom there shall be no end, for the kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honor unto Him, "and He shall reign forever and ever. Hallelujah!" Glory be to His holy name!

Have all our hearts truly learned these four grand lessons—the shamefulness of sin—the condescension of our Lord—the immeasurable love which made Him so condescending—and the ineffable glory which hides behind the skirts of all this shame and sorrow? If not, let us beseech the Holy Spirit to teach them to us.

II. Now I want to give you, from this same incident, A SET OF LESSONS FOR YOUR CONSCIENCE.

And, first, it is a very painful reflection—let your conscience feel the pain of it—that *Jesus Christ can still be mocked*. He has gone into the heavens and He sits there in Glory, but yet, spiritually, so as to bring great guilt upon him who does it, the glorious Christ of God can still be mocked and He is mocked by those who deride His people. Now, men of the world, if you see faults and failings in us, we do not wish you to screen us. Because we are the servants of God, we do not ask for exemption from honest criticism. We do not desire that our sins should be treated with more leniency than those of other men, but, at the same time, we bid you beware that you do not slander, scandalize and persecute those who are the true followers of Christ, for, if you do, you are mocking and persecuting Him. I believe that if it is the poorest of His people, the least gifted and the most faulty, yet, if they are evilly spoken of for Christ's sake, our Lord takes it all as done to Himself. You remember how Saul of Tarsus, when he lay smitten on the ground, heard a Voice which said to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" "Well, but," he might have said, "I have never persecuted *You*, Lord." No, but he dragged Christian men and women to prison and scourged them, and compelled them to blaspheme—and because he had done this to Christ's people, Christ could truly say to him, "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these, My brethren, you have done it unto Me." If you persecutors need to amuse yourselves, you can find much cheaper sport than that of slandering the servants of Christ! Remember that the Lord has said concerning them, "He that touches you, touches the apple of His eye." If you were to touch the apple of a man's eye, you would be provoking him to defend himself, so do not awaken Christ's righteous anger by scoffing at any of His people! I say no more upon that point. If the message is meant for any man here, let him give heed to the warning.

Next, Christ may be mocked by despising His Doctrine. It seems to me a fearful thing that men should ever hold up Christianity to scorn. Yet nowadays there is scarcely any portion of the Truth of God which is not ridiculed and caricatured. It is stripped of its own clothes and dressed up

in somebody else's old purple cloak and then it is set in a chair, while men pretend great homage for it, and salute it, saying that they have great reverence for Christ's teaching. But, before long they spit in its face and treat it with the utmost disdain. There are some who deny the Deity of Christ, others who hate the central Doctrine of His atoning Sacrifice, while many rail at Justification by Faith which is the very heart of the Gospel! Is there any Doctrine—I scarcely know one—which has escaped the mockery and scorn of ungodly men? In the present day if a man wants to make himself a name, he does not write upon something which he understands and which is for the public welfare, but he straightway begins to assail some Doctrine of Scripture of which he does not know the meaning! He misrepresents it and sets up some notion of his own in opposition to it, for he is a "modern thought" man, a person of much importance.

It is easy work to scoff at the Bible and to deny the Truth of God. I think that I could, myself, pose as a learned man, in that way, if ever the devil should sufficiently control me to make me feel any ambition of that sort. In fact, there is scarcely a fool in Christendom who cannot make himself a name among modern thinkers if he will but blaspheme loudly enough, for that seems to be the road to fame, nowadays, among the great mass of mankind! They are dubbed "thoughtful" who thus insult the Truth of God as the soldiers, with their spit, insulted the Christ of God!

I shall come closely home to some of you who attend here regularly, when I say that Christ can still be mocked by resolves which never lead to obedience. Let me speak very softly upon this solemn Truth of God. Give me your hand, my Friend. Let me look into your eyes. I would gladly look into your soul if I could, while I put this matter very personally to you. Several times, before leaving this House, you have said, "I will repent of my sin. I will seek the Lord. I will believe in Jesus." You meant these words when you uttered them. Why, then, have you not fulfilled your promises? I do not care what excuse you give, because any reason which you give will be most unreasonable, for it will only amount to this—that there was something better than to do what Christ bids you, something better for you than to be saved by Him, something better than the forgiveness of your sins, something better than regeneration, something better than Christ's eternal love! You would have chosen Christ, but Barabbas came across your path, so you said, "Not this Man, but Barabbas!" You would have thought seriously about the salvation of your soul, but you had promised to go to a certain place of amusement, so you put off seeking the Savior till a more convenient season. Possibly you said, "My trade is of such a character that I shall have to give it up if I become a Christian—and I cannot afford to do that." I heard of one who listened to a sermon which impressed him—and he did not often hear sermons—and he wished that he could be a Christian, but he had made various bets for large amounts and he felt that he could not think of other things till they were settled.

There are many such things that keep men from Christ. I do not care what it is that you prefer to the Savior—you have insulted Him if you

prefer anything to Him. If it were the whole world and all that it contains, that you had chosen, these things are but trifles when compared with the Sovereignty of Christ—His crown rights to every man's heart, and the immeasurable riches that He is prepared to give to every soul that comes and trusts in Him! Do you prefer a harlot to the Lord Jesus Christ? Then don't tell me that you do not spit in His face! You do what is even worse than that! Do you prefer profits wrongly gained to accepting Jesus as your Savior? Do not tell me, Sir, that you have never bowed the knee before Him in scorn, for you have done far worse than that! Or was it a little paltry pleasure—mere trifling laughter and folly of an hour—that you preferred to your Lord? Oh, what must He feel when He sees these contemptible things preferred to Him, knowing that eternal damnation is at the back of your foolish choice? Yet men choose moment's folly and Hell, instead of Christ and Heaven! Was ever such an insult as that paid to Christ by Roman soldiers? Go, legionaries, you are not the worst of men! There are some who, being pricked in their conscience, make a promise of repentance and then, for the world's sake, and for their flesh's sake, and for the devil's sake, break that promise—the soldiers did not sin against Christ so grossly as that!

Listen once more. I must again come very closely home to some of you. Was it not a shameful thing that they should call Christ, King, and yet not mean it? And, apparently, give Him a crown, a scepter, a royal robe, the bowing of the knee and the salutation of the lips, but not to mean any of it? It cuts me to the heart to think of what I am going to say, yet I must say it. There are some professors—members of Christian churches—members of *this* Church—who call Christ Master and Lord, yet they do not do the things which He says. They profess to believe the Truth of God, yet it is not like the Truth of God to them, for they never yield to its power and they act as if what they call Truth were fiction and human invention! There are still some, like those of whom the Apostle wrote, and I can say as he did—"of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ"—though in the nominal church! Their God is their belly, they glory in their shame and they mind earthly things. Yet they bow the knee before Christ, they sing, "crown Him, crown Him," and they eat the bread and drink the wine which set forth His broken body and shed blood—yet they have no part nor lot in Him.

It has always been so in the nominal church, and it will be so, I suppose, till Christ comes to separate the chaff from the wheat. But, oh, how dreadful it is! To insult Christ in the Roman guard-room was bad enough, but to insult Him at the Communion Table is far worse! For a Roman soldier to spit in His face was bad enough, but to come and mingle with His people, call yourself His servant and then to go deliberately to drink with the drunkard, or to be unchaste in your life, or dishonest in your trade, or false in your talk, or foul in your heart is even more abominable! I know no milder word that can express the truth! To call Christ, Master, and yet never to do His bidding—this is mockery and scorn of the worst possible kind, for it wounds Him at the very heart!

I was reading, today, part of a Welsh sermon which struck me much. The preacher said, "Let all who are in this congregation avow their real master. I will first call upon the servants of the devil to acknowledge him. He is a fine master, and a glorious one to serve, and his service is joy and delight. Now all of you who are serving him, say, 'Amen. Glory be to the devil!' Say it! But nobody spoke. "Now," he said, "don't be ashamed to acknowledge him whom you serve every day of your life. Speak out and say, 'Glory be to my master, the devil!' or else hold your tongues forever." And still nobody spoke, so the minister said, "Then, I hope that when I ask you to glorify Christ, you will speak." And they did speak, till the chapel seemed to ring again as they cried, "Glory be to Christ!" That was good. But if I were to test you in a similar fashion, I feel tolerably certain that nobody here would acknowledge his master, if his master is the devil! And I am afraid that some of the devil's servants would join us in our hallelujahs to Christ! That is the mischief of it—the devil himself can use self-denial and he can teach his servants to deny their master—and in that very way to do him the most honor. O dear Friends, be true to Christ and, whatever you do, never mock Him! There are many other things which you can do that will be much more profitable to you than mocking Christ. If God is God, serve Him. If Christ is your Lord and Master, honor Him. But if you do not mean to honor Him, do not call Him Master, for if you do, all your faults and sins will be laid at His door and He will be dishonored through you.

Now I think that I hear somebody say, "I am afraid, Sir, that I have mocked Christ. What am I to do?" Well, my answer is—Do not despair, because that would be mocking Him in another way by doubting His power to save you. "I am inclined to throw it all up." Do not act so, for that would be to insult your Maker by another sin, namely, open revolt against Him. "What shall I do, then?" Well, go and tell Him your grief and sorrow. He told His disciples to preach the Gospel first at Jerusalem, because that was where those soldiers lived, the very men who had mocked Him. And He prayed for His murderers, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." In a like manner, He presents His mercy to you, first. Come to Him, then, and if you are conscious that you have mocked Him in any one of these ways that I have mentioned, say to yourself, "Then, if He will but forgive me, I will henceforth live all the more to His praise. I cannot wipe out my sin, but He can, and if He will do so, I will love Him much because I shall have had much forgiven. And I will spend and be spent to glorify His holy name."

My time has almost gone, so this must be my last remark. Whether we have mocked Christ or not, come, dear Brothers and Sisters, *let us now glorify Him*. This very hour let us crown Him with our heart's love and trust. Bring forth that royal crown—the crown of your love, of your trust, of your complete consecration to Him—and put it upon His head now, saying, "My Lord, my God, my King." Now put the scepter into His hand by yielding absolute obedience to His will. Is there anything He bids you do? Do it! Is there anything He bids you give? Give it! Is there anything He bids you abstain from? Abstain from it! Put not a reed scepter into His hand, but give Him the entire control of your whole being. Let Him be

your real Lord, reigning over your spirit, soul and body! What next? Bow before Him and worship Him in the quiet of your inmost heart. You need not bow your bodies, but let your spirits fall down before Him that sits upon the Throne of God, and cry, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

And when you have worshipped Him, then proclaim Him King. As those soldiers said in mockery, "Hail, King of the Jews!" so now do you in real earnestness proclaim Him King of Jews and Gentiles, too! Go home and tell your Friends that Jesus is King! Tell it out among the nations that "the Lord reigns," as the old version has it, "reigns from the tree." He has made His Cross to be His Throne, and there He reigns in majesty and in mercy! Tell it to your children, tell it to your servants, tell it to your neighbors, tell it in every place wherever you can be heard—that the Lord, even Jesus, reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords! Say to them, "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little."

And then, when you have proclaimed Him, kiss Him yourself. As the rough soldiers spat upon Him, so do you give to Him the kiss of homage and affection, saying, "Lord Jesus, You are mine forever and ever." Say, with the spouse, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine." I suggest to you that each individual here who loves His Lord much, should think of something fresh that He can do for Christ during this week—some special gift that you can bestow upon Him—some special action that you can do which shall be quite different and shall be only for Jesus, and altogether for Jesus, as an act of homage to His name. I often wish that God's people were more inventive, like that woman who wanted greatly to honor Him, so she brought out her alabaster box and broke it, and poured the precious ointment upon His head. Think of something special that you can do for Christ, or give to Him.

A dear Friend, now in Heaven, but who used to worship in this place, had a son who had been a great scapegrace, and was, in fact, living a vicious life. He had been long away from his father, and his father did not know what to do about getting him home, for he had treated him very badly, marred his comfort and spoiled his home. But, as I was preaching one night, this thought came to him, "I will find out, tomorrow morning, where my son is, and I will go to him." The father knew that the son was very angry with him, and very bitter against him, so he thought of a certain fruit, of which his son was very fond, and he sent him a basketful of it the next morning. And when the son received it, He said, "Then, my father still has some affection for me." And the next day the father called—and the day after he had him at home again! And that was the means of bringing the son to the Savior! He had worn himself out with vice and he soon died, but his father told me that it was a great joy to his heart to think that he could have a good hope concerning his son. Had the son died away from home. Had the father not sought him out, he would never have forgiven himself!

He did that for Christ's sake. Cannot some of you do a similar deed for the same reason? Is there any skeleton in your closet? Is there any mischief you could set right? Or have you anything you can give to your Lord and Master? Think, each one of you for himself or herself, what you can do and, inasmuch as Christ was so shamefully despised and rejected, seek to honor and glorify Him in the best way that you can and He will accept your homage and your offering for His love's sake. May He help you to do so! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 27:15-54; JOHN 18:28-38.

We are now to read about our Lord before Pontius Pilate.

Matthew 27. **Verses 15-30.** *Now at that feast the governor was accustomed to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would. And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas. Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will you that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ? For he knew that for envy they had delivered Him. When he was set down on the Judgment Seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have you nothing to do with that just Man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him. But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask for Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. The governor answered and said unto them, Which of the two will you that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas. Pilate said unto them, What shall I do, then, with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let Him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil has He done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let Him be crucified. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just Person: see you to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children. Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified. 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 struck Him on the head.* Surely, mockery could have gone no further! We marvel at the boldness and ingenuity of their scorn. Oh, that we were half as earnest in seeking to honor Him—as careful to think of everything that might make our homage perfect. But we, alas, too often fail to give Him due honor and glory, even when others are all aflame with zeal to insult Him.

31. *And after that they had mocked Him, they took the robe off from Him and put His own raiment on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.* Perhaps they were afraid that He would die from sheer exhaustion and so, with a cruel mercy, they would keep Him alive for the infliction of further tortures.

32. *And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear His Cross.* Any one of us might well have wished to have been Simon, yet we need not envy him. There is a cross for everyone who is a follower of the Crucified—may we have Grace to carry it after Him!

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.* He wholly abstained from that which might have lessened His pain. He came to suffer and He intended to go through with all that He had undertaken. He would do nothing that would blunt the edge of the sacrificial knife. He forbids not the soothing draught to other sufferers who are in pain, but, as for Himself, He will not partake of it.

35-37. *And they crucified Him, and parted His garment, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophet, They parted My garment among them, and upon My vesture did they cast lots. And sitting down they watched Him there, and set up over His head His accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.* And so He is, and so He shall be—King of the Jews even on that Cross and never so royal as when He had surrendered everything for love of those whom He came to redeem!

38-43. *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 destroys the temple, and builds it in three days, save Yourself. If You are the Son of God, come down from the Cross. Likewise also the chief priest 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.* What pain this taunt must have caused to the Savior! Because He is so pure and never yields to temptation, we are very apt to forget that temptation was really temptation, even to Him, and that it grieved His pure and holy Soul thus to be tempted to turn aside from the path of perfect trust in His Father and complete obedience to Him. No doubt the pain of temptation is in inverse ratio to our willingness to yield to it. When we yield to temptation, we feel a pleasure in it, but when we are horrified at it, and start back from it, then we feel the pain of it. Oh, for a mind and heart, so perfectly subject to the will of God, that we should feel such a temptation as this to be the very agony of grief to us, as it was to our Lord!

44. *The thieves also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth.* Nobody seemed to look upon Him with any desire to help Him, but even the lowest of the low would contribute their portion of mockery to increase His misery.

43-54. *Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. 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? 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. 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 ripped in two from the top to the bottom, and the earth did quake, and the rocks split; 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. John gives us some details of our Lord before Pilate which Matthew does not mention.

John 18:28-38. *Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the Hall of Judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover. Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring you against this Man? They answered and said unto him, If He were not a malefactor we would not have delivered Him up unto you. Then said Pilate unto them, Take you Him, and judge Him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death: that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which He spoke, signifying what death He should die. Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto Him, Are You the King of the Jews? Jesus answered Him, Say you this thing of yourself, or did others tell it you of Me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You unto me: what have You done? Jesus answered, My Kingdom is not of this world: if My Kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My Kingdom not from here. Pilate therefore said unto Him, Are You a king then? Jesus answered, You say that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the Truth. Everyone that is of the truth hears My voice. Pilate said unto Him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and said unto them, I find in Him no fault at all.* Thus did all who came into contact with Jesus bear witness that the Lamb of God was indeed "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—414, 333.

—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.

MAJESTY IN MISERY
NO. 2825

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 5, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 7, 1883.

"And the men that held Jesus mocked Him and struck Him. And when they had blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face and asked Him saying, Prophesy, who is it that struck You? And many other things they blasphemously spoke against Him."
Luke 22:63-65.

I SUPPOSE that all this cruelty took place while our Lord was before Caiaphas, in the dead of night, before the Sanhedrim had been fully gathered together to hold their trial at daybreak. His enemies were in so great a hurry to condemn Him that as soon as He arrived at the high priest's house, they had a kind of preliminary examination that they might try the tack upon which they meant to sail in endeavoring to procure a conviction against Him. Thus, after He had been, in an informal and illegal way, condemned without any proper trial, they left Him in the custody of their officers until early in the morning when they summoned the rest of their companions, so as to go through again the farce of trying Him whom they knew to be innocent.

While these officials had Christ in their keeping, they might at least have left Him in peace and quietness. According to the rules of all civilized nations, a prisoner detained in custody should be guarded from insult and ill-treatment while in that condition. Whatever his ultimate punishment may be after he has been tried and found guilty, while he is as yet uncondemned, he is reckoned to be under the protection of the State that has arrested him—and he ought not to be subjected to insult or injury. But here, as if they had been so many savages, the judges of our Lord abandoned Him to those outcasts whom they employed to do their foul work—and those wretched creatures treated Him with mingled cruelty and scorn—"The men that held Jesus mocked Him and struck Him." Could they not have allowed Him a little time of rest? The traces of the bloody sweat must still have been upon Him. They could see, by the emaciation of His Person, that He was, as it had been long before foretold that He would be, "a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief." He must already have been ready to faint under the rough usage which had been meted out to Him both before and at His preliminary trials before Annas and Caiaphas. His tormentors must have seen how exhausted He was, yet they had no pity for Him in their hard, unfeeling hearts! They al-

lowed Him no respite and gave Him no opportunity to prepare Himself to answer the charges that were about to be brought against Him. There were none found to vindicate His Character, or to plead His cause—and the intervals between the informal and the more formal trials were spent in mockery and in scorn.

These men were gross cowards. I am sure that they must have been because they were so cruel, for cruelty is one of the badges of cowardice wherever you find it. These are the very men who, in the garden, "went backward, and fell to the ground," when Christ did but say, "I am He," in answer to their declaration that they were seeking "Jesus of Nazareth." They went out, with swords and staves, to take Him prisoner, yet they fell to the ground when He did but speak a word or two to them! But now that they had Him in their power and perceived that He was, apparently, not inclined to exert the Divine energy with which He was endowed, but that He was as submissive as a sheep before her shearers, they determined to be as cruel as they could be to Him. God grant that the sin of cruelty to anything that lives may never be justly laid to the charge of any one of us! If you have acted cruelly, even though it is to the meanest thing in creation, despise yourself, for you are of a lower order than the creature that you tortured! And if these men could have judged themselves aright, they would have despised themselves. They seem to me to have been the very meanest of mankind who, having such a gentle Sufferer in their power, instead of showing any humanity to Him, seemed as if they could not sufficiently abuse Him. And so they indulged their vile nature to the utmost in mocking and persecuting Him.

I. I hope that some spiritual profit may come to us while we are considering this terrible part of the suffering of our Lord. And, first, I want you, in imagination, to, gaze upon MAJESTY IN MISERY.

There stands Jesus of Nazareth. I will not attempt to picture Him. There has never yet been a painter who could portray the lineaments of that wondrous face! The highest art has never yet been able to satisfy itself upon that point even though it has borrowed its outline and its colors from the Scriptures themselves. The most skillful hand grows unsteady in the Presence of One so glorious in His griefs. I will not, therefore, attempt to draw a portrait of my Lord and Master, but will simply ask you, by faith, to behold Him, clothed with the garment that was without seam, bound, delivered over to the officers and surrounded by them while they mocked and scoffed at Him. Letting your eyes rest upon Him in a loving look, regarding Him as the great center of your heart's affection, what do you see—you who believe in His Deity—and who can say that He is "very God of very God" to you?

If your eyes are opened by the Spirit of God, you will see *Omnipotence held captive*. "The men that held Jesus" did not really know who He was. He appeared to them to be a poor Galilean peasant. Speaking the country brogue, they saw that He was a humble, lowly, emaciated Man and, as He had been committed to their charge, they held Him as their prisoner. But they did not recognize that He was the Almighty God, the very Deity

that created the heavens and the earth, for, "all things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." He was, at that very moment, "upholding all things by the word of His power" and, amid all His weakness, and in all His sufferings, He was still "over all, God blessed forever," whom all the holy angels continued to adore. Is it not a great mystery that Omnipotence should thus be held captive? What a marvelous thing it is that He who can create or who can destroy, according to the good pleasure of His own will, should take upon Himself our nature and in that Nature should sink so low as to become subject even to the very coarsest and most cruel of mankind! What a wondrous stoop of condescension is here! Omnipotence allows itself to be bound and never proves itself more truly Omnipotent than when it restrains itself and permits itself to be held as a prisoner by sinful men!

Look again at this Majesty in misery and you will see *glory mocked,* for "the men that held Jesus mocked Him." To them He seemed to be a fit subject for ridicule and derision in professing to be a king, when He had neither an armed host nor multitudes of followers who could hope to stand for a single second against the mighty Caesar who held Israel in bondage! Yes, but there was a Glory in Christ which He had deigned to veil and to conceal for a while, but which angels still beheld and adored—yet these men were mocking Him! There are some themes which seem to strike a speaker dumb and this subject has something like this effect upon me. It appears to me amazing that the God who had reigned in Glory over myriads of holy angels, should be mocked by miscreants who could not even have lived an instant longer in His Presence if He had not permitted them to do so! Yet I see, in my text that He who made the heavens and the earth stood there to be despised and rejected of men and to be treated with the utmost contumely and scorn. I can make that statement, but you cannot realize what it means. This is one of those great mysteries of the faith that seem to stagger you. You believe it without the slightest hesitation, yet, the more you try to really grasp and comprehend it, the more it seems to elude you and to tower above you!

Thus, we see Omnipotence held captive and Glory mocked.

Next, we see *Goodness smitten*—perfect, infinite, unutterable Goodness stricken, bruised, assailed, assaulted—"The men that held Jesus mocked Him and struck Him." To strike wickedness is an act of justice. And even to lift the sword against oppression may not always be a thing to be condemned. But to strike Him who never did any man a wrong, but who has done all men some measure of good and who has given to some men all conceivable good—ah, this is indeed brutish! The blessed Son of God who stood there, had within His soul that mercy which endures forever, yet they struck Him—there burned in His heart a love which many waters could not quench and which the floods could not drown, yet they struck Him! He had come here upon no errand of vengeance, but to bring peace and goodwill to men—and to set up a Kingdom of joy and love—yet they bound Him! Ah, me, it is amazing that Goodness should be so good

as to submit to this shameful indignity! None but Divine Goodness would have submitted to it.

See what these mockers and smiters did next to our Lord. They produced a handkerchief, or a cloth of some kind, and they put it over His eyes. *Omniscience must seem to be blinded,* which, in truth, it cannot be. Yet, in the Christ there was the Omniscience of the Godhead and, to the utmost of their power, these men blinded Him in the hope that He might not see what they were doing. I know some who are trying to act that way at this present time. The only god that they have is a blind god. They believe in what they call, "the forces of nature," and then they condescendingly talk as though God was only the aggregate of the forces of nature working according to certain mechanical laws that can never be altered. The god in whom they profess to believe is a god that does not see. They tell us that it is idle to pray, or to think that God takes any interest in such insignificant individuals as we are. Ah, I remember reading about those gods of the philosophers—"They have mouths, but they speak not: 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 that make them are like unto them; so is everyone that trusts in them." "But our God is in the heavens," seeing all that happens and doing as He pleases among the hosts above and among men below. He is not now to be blindfolded, as He was once, when He condescended to wear our nature and to bear our sin. Yet it is amazing that He should ever have permitted this indignity to be put upon Him. The spouse in the Canticles truly sings, "His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set"—exceeding the very stars of Heaven for brightness—yet they covered them over! His eyes flamed with love and in them there did gleam bright diamonds of pity for all the sorrows of mankind—yet those cruel men did hide those precious eyes of His, blindfolding the Christ of God!

Now, surely, they had made Him suffer enough, far too much—yet again the infinite beauties of His blessed Countenance were to be marred, for "they struck Him on the face." "Oh, but had we been there," we say, "our indignation would have burned against them for striking that dear face!" Yet we had need lay aside our indignation and bring forward penitence, instead, for we, also, have sometimes struck that dear face of Jesus, which is as the Sun of Heaven, far brighter than the sun which lights up the world! All other beauties put together cannot equal the marvelous charms of that Countenance which was marred more than any man's. There is nothing under Heaven, or in Heaven, itself, that can rival the face of the Well-Beloved, yet these men struck it! I think an angel might well shiver with horror if, for the first time, he heard that men had struck the face of His Lord! It was but His *Human* face, it is true, but therein they struck at all of Deity that they could reach. It was man striking God in the face! A slap in the face of Deity was what it really meant. Ah, me, that my Master should ever have had to endure such in-

sult and pain—that He should ever have been willing to suffer such indignity as this—was there ever love like unto His?

Then the mockers said, "Prophesy, who is it that struck You!" That was *Justice defied*. They seemed to say to our Lord, as they struck Him, "Tell us what our name is; say who struck that blow. You cannot resist it. You cannot avenge Yourself, but, at least, see if You can tell the name of him that struck You. We defy You to do it." Ah, He had written down their names and they will find out, one day, that He knows them all, for there are none who strike the Savior who will not have their blows come back upon themselves unless they repent of their sin! There was Justice defied, as "they struck Him on the face and asked Him, saying, Prophesy, who is it that struck You?"

I say again that I am not worthily able to speak on such a theme as this. And I think I never shall be, however long I may live. It is not within the compass of lips of clay, with words of air, to describe the condescending sufferings of Him who, though He was rightly called, "Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace," nevertheless stooped so low as to be mocked, struck, blindfolded, and struck again for your sakes and mine—

"Vexed, I try and try again,
Still my efforts are all in vain—
Living tongues are dumb at best,
We must die to speak of Christ."

The wonder of this Majesty in misery can be described in four words. The first wonder is that, under all this torture, our Lord was so *patient*. Not a flush of anger appeared on His cheek, not a flash of wrath from His eyes. He bore it all, bore it in His very soul, with Diving Patience, the very patience of "the God of Patience."

The next wonder is that He was *silent* under all this cruelty—not a word did He utter either in complaint or in condemnation of His assailants. This proved His true greatness. Eloquence is easy compared with silence and, perhaps, it would not have been true of Christ that "never man spoke like this Man," if it had not also been true of Him that never man was silent like this Man. He fulfilled to the letter the ancient prophecy, "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth." Lord, teach us how to imitate Your patience and Your silence!

Notice, in the third place, how *eloquent* He was by that very silence. He said more for us, and more to us, by holding His tongue than if He had delivered Himself of many burning sentences. It is matchless eloquence that is seen in the calm serenity of Christ in the presence of these cruel persecutors, in the forgiving Character of Christ under the most exasperating circumstances and in the patience of Christ under unparalleled sufferings!

And yet again, I see something so triumphant in our Savior's griefs that, while I call Him patient, silent, and eloquent, I must also call Him *victorious*. His persecutors could not make Him give way to anger. They could not destroy His mercy. They could not slay His love. They could not

cause Him to think of Himself. They could not make Him declare that He would go no further with His work of saving sinners, now that men began to scoff at Him, strike Him and despitefully use Him. No, the strong-souled Christ still perseveres in His merciful work, even as a mighty hunter pursues his game upon the mountain, leaping from crag to crag and cliff to cliff, defying danger and death that he may secure the creature on whose track he has gone. So, O mighty Christ, You did accomplish Your glorious purpose of love and mercy! You did lead captivity captive by suffering, to the bitter end, all that was inflicted upon You, even unto the death of the Cross!

Thus have I tried to picture Majesty in misery, but I have not been able to describe either Christ's Majesty or His misery as they deserve to be described. Meditate on them and pray the Spirit of God to give you such a sight of them as human nature, by itself, can never afford you!

II. Now I pass on to notice, secondly, that my text seems to me to show us SIN AT ITS SPORT.

All this sad scene represents what sin did when it had the opportunity—when all restraining bands were loosed and it could act according to its own evil will. It also represents what sin is still doing, as far as it can, and what would always be the action of sin if it were not hindered by the almighty power of God.

What, then, does sin do in the hour of its liberty? I invite you to notice, first—and to pay particular attention to any part that may come home to yourself—*the levity of sin*. These men are grossly insulting the Christ of God, but, to them, it is a sport, a game. They play at blindfolding Him—it is simply mirth and amusement to them. Sad, indeed, is it that sin should ever be what men call sport, yet I need scarcely remind you how often it is so, even now, to many. They run after it with the utmost eagerness and they call it pleasure—they call that which is provoking God pleasure—they call that which crucified Christ pleasure! They say that "they must see life," and they call that, "life," which forced from Jesus a bloody sweat and which afterwards dragged Him to a cruel death! And, alas, they say of many a sin, "What a delight it is to us! Would you make our life miserable by taking away our enjoyments?" So it becomes a matter of enjoyment to them to strike Christ on the face and to mock Him! Perhaps I am addressing some who have even made the Bible into a jest-book—their puns and mirth have been pointed with passages of Holy Writ. Possibly others have made rare fun out of some venerable Christian, some faithful servant of the living and true God. Well, Sirs, if you have done so, I would have you know how heinous is your sin in thus making sport of the godly—such "sport" as that, unless you repent of it, will damn you forever! As surely as you live, it will shut you out from the great Father's love and close the door of Mercy against you, world without end! Yet that is how sin acts when it has its liberty. Yes, and it sports even with the wounds of a Crucified God! Alas, that it should ever do so!

Notice, next, *the utter wantonness of sin*. If these men really wanted to get amusement out of Christ, they were able to get it, but what need was

there for them to also *strike* Him? What need was there of all that superfluity of cruelty by which they put Him to such shame and pain? If Christ must die, at least let Him die in peace—why that spitting in His face, that terrible scourging, that awful aggravation of His griefs? It was because men will sin out of sheer wantonness! I have known some persons sin in such strange ways that I have wondered why they did it. It was not for pleasure—at least I could not see any pleasure in it. It caused the man's own family to be utterly miserable and brought them and himself, too, down to poverty—what mirth or merriment could there be in *that*? There are some who seem as if they could never be happy unless they were engaged in making themselves unhappy forever and ever. They are not content without committing some extravagance in sin and making their whole lives an outrageous series of rebellions against God. If any of you have ever been guilty of such wantonness in sin, may the Holy Spirit cause a gracious influence to steal over you so that you will no longer grieve the Christ of God, but will, yourself, grieve that you should ever have sinned so shamefully against Him!

Then note, next, *the cruelty of sin*. I have already asked and I repeat the question—What need was there for these men to strike the Savior? What pleasure could they derive from all the pain they caused Him? By the mouth of His ancient Prophets, the Lord said, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!" It was in their own interests that He thus pleaded with men, for He would not have them injure themselves—and sin is always self-injury—it is a sort of suicide. Whenever a man does wrong, mischief must certainly come of it, and God knows this, so He beseeches men not to act so foolishly. And, oh, when a man mocks at true religion, rejects Christ and postpones the day of repentance, He is piercing again that dear heart that bled for the unworthy, and grieving that blessed Spirit who still strives with the sons of men, though He is often vexed and grievously provoked by them. Why are you so unkind to your God? Surely, there can be no necessity for committing such a sin as this!

Then, observe *the desperate unbelief that there often is in sin*. These men would not have blindfolded Christ if they had really believed Him to be the Son of God. They acted as they did because they had no faith whatever in Him. This is the great evil that lies at the root of most men's sins—they believe not in Jesus Christ whom God has sent. It is this of which the Spirit of God convinces men, as our Savior foretold concerning Him—"He will convince the world of sin…because they believe not on Me." Yet there is nothing more reasonable, nothing more worthy to be believed, than the Revelation of God as given to us in the Holy Scriptures! A man has only to test and try for himself whether it is true, or not, and he shall soon have the proof of its verity in his own bosom. Let him really believe it and then see whether it does not make him both holy and happy—that shall be to him the test of its truth.

Notice, again, *how often there is in sin a kind of defiance of God*. If a boy were to come to his father and were to say to him, "I will do all manner of rude and unkind things to you, yet you will not chastise me," it

would not be long before that father would make his son smart if he were, himself, worthy to be a father! But sinners act towards God in that kind of way. They often do to God what these persecutors did to Christ, as far as they can. They mock Him, strike Him and defy Him. Am I addressing anyone who has ever called down upon himself the curse of God? Beware lest that blasphemous prayer of yours be answered the next time you utter it, for it is God's way to answer prayer and, perhaps, He will answer yours—and then where will you be? Some have even dared to defy God thus—"Well, even if it is as you say, I am willing to take my chances—I will not submit to God." Ah, Sir, Pharaoh tried that plan and he repented of it, I think, when it was too late! In the midst of the Red Sea, when the waters began to overwhelm him and all his mighty host, *then* he learned what were the consequences of saying, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?" Every sin has in it a measure of defiance of God—it is like these men striking Christ upon the face and saying to Him—"Prophesy, who is it that struck You?"

I will not linger longer upon this part of my theme except just to say that there is one more thing about sin that is peculiarly lamentable, namely, *the multiplicity of sin.* Read the 65th verse—"And many other things they blasphemously spoke against Him." One thing, two things, 20 things will not content them—they must say "many other things" against Him! When a man once gives himself up to sin, it is like getting into a current which bears him onward where, at first, he had no thought of going. If you wade into the waters of sin, it will not be long that you will be able to retain a foothold and, by-and-by, unless the Lord shall, in His Grace, prevent such a calamity, the rapid current will bear you away to your everlasting destruction! It is no use for you to say, "This far will I go in sin, but no farther." You cannot stop when you please—if you once commit yourself to the influence of sin, you know not where it will carry you. Alas, alas, some men seem as if they never could sin enough to satisfy themselves! They multiply their transgressions beyond all count. Every iron of iniquity that they have is thrust into the fire. Both hands are diligently engaged in doing mischief. Sometimes they rise up early, but, more often, they sit up late—possibly all through the night, that they may waste the more precious hours in their wickedness! So God is grieved and Christ is wounded afresh by the sin of man. It is a sad, sad picture. I cast a veil over it and turn to something brighter and better.

III. We have seen Majesty in misery, and sin at its sport. Now, thirdly, let us see LOVE AT ITS LABOR.

All that shame and suffering was endured by our Savior for love of each of us who can truly say, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." All this blindfolding, mocking, and striking was borne by Christ for your sake, Beloved, and mine. I will not try to describe it further, but I will ask you to just spend a minute or two in trying to realize that sad scene. For you—as much as if there were no other person in the whole universe—for you the King of Glory became the King of Scorn and bore all this despis-

ing and rejection of men! For you, John. For you, Mary. For you, old friend. For you, in your youth. If you, whoever you are, believe in Him, He was your Substitute. Your faith gives you the assurance that He was enduring all this for *you*—for you, I say, as much as if He had no other redeemed one, but had paid the ransom price all for *you*. Less than this would not have sufficed for you, though it is, indeed, sufficient for all the innumerable host redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus!

Let us, then, see love at its labor. I mean, our love to our Lord, though I might also speak of our Lord's love to us, and what it did for us. What shall our love do to show how grateful we are to Jesus for all that He endured for us? Well, first, *let it set penitence to confess*. Come, my Heart, here is room for the display of your grief. Why was Christ mocked in Jerusalem? Surely it was because you have mocked God with prayers that were no prayers, with hymns carelessly sung, with Scripture read as if they were merely the writings of men, with professions of religion that were hollow and empty! Brothers and Sisters, have you not some of these things to repent of? If you have mocked Him thus, the mocking that He endured in the hall of the high priest was on your account.

And as He was blindfolded, let us weep because our unbelief has often blindfolded Him. We imagined that He did not know about us, or that He had forgotten us. We thought that He could not see the end from the beginning and that He would not be able to bring good out of evil. Let me ask you, dear Friends—have you not often made Christ to be a blindfolded Christ so far as your apprehension of Him was concerned? If so, because you have thus blindfolded God by your unbelief, you are, by your sin, imitating the guilt of these men who literally blindfolded Christ.

And as we behold Him struck, let us again grieve as we remember how it was written of Him, "He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." Every sin that we have ever committed made a gory furrow upon His precious back! Those black and blue bruises that alternate upon His sacred shoulders were caused by the cruel scourging to which each of us contributed our share by our transgressions. O Beloved, weep as you see Him bearing what you ought to have borne!

And when you read that they asked Him taunting questions while His eyes were blindfolded, ask yourself, O child of God, whether you have not often done the same! Have you never asked for a sign, instead of walking by faith? I confess that I have sometimes wished that I could have some token or indication of what my Lord thought. Ah, that is what these cruel men sought from Christ—they tried to get Him to convince them that He knew them when His eyes were blinded. O Brothers and Sisters, let us never seek a sign as that wicked and adulterous generation did! Let us walk by faith, not by sight, and implicitly trust our Lord! Because we have not trusted Him as we should have done, but have demanded of Him signs and tokens, we have been too much like these men who asked Him, "Prophesy, who is it that struck You?"

I said that we would see love at its labor, so I want you, next, to let your love *urge faith to confide in Christ*. Come, dear Friends, in all this suffering of our Savior, let us see fresh reasons for trusting ourselves more entirely in the hands of Christ. Those men held Jesus in order that neither death nor Hell might ever be able to hold us. He was held in our place, so He says concerning us, as He said concerning His disciples in the garden, "If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way." The great Substitute is held as a prisoner so that all for whom He stood as Surety might be set at liberty forever!

He also was mocked. And to what end? We deserve eternal shame and contempt because of our sin, but He took all that shame upon Himself and made this wonderful exchange. As He put on the rags of our shame, He said to us, "Take My glittering vesture and wear it!" And now, the Glory which He had with the Father from eternity, He has put upon His people, that they may be like He and may be with Him where He is forever and ever! What a wonderful exchange is this! As Thomas read the Deity of Christ in His wounds, so do I read the eternal glory of His people in the mockery which He endured on their behalf.

When you see your Lord struck, why is that but that there may be no striking and no wounds for you, now or forever? You shall go free, for Jesus has borne all that you deserved to bear! He bore blow after blow that not one might ever fall upon *you*.

Why, too, was Jesus blindfolded but that we might be able to see? Our sin had blinded us to all that was worth seeing, but His death has taken away the scales and we can now see because He was caused not to see. Because He suffered these miserable miscreants to bind His eyes, therefore are our eyes unbound, today, and they shall be yet more unbound in that day when we shall behold Him face to face and be no more parted from Him.

And why was Jesus blasphemed by the "many other things" which they falsely laid to His charge? He was blasphemed that we might be justified! He was unrighteously accused and slandered in order that we might be able to boldly say, "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." Therefore, be glad, Beloved—while you sorrow over your Lord's griefs, rejoice over what those griefs have brought to you and what they will continue to bring to you throughout eternity!

Now, lastly, let our love at its labor *awaken our zeal to consecration to our Lord*. Was He held captive? Then come, my most burning zeal, and inflame me with devotion to His cause! Was He held thus for *me*? Then He shall hold me fast and never let me go! My Lord, I do surrender myself, my life, my all, to You, to be Your willing captive forever! Take these eyes, these lips, these hands, these feet, this heart—and as you were and are altogether mine, so let me be altogether Yours. Is not this a fair requital? Does any child of God object to that?

Then, next, as they despised Him, come, my Soul, what do you say to this? Why, that I will despise the world that did despise my Lord and Sa-

vior! O world, world, world, you are a blind, blear-eyed, black-hearted thing to have treated my Master so! Shall I conform to your customs? Shall I flatter you? Shall I ask for your applause? No, you are crucified to me. As a felon nailed up to the cross, so, O world, are you to me because you have crucified the Christ, the infinitely-lovely Son of God! Henceforth, the world is crucified to us and we to the world!

And as they blindfolded Jesus, what then? Why, I will be blindfolded, too! I will henceforth see no charm, no attraction anywhere but in my Lord. My eyes shall behold Him and no other in the glory that is yet to be revealed and, today, I can say with the Psalmist, "Whom have I in Heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire but You." Go through the world, Beloved, blindfolded to all but Christ, and you shall do well!

And, as they struck Jesus on the face, what will you and I do to show how much we love that face which was so shamefully ill-treated? My heart brings up before me a vision of that "sacred head, once wounded," encircled by the crown of thorns—that dear face, so bruised and battered, yet even then more beautiful than all the other loveliness of Heaven besides! Jesus, Son of God, and Son of Man, we adore You and we hasten to kiss those blessed feet of Yours, in loving adoration, and we do it all the more because wicked men did strike You upon the cheek! Reverence and love we gladly give to Him who once was struck by outcasts and who afterwards was nailed to the accursed tree!

And, inasmuch as these men said "many other things blasphemously against Him," come, my Brothers, let us say many things in His praise! And, Sisters, join us in the holy exercise! No one shall close our lips, faulty as they are, from speaking in honor of our dear Lord! Sometimes, with the Prophet, we are ready to confess that we are men of unclean lips and that we dwell in the midst of people of unclean lips, but, such as we are, we will render to Him the calves of our lips and give glory to His holy name! Never be ashamed to speak up for your Lord, Beloved. Never blush to acknowledge that you belong to Him. No, if you blush at all, blush with shame that you do not love Him more and serve Him better! By the memory of that dear face, blindfolded and struck, while cruel men all around slander Him with their blasphemous accusations, I charge you to—

"Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
You soldiers of the Cross!"

God help you to do so!

Oh, that some here who have never believed in Jesus Christ would now begin to trust Him! I do not invite you, just now, so much to believe in Him in His glory as to believe in Him in His shame. Was He really the Son of God and did He suffer for guilty men all that we have been talking of, and far more than that? Then I must believe in Him! To me, Jesus Christ seems to be a Character that men could never have invented. He must be historical for He is so original. Unaided human minds could never have thought out such a Character! There are strange things in

Buddhism and other false religions, and men with wild imaginations have conceived curious notions concerning their gods, but I challenge anyone to show me, in any book except God's Book, anything that can parallel the story of the Eternal God, Himself, becoming Man in order to make atonement for the sins of His creatures, that is, the sins committed by them against Him. Yes, Brothers and Sisters, I must believe in Him! What is more, I must believe that He died for me—

"That on the Cross He shed His blood
From sin to set me free."

Having so believed—I speak as God's witness to all who can hear me—I feel an inward peace that nothing can break, a holy joy that nothing can disturb and a sacred calm which death, itself, shall not be able to destroy. I have been at the deathbeds of many of our Brothers and Sisters who have been accustomed to worship here and who have been members of this Church. And—note this testimony, I pray you—I have never seen one of them afraid to die! I have not met with one coward among them all! But I have heard some of them singing triumphantly in their last hours, as merrily as though it were their marriage day—while others have been as calm and quiet as if to die were but to go to bed, sleep a while and wake again in the morning!

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ—in this very Lord who stooped from the heights of Glory to the depths of shame and suffering—and you, also, shall find that your confidence in Him shall be rewarded even in this life! While, as for the world to come—ah then, when there shall be no blindfolded eyes for Him—no mockery and scorn and smiting for Him—but all shall be Glory forever and ever, then you and I, if we are believers in Him, shall eternally share His Glory! God grant it, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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

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THE KING IN PILATE'S HALL
NO. 2826

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 12, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 4, 1884.

"Pilate therefore said unto Him, Are You a king, then? Jesus answered, You say that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the Truth. Everyone that is of the Truth hears My voice."
John 18:37.

OUR Lord was being cross-questioned by an unscrupulous, vacillating, contemptuous Roman official. So, as our blessed Lord and Master did not escape the ordeal of malicious questioning, let no disciple of His imagine that he will escape. "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he is as his master, and the servant as his lord." Sooner or later the day will come when the profession that you have made shall be questioned and tested. To some of Christ's followers, this time of trial comes very soon after their conversion. Others are assailed at a later period. The cool, calm, calculating doubter suggests a question about this or that and everything that can be moved is shaken. Just as Pilate said to Christ, "Are you a king, then?" so will men say to you, "Are you a Christian? Are you really believing in Jesus? Have you been born-again? Are you a new creature in Christ Jesus? Are you fully sanctified?" And they will make these enquiries in such a tone of contemptuous ridicule that you will need all your strength, all your patience, an increase in your faith and in all your graces if you are to witness a good confession, as your Master did before Pontius Pilate.

When such a time comes to you, I cannot suggest to you a better model for your answer than that which your Lord gave to the Roman governor. At first, He did not answer Pilate. "Jesus gave him no answer." And a large portion of the inquisitive questioning to which we have to submit is not worth answering. Nor is it worthwhile for you and me to go up and down the world fishing for questions, or inviting the objections and quibbling of skeptics because we think ourselves so exceedingly clever that we are easily able to answer them. Believe me, you will have quite enough to do if you catch on your shield all the fiery darts that come without your invitation! You will have no need to ask to be led into temptation, or to seek permission to rush into it. Our Savior invited no questions from Pilate—He did not even condescend to answer all that Pilate had to say to Him—and the best thing for a Christian to do, in many of

his times of trial, is to say, with David, "I was dumb with silence. I held my peace, even from good; and my sorrow was stirred."

When the Master did reply, He set us an example that we may safely follow. Observe how He replied without any tartness, without even the appearance of anger. He was very courteous towards Pilate. He put what He had to say in a fashion which would commend itself to him. He knew that Pilate's chief jealousy was about His being a king and He tried to remove it by explaining that His Kingdom was not of this world, otherwise His servants would fight for Him so that He should not be delivered to the Jews. I cannot conceive of replies, to such a man as Pilate, more suitable, more calculated to have done him good if there had been any soil in Pilate's heart upon which the Good Seed could have fallen with the hope of growth. I pray that you and I, when we are assailed and questioned, may be wise as serpents and harmless as doves, giving a reason for the hope that is in us with meekness and fear, answering not with the objective of displaying our own skill or learning, but always with the motive of seeking the good of the questioner, if, perhaps, God may grant unto him repentance that he may come to the knowledge of the Truth of God. I admire and hold up as an example to you the exceeding sweetness of our Savior's replies to His carping critic.

Note, however, how bold He was, as well as wise and gentle—"You say that I am a king." He does not flinch from admitting the Truth, however distasteful it may be to His hearer. If this Truth troubles Pilate after our Savior's explanation that His Kingdom is not of this world, He cannot deny the fact that He really is a King, for He must speak the Truth come what may of it. I fear that sometimes, in our endeavors to be sweet in disposition, we have not been strong in principle. "Charity" is a word that is greatly cried up nowadays, but, often it means that in trying to be courteous, we have also been traitorous. Our speech has been soft and smooth, but it has not been sincere and true. Did you ever catch yourself wishing to trim off the corners of a Truth of God—or, at least, seeking if you could not omit something that might prejudice your hearer? If so, let me tell you plainly that he who wishes to alter *any* truth has already began to lie! Though he may not actually do it, yet the very wish to change the Truth of God in any degree is a proof of perversity of heart which needs to be repented of and forgiven! We have already turned aside from the right path when we do not dare to say what God has taught us. Our Savior never acted like that—He was always true, transparent, clear, faithful. There was never in Him any holding back in the least degree. As He said to Pilate, "You say that I am a king. To this end was I born and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the Truth." Oh, that we might learn from our Savior the sacred art of blending Christ-like gentleness with holy courage—and Christ-like courage with gentleness such as His!

Observe, too—for it is worthy of notice—how modestly and unobtrusively our Savior answered Pilate's questioning. It is an unhappy circumstance that some men seem as if they cannot speak boldly without having somewhat of pride mixed with their courage. Full often our very

virtues lie quite near to the borders of vice. We aim at what is right, but, alas, we go beyond it, or we fall short of it, or hit the target where our shots do not count. Ah, Lord, what imperfect creatures we are! But our Savior was perfect in every respect. He only answered the questions of Pilate when it was right for Him to answer them and even then He seemed to take the words wherewith to frame His answer out of Pilate's own mouth—"You say that I am a king." "It is even as you have said." Our gracious Master is very straightforward, yet how modest He is! He seems to hide Himself even behind Pilate's words. He does not hide the Truth, yet, in a perfectly sinless way, He somewhat conceals Himself. I wish we could imitate Him in that respect. Even when we are, like Bayard, "without fear, and without reproach," we are very apt, at the same time, to be without any desire for the conflict against evil, or any wish to impose ourselves in the least degree upon the attention of others, even if a protest would be right from us. We never see any of this false shame in our Savior. So, if we have at all given way to it in the past, let us never repeat that sin.

The words of Paul, in his First Epistle to Timothy, are very properly rendered in the Revised Version, "Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed *the* good confession." It was more than a good confession that our Lord Jesus witnessed before Pontius Pilate, so the definite article is rightly used and, "the good confession," stands out prominently as an example for all His followers. It is concerning that good confession that I am about to speak as the Holy Spirit shall graciously guide me.

I. First, let us ask—WHAT WAS "THE GOOD CONFESSION" THAT JESUS WITNESSED BEFORE PONTIUS PILATE?

I think the good confession of our Lord was, first, *His avowal of His Kingship*—"You say that I am a king." Dear Friends, do not forget that our Savior was, at that time, a prisoner in bonds, on trial for His life. As far as the eye could see, He appeared to be absolutely in the power of Pilate—a man who was destitute of any kind of conscience and who cared nothing about what means he employed so long as he could attain his own evil ends. There stands Jesus, a bound Prisoner, before one who can order Him to be put to death. And the judge contemptuously says to Him, "Are you a king, then?" And He answers, with great gentleness, but most decidedly and undoubtedly, "I am a king, even as You say." I think I see Pilate's lip curl—I can imagine the supreme contempt with which he looked upon the miserable Victim before him, disowned by His own countrymen, who had brought Him there because, in their hate, they wished to have Him put to death—yet He talks about being a king! It may have been a merry jest for Pilate at the moment, but he did not dare to make it one afterwards. His wife would have stopped him had he sought to find amusement in Jesus of Nazareth!

At the time, it must all have seemed very strange to him. It takes a great deal of courage for a man to avow that which seems to be improbable and, indeed, impossible. He knows it is true, but the other man thinks it is a piece of fanaticism. "Ridiculous nonsense," he says, and he scorns the idea with a sarcastic grin. It is not easy, then, for a humble-

minded spirit just as determinedly to acknowledge it. I believe that there is many a man who could stand upon a public platform and announce his convictions to an infuriated crowd, who would not dare to say the same things to a single individual. It took more courage for Christ to speak to Pilate, alone, as He did, than it has done for many a man to stand and burn at the stake, yet the Savior did it. Calmly and deliberately, He avowed the Truth of God, blessed be His holy name! "I am a King," He said, and so He is. In our hearts, we acknowledge His Sovereignty over us as individuals and His supremacy over the entire Church. No, more, His Father has given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as He has given Him. He has said it, "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." "And He shall reign forever and ever," and all loyal hearts cry, "Hallelujah!" It was a good confession for the Nazarene, clothed in the common smock frock of a Galilean peasant, with gory sweat still upon His brow, with the ropes that bound Him still about His wrists, with the howling savagery of His countrymen behind Him, to say to Pilate, "I am a King."

Next, Christ's "good confession" was *His announcement of a spiritual Kingdom*. Pilate could not comprehend what He meant when He said, "My Kingdom is not of this world; if My Kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews." A spiritual Kingdom! Pilate would not have given the smallest Roman coin for such a kingdom as that! Our Savior's own countrymen did not understand what He meant by a spiritual Kingdom "not of this world." They were looking for a temporal prince, an earthly leader who would deliver them from the Roman yoke, but Jesus asserts that His Kingdom, whatever it is, and wherever it is, is a *spiritual* thing! This is the testimony that we are also trying to bear today and, sometimes we have to bear it before the very temporal power that thinks the church to be an instrument to be used for its own purposes—a sort of mental and moral police force to keep people in order—the officers themselves to be kept in order and dressed, governed, fed and maintained by an Act of Parliament and not able to lift so much as a little finger should the State forbid them to do so! This is a doctrine which needs some courage to utter it even now, but it is to be spoken, and must be spoken more and more loudly! Christ's Kingdom is not of this world! It borrows no power from the secular arm and would not accept it if it were offered. It is a rule of spirit over spirit, of mind over mind, of the Truth of God over the souls of men—and that man is a faithful witness for Christ who can unflinchingly bear this testimony even before the greatest and the proudest of the land! Our Savior did so when He said to Pilate, "My Kingdom is not of this world."

Another part of Christ's "good confession" was *a declaration of His life purpose*—"To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the Truth." There is many a man who is pursuing a calling which he would scarcely like to acknowledge. And there are others who think that their calling can be best pursued by stealthy, crafty, Jesuitical plans. But it was not so with the Savior. He boldly declared the purpose for which He had come into the world—why

should He conceal it? He who seeks to bear witness to the Truth of God should be true enough to declare what the objective of his witness is. And the Savior did so, before Pilate, and wherever He was! All His life He was a witness to the Truth—He was the truest man who ever lived! It is beautiful to notice the Truth of the Lord Jesus Christ even in small particulars. There is no rhetoric about our Savior's speech, because rhetoric is too often but a lie. He speaks as simply as a child. There is no attempt at any display of learning in our Savior's teaching. Because it is all solid Truth and Divine Revelation, there is no need that He should use the jargon of the schools, or call Himself a Rabbi or Doctor.

He spoke with authority and you can see how simply, how plainly, how heartily He did it. There was no particular garb to attract attention to the Savior, no priestly robes with which to dignify a kind of babyish authority. He was a Man among men, speaking what He knew in the language of the people which they could understand. There was no pomp, or ceremony, or show about His life and, especially, there was no sham or pretence. He was what He seemed to be, and He seemed to be just what He was! If you look upon any other man, you can see some attempt to hide his deficiencies, or to increase his influence by an appearance of greater strength than actually exists. In the Savior, you see Him altogether as He is. He wears His heart upon His sleeve. He speaks straight on and never turns aside to crooked ways. He never blushes or stammers—why should He? What has He to conceal? His teaching is delivered as from a mountaintop and men may stand and gaze—and, the longer they gaze, the better will they see what He wishes them to see! He has no curtain behind which there is something concealed—all is as open as the day. As a truthful man, He was a fit witness to bear testimony to the Truth of God. And what a breaker of idols, what a smasher of all shams He was! Pharisees and Sadducees, and Herodians got but short notice from Him. Nothing false could stand before Him. Even a scourge of small cords, when it was held in His hands, sufficed to sweep the buyers and sellers from the temple! And when He used the sledgehammer of denunciation, who could resist Him? His fan was in His hand and He thoroughly purged His floor. And this was His life purpose—that He might bear witness to the Truth of God—and He acknowledged that purpose even before Pontius Pilate.

Our Savior also witnessed "the good confession" *by His acknowledgement that there is such a thing as positive Truth*—"To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the Truth." There is need of just such witness as that today. "Now be very careful upon that point," says one. "Do you mean to say that there really is such a thing as the *Truth*"? By your leave, dear Sir, or without it, I will venture to assert that there is! "That reply is a very bigoted one because if there is a Doctrine that is the Truth, then that which is contrary to it is a lie." Precisely so, and by your leave, or without your leave, I say again that it is so and it must be so in the natural order of things. If this Doctrine is true, then that which contradicts it cannot be true! If God has spoken thus, that which is opposed to God and His Truth, is not from

Him and cannot stand on the same footing with that which is Divinely revealed. It takes a good deal of courage to say that, nowadays. If you go into society, you will get three cheers if you declare that you are an Agnostic—that you do not know anything—you are not sure of anything.

Others say that whatever a man believes, or does not believe, it really doesn't matter provided he is perfectly sincere. That is to say, if a man sincerely takes cyanide, it will not kill him! And if he sincerely goes without food, he will not starve. And if he sincerely refuses to breathe, he will do as well as those who do breathe, which is another lie. The statue of Christ was set up among the statues of Plato, Socrates and other notable men—and some thought it was an honor to Christ, but it was not. They would crown Christ, so they say, among the great ones of earth. Ah, but they cannot crown Him unless they "crown Him Lord of all." Our blessed Savior is honestly intolerant! He says, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but He that believes not shall be damned." Because He loves the souls of men, He will not bolster up the fiction of universal charity. And even before the Broad-church or No-church Pilate—He says that He has come to bear witness to the Truth. So there is the Truth, and that which is contrary to it is not Truth!

One other point in our Lord's "good confession" was *His separation of characters,* for He went on to say to Pilate—and I fear that most of us would have left out that sentence—"Everyone that is of the Truth hears My voice." Do you hear that declaration, Pilate? You are the Roman procurator—a very great man—and this poor Prisoner of yours, whose life is now at your mercy, tells you plainly that everyone that is of the Truth hears His voice. Then, Pilate, if you are of the Truth, you will have to sit at His feet and listen to His words, and learn of Him! I can well conceive what Pilate thought as he turned on his heels and contemptuously asked, "What is truth?" He had heard quite enough of such talk as that—he did not want any more of such close dealing. But therein lies the Glory of the Master, that He is not content with merely teaching Truth of God, but, in His good confession before Pontius Pilate, He presses it home even upon His judge! And He divides and separates between the precious and the vile. So must you and I do, dear Friends, if we are faithful followers of "the faithful Witness."

I dare not preach to this congregation as if you were all Christians, for you are not. I dare not deliver even one discourse under the delusion that all my hearers are saved, for, alas, they are not. This is the fault with multitudes of sermons—that they seem to carry the whole congregation to Heaven when possibly the major part of those present may be going down to Hell! That will not do. Remember what the Lord said to the Prophet Jeremiah, "If you take forth the precious from the vile, you shall be as My mouth." But if there is no winnowing fan in our hand to separate the chaff from the wheat, we are not like Christ, nor has Christ sent us on His service. In this "good confession" of His, we see how clearly and solemnly—gently, I admit, but still most decidedly—He made a division and separation of characters and gave a test by which Pilate could judge himself if he had been willing to do so.

II. The time will not suffice for me to go fully into all the teaching of my text, but I want to ask, in the second place—TO WHAT TRUTH DID OUR LORD WITNESS?

He said to Pilate that He was born—that proves His Humanity. He also said that He came into the world and that, I think, shows His Divinity as well as His Humanity. He came on purpose to bear witness to the Truth and I believe that the life of Christ witnessed not only to all Doctrinal Truth, but also to everything that is true, especially to true-heartedness, simplicity, sincerity. His life was a testimony against all guile, craftiness, cunning, concealment—in that sense it was as testimony to the Truth of God.

But with regard to special Truths to which He testified, did not His very coming here and being born, bear witness to *the grand Truth that God is love and that God loves men?* The Infinite takes upon Himself the nature and form of an Infant. The Illimitable is encased within a human body. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." We never can have a clearer testimony to the thoughtful care of God to men than we find in the coming of the Son of God as the Son of Man, except this—that, being found in fashion as a Man, He proved the love of God to sinners by the tears which He wept over the guilty and perishing and, best of all, by the blood which He shed for many for the remission of sins. As you see Christ dying on the accursed tree, say, "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us." He wills not the death of any, but longs that they should turn unto Him and live. The Savior's death for the guilty proves that "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." All His life the Savior was bearing witness to this grand Truth of God. Oh, that we may, none of us, dare to doubt it after He has backed it up by a life of self-abnegation and a death of sublime self-sacrifice!

He also bore witness, all His life, to *the spirituality of true religion.* He was always teaching Truth like this—"God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." He wore no phylactery, He assumed no airs of an ascetic. Even in His eating and drinking, He was like other men, insomuch that they said of Him that He was "a man gluttonous, and a wine bibber"—a vile charge, without an atom of truth in it! He taught that true religion consisted not in long prayers, but in entering into the closet and sincerely seeking the Father's face. It was not fasting thrice in the week, but it was truly praying, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." It was not giving alms in public and sounding a trumpet before him, and in secret devouring widows houses, but it consisted in love to God and love to man. It was the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart that Jesus preached—and He grandly witnessed against all the idolatrous and false forms of faith which, even down to this day, prostitute His blessed name!

In that sad hour our Lord Jesus was also a wonderful Witness to *the enmity of men to God.* He in whom there was no roughness or sternness, as there was in John the Baptist, came as the Messenger of love and mercy, for God sent Him not into the world to condemn the world, but

that the world, through Him, might be saved. He was the great Householder's Son, who was, "last of all" sent to receive the fruits of the vineyard, but the husbandmen said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance." The men of this world were never so base—they never displayed so much of their utter malice against God as when they took His Son and put Him to a cruel and ignominious death. This was the culmination of human guilt. All the adulteries, murders, unnatural vices and accursed blasphemies that had ever defiled the race of mankind have not so certainly proved it to be a desperately fallen thing as the murder of the Son of God, the Savior and the Friend of men! This appalling crime of Deicide stands out without a parallel in the history of the universe! There was no guilt in the Lord Jesus for which He deserved to die, yet, with wicked hands, they crucified and slew Him.

Our Savior was also always a Witness to *the great necessity of a new creation*, a change of heart, a regeneration. To Nicodemus He said, "You must be born-again." And to His disciples, "Except you are converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." He also preached the absolute necessity of faith in Himself and did not mince the matter in the least—"He that believes on the Son has everlasting life: and He that believes not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." To all this Jesus steadfastly witnessed in life and in death.

And to this Truth of God He also bore witness, *that salvation was to be found only in Himself*. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." "If any man thirsts, let Him come unto Me and drink." His teaching was always concerning Himself—"I am the way, the truth, and the life." "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He never hesitated to bear witness to the Truth of God so it was but natural that part of His "good confession" before Pilate should be this plain declaration, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the Truth."

III. Now I will try briefly to answer a third question—WHAT HAD THIS "GOOD CONFESSION" OF JESUS TO DO WITH PILATE?

I answer, first, that *it gave Pilate a reason for acting justly*. It ought to have helped to stir any little conscience that Pilate still had and, also, to allay the jealousy which he may have felt because of the Savior's royal claims. Our Lord spoke thus out of kindness to Pilate.

I think, however, that the main reason for our Savior's testimony was that *it gave Pilate an opportunity to learn the Truth.* Had his soul been like the good soil—had he really ever been the subject of Sovereign Grace, he would have said to Jesus, "I will gladly hear what this Truth is if you will tell me." He would, at least, have spared time enough to hear from his strange Prisoner what this Truth was. There must have been an unusual force about our Savior's few short sentences that ought to have convinced even Pontius Pilate of His evident sincerity. Those eyes, so gentle, yet so piercing, must have looked Pilate through and through. The tone

of His voice must have been very different from anything to which Pilate had been accustomed in the courts of Nero. Jesus spoke as no other man had ever spoken in Pilate's Hall before—and had there been anything hopeful about him, he would have said, "Good Master, tell me what that Truth is to which You bear witness."

And I say to you who are not converted, if you desire to be right with God, you will want to know what this Truth is for which the Lord Jesus lived and died. And when you do know it, if there is the right principle in your heart, then you will believe it and, believing it, you will assuredly be saved! There is such life-giving Truth in the Savior's teaching that you have but to hear it, and turn it over in your mind, and weigh it with the best judgment that you have, to be convinced that it is most certainly true! So I put it to you—if it is true, will you not believe it? Believing it, will you not yield to it and let it reign over your whole being, for it is the Truth of God from the mouth of the King? It is the scepter in the hand of King Jesus with which He rules over the hearts of all His loyal subjects!

IV. Now, to finish, I have to ask—WHAT HAS THIS TO DO WITH OURSELVES?

It has something to do with everyone of us, whether we acknowledge Christ or not. First, it suggests to our hearts this question—*Are we of the Truth?* For, if we are of the Truth, we shall hear Christ's voice! It is the voice of the King eternal, immortal, invisible! He is the King of Truth and He rules over truthful minds. Coming to be the Chief Witness to all Truth, He really occupies the throne of Truth. Now, dear Friends, are we of the Truth? For, if we are not, we shall not accept Christ. But if we are, we shall be glad to have Him as our King. I ask any man or woman here who has up to now refused Christ, whether he is not conscious of something missing from his life? Are you not sometimes half-inclined to believe in Jesus? Do you not have to do violence to your conscience by what you call, reason, but by what I venture to say is a most unreasonable travesty of all good reasoning? If you would but let that reason of yours go its own way and follow the track of the Truth of God, I believe that, before long, by God's Grace, you would be sitting at the Savior's feet and learning of Him!

The next thing that this testimony of Christ has to do with us is this. If, on our behalf, He witnessed "the good confession" for the Truth of God before Pontius Pilate, then it behooves you and me, not only to believe, but *to bear witness to the Truth*. Brothers and Sisters in Jesus, this looks to me to be but a small thing for us to do. If the Son of God has come into this world on our behalf and has not been ashamed to call us brethren, and to espouse our cause even at the cost of His life, I say that it looks to me to be but a small thing that He should ask of us that, if with our heart we believe in Him, we should with our mouth make confession of Him—that, if we believe in Him, we should also be baptized in His name, for it is His will that we should make an open confession before men if we really are His disciples.

There are new fashions in theology and new gods lately come up, and even new Christs and all manner of nonsense and novelty. But I am a

follower of the old Christ who is the same yesterday, today and forever—and I glory in being a fool for Christ's sake if it is a foolish thing to follow the Man of Nazareth, the Christ of Calvary who died as the Substitute for all who believe in Him—that by the shedding of His precious blood He might reconcile them unto God forever!

I appeal to some who I believe really do love my Lord and Master, but who are, like Saul of old, hiding away out of sight. Are you never going forth to fight for your King? Will you still continue in the ways of the world and yet profess to be a lover of the Lord? Cowards that you are, come out boldly for Jesus! If you are on Christ's side, acknowledge it. There never was a cause that better deserved to be openly confessed than His! If Christ is God, follow Him! But if Satan is God, serve him. If the world is worth your love, give your love to the world and say so—do not come sneaking in among Christians as if you belonged to them! But if the Lord Jesus Christ is worthy of your love, give it to Him and say that you have done so. Come to the front, unite with His people, share the scorn that falls upon them and whenever any man wishes to set Christ in the pillory, say to Him, "Put me there, too, for I am one with Him and have taken up His cause." When He comes—and He soon will come in all the Glory of His Father and of His holy angels, he who has denied Him before men, He will deny before the assembled universe! But he who has confessed Him before men, him will He confess in the Presence of His Father and of His holy angels. May that be my lot, and yours, dear Friends, without a single exception, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 18:28-40; PSALM 2.

John 18:28. *Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas unto the Hall of Judgment:* That is to say, Pilate's Hall. Pilate, at that time, was probably residing in one of the old and sumptuous palaces of Herod, there holding His court during the time of the Passover.

28. *And it was early.* They were very eager to prove their enmity to Christ. They had spent the night and the earliest moments of the dawn in examining their illustrious Prisoner, condemning Him, abusing Him and now they were off to Pilate.

28. *And they themselves went not into the Judgment Hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the Passover.* What could defile such wretches as these? Yet they were afraid of ceremonial defilement, though neither afraid nor ashamed to saturate their hands in the blood of Jesus!

29. *Pilate then went out unto them.* He loathed and detested them, yet, for his own evil purposes, he would yield to their wishes and whims.

29, 30. *And said, What accusation bring you against this Man? They answered and said unto him, If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up unto you.* As much as to say, "You may take that for granted. We would not have brought Him if He had not done wrong. You need not look into the matter, we have already heard the evidence,

and convicted Him, and so saved you all the trouble of trying Him. We only bring Him here for you to condemn Him."

31. *Then said Pilate unto them, You take Him, and judge Him according to your law.* "That is your way of doing such things, but it is not a method into which we shall fall. Our law does not condemn a man before it hears the evidence against him. I am not going to be your tool, to put this Man to death without hearing what is laid to His charge, and the proofs of His guilt. If you want that done, you must do it yourselves."

31. *The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death.* "You Romans have taken from us the power of life and death, and we want Him put to death." There was a clear confession that nothing short of Christ's death would satisfy them.

32. *That the sayings of Jesus might be fulfilled, which He spoke, signifying what death He should die.* Crucifixion was a Roman, not a Jewish method of capital punishment, so God overruled the wanton wickedness of the worst of men for the accomplishment of His own eternal purposes, without, however, diminishing their responsibility and guilt in the least degree. It was "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" that Christ was put to death, yet it was "with wicked hands" that they took Him and crucified Him.

33. *Then Pilate entered into the Judgment Hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto Him, Are you the King of the Jews?* He did not look much like it. There was little enough about His appearance or His apparel to suggest the idea of royalty.

34, 35. *Jesus answered Him, Say you this thing of yourself, or did others tell it you of Me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew?* I can imagine him throwing all the scorn and contempt possible into the question. It was characteristic of the Romans, as we learn from the works of their great writers, that they utterly despised and detested the Jews.

35-37. *Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You unto me: what have You done? Jesus answered, My Kingdom is not of this world: if My Kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My Kingdom not from here. Pilate therefore said unto Him, Are you a king, then? Jesus answered, You say that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I unto the world, that I should bear witness unto the Truth. Everyone that is of the Truth hears My voice.* We might have expected that He would have said, "I came into the world that I might be a king." But He explains that, as a Witness to the Truth, He *was* a King.

38. *Pilate said unto Him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and said unto them, I find in Him no fault at all.* He did not want an answer. He merely thought it such an unnecessary piece of trifling to talk about truth. He had so slight an idea of what the word might mean, that when he had said, "What is truth?" "he went out again unto the Jews, and said unto them, I find in Him no fault at all." That was the truth about *the* Truth, from the lips of a man who cared nothing about the Truth of God, yet who was compelled to bear this testimony, "I find in Him no fault at all."

39. *But we have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the Passover: will you therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?* Now Pilate may have thought if Christ were their King they would certainly prefer Him to a thief and a robber, so he was putting before himself an opportunity of escaping from judging Christ—and before them a test as to whether there really was in them any liking for the Christ, or any possibility of His becoming their King.

40. *Then cried they all again, saying, Not this Man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.*

Psalm 2:1, 2. *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.* This raging company of the Jews was but a example of the universal opposition which there is to the reign of Christ, for it is not alone in Israel, but among the heathen, and among all people, that there is this opposition to the Christ of God!

3. *Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.* The bands of Jehovah and the bands of the Christ, His Anointed.

4, 5. *He that sits in the Heaven shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure.* His word, it seems, vexes them. There is no need of sword or javelin. The weapons of God's warfare are His words.

6-12. *Yet have I set My king upon My holy hill of Zion. 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. You shall break them with a rod of iron: You shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. 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, 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.*

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

THE REDEEMER DESCRIBED BY HIMSELF
NO. 2827

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 19, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 1, 1877.

"Why, when I came, was there no man? Why, when I called, was there none to answer? Is My hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver? Behold, at My rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stink because there is no water, and die for thirst. I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering. The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakens Me morning by morning, he wakens My ears to hear as the learned. The Lord GOD has opened My ears, and I was not rebellious, nor did I turn away. I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting."
Isaiah 50:2-6.

WE spent this morning at the foot of the Cross. [Sermon #1362, Volume 23—MOURNING FOR CHRIST—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] I hope that some of us, at least, were helped by the Spirit of Grace and of Supplication to look unto Him whom we have pierced by our sins, and to "mourn for Him, as one mourns for his only son." I thought that as we then found it so good to be there, we would go there, again, the more especially as we are afterwards to gather around the Communion Table where we shall again be reminded of the sacrificial death which the sacred Supper so clearly symbolizes. Let us come, then, under the guidance of God's Holy Spirit, very near to our Lord Jesus Christ. I pray that the Spirit of Christ may aid our meditations while I try, once more, to speak about His glorious and matchless Person, and the wondrous condescension which made Him undertake such gracious offices on our behalf and bear for us such awful and shameful griefs.

I shall need no further preface to my discourse except to say that in my opinion these verses run on without any break, so that you are not to separate them and ascribe one to the Prophet, another to the Messiah, and another to Jehovah, Himself, but you must take the whole as the utterance of one Divine Person. That Jehovah-Jesus is the One who is speaking here is very clear from the last verse of the previous chapter—"I the Lord" ("I, Jehovah," it is,) "am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob." It is Jehovah, as the Savior and Redeemer of His people, who is here manifesting Himself to us—and we must take the whole chapter as being uttered by Him.

I. So, then, to begin with, let us BEHOLD THE MESSIAH AS GOD—"I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering."

I ask you again to link this 3rd verse with the 6th –"I clothe the heavens with blackness and I make sackcloth their covering...I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting." He, then, who suffered thus and whom we regard as redeeming us by His death, and as saving us by His life, is no less than the Almighty God who clothes the heavens with blackness, at whose rebuke the sea is dried up and the rivers become a wilderness!

I think the first reference in these words is to the miracles which were worked by the plagues in Egypt. It was Jehovah-Jesus who was then plaguing His adversaries. It was He who stood by the border of the Red Sea and dried it up. In a later chapter Isaiah says that "the Angel of His Presence saved them." And who is that great "Angel of His Presence" but the Angel of the Covenant in whom we delight, even Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior? It was He who struck the rivers of Egypt till they began to stink and the fish died from thirst. It was He who called for an unusual darkness—even darkness which might be felt—and which lasted three days and nights—a supernatural darkness such as had never before been known. Think of the greatness of that God who can darken the great orb of day! The strongest eyes of man cannot bear to gaze upon the sun, for fear of producing blindness, yet Jehovah-Jesus does not only look the sun in the face, but He lifts His hand and shuts the light of the sun from off the face of the earth! And He bids the sun—"which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoices as a strong man to run a race"—to take off his bridal attire and to put on the garments of mourning, for thus said the Lord, "I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering." This mighty miracle, which was worked of old, was worked by that same Jesus who, in the days of His flesh, was despised and rejected of men! Learn this lesson and adore the Lord who is so great in power and as gracious as He is great.

But we must not restrict the text to that which happened in the land of Egypt, for it has a far wider reference than that. All the great wonders of Nature are to be ascribed to Him upon whom we build all our hopes for time and for eternity. There are channels of great rivers to be found that are now perfectly dry. Travelers tell us of vast lakes and riverbeds that have become mere pans of salt. How came they to be dried up? "By the action of the laws of nature," some people say. But laws have no power to act by themselves—they need force at the back of them to make them operate. And whose force is that? It is the energy of God—and that same energy dwells in the adorable Person of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. When the storm clouds come hurrying up, driven by the winds, and the crash of Heaven's dread artillery is heard, and the dashes of forked lightning follow each other in rapid succession, we tremble at the power of the Lord who thus makes the earth to quiver before Him. But who is He that is thus driving in His conquering car? It is Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior! All the elements of Nature are under His control

and He rules all things according to the good pleasure of His own will. He sits at the right hand of God, even the Father, being Himself very God of very God!

The last miracle recorded here, namely that of covering the heavens with sackcloth, was performed by our Lord even when He was in His death agony. We read that at high noon the sun was veiled and there was darkness over all the land for three black hours. Wonder of wonders! He who hung bleeding there had worked that mighty marvel! The sun had looked upon Him hanging on the Cross and, as if in horror, had covered its face and traveled on in tenfold night. The tears of Jesus quenched the light of the sun! Had He been wrathful, He might have put out its light forever, but His love not only restored that light, but it has given to us a light a thousand times more precious, even the Light of God—the light of everlasting life and joy!

I cannot preach worthily upon so sublime a doctrine as this, so it is no use for me to attempt to do so. I always feel, when I begin to speak of the Deity of our blessed Lord and Master, as if my heart were too full for me to give utterance to my deepest feelings and convictions. My heart is indeed inditing a good matter when I am speaking thus concerning the King, but I cannot say that my tongue is as the pen of a ready writer when it has so vast a theme to dwell upon. What I want to bring before your minds most clearly is the blessed Truth of God that you are not depending for your salvation upon a mere man. He is Man—certainly Man—Man of the substance of His mother. But He is just as truly Divine. In trusting Him, you are resting your souls upon One who is Infinite and Almighty. Nothing can be too difficult for Him to do. It is He who asks these questions in the second verse—"Is My hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver?" You may depend upon it that you are absolutely safe in His hands! What you commit to Him, He will securely keep, rest assured of that. Even when you draw nearest to Him in the familiar union which He graciously permits to those whom He loves, never think of Him as being less than the Eternal God. So worship Him, trust Him and rejoice in Him!

II. Now let us turn to the next verse of our text and BEHOLD THE MESSIAH AS THE INSTRUCTED TEACHER—"The Lord God has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakens Me morning by morning, He wakens My ears to hear as the learned."

Our Lord veiled His Godhead in the robe of Manhood and He came and dwelt here, among men, that He might proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that were bound. He came in fact as it was foretold concerning Him, that He might save His people from their sins. But before He began to teach, it was necessary that, as Man, He should be prepared for His work. I call your special attention to the condescension of our Lord in coming here on purpose to care for the weak—to speak consoling and sustaining words to them and also to the fact that before He performed that service, He learned the sacred art from His Father. It seems, according to this verse, that His chief work was to

speak words in season to the weary ones. How sweetly He has learned that blessed lesson and how graciously He has turned it to practical account! Have not many of you found His words to be exceedingly seasonable to you when you have been weary? When you have been most depressed, have not the consolations of Christ been more precious to you than at any other time? Have you not, often, in seasons of sorrow, wiped away your tears at the sound of His cheering voice? As for you who have beat upon your breasts in deep contrition of heart because of the burden of your sin, has not Jesus removed your load from you when you have heard Him speak? We do well to treasure up every sentence that He has uttered, for there is not ever a word that has fallen from His dear lips, by way of promise and encouragement, but exactly suits our experience at some time or other! Whatever our distress or difficulty may be, He knows how to speak a word in season to everyone who is weary. To us He says, as He said to His disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me." He knows, even to perfection, the blessed art of consoling the sad and sorrowful.

The most condescending part of this Truth of God is that He received from His Father the power to deliver such words of consolation. He says, "The Lord God has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." He became a disciple, sitting at His Father's feet. For 30 years, He was learning much in Joseph's carpenter's shop. Little do we know how much He learned there, but this much we do know, for Luke records the fact, "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." And afterwards, when He entered upon His public work among men, He spoke with the tongue of the learned, saying to His disciples, "All things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." All through His time of teaching, He was still listening and learning. Notice the words in the 4th verse—"He wakens Me morning by morning, He wakens My ears to hear as the learned."

The Lord Jesus was often up early in the morning—even when He had not been all night in prayer—that seemed to be the special season in which He communed with His Father. He first went and enjoyed most intimate fellowship with the Lord, refreshing Himself by talking of heavenly things and receiving new strength for service. And then, with the dew of Heaven fresh upon Him, He came forth and taught the people. They, very likely, were still sound asleep, but He was awake early, receiving renewed Inspiration in prayer and fellowship. And then He came forth, fragrant with the savor of His union with His Father and the sweet odor of His consecration was shed abroad among the sons of men through the blessed Truths of God that flowed from His lips! I ask you again to think of this wonderful condescension, that He who clothes the heavens with blackness and makes sackcloth their covering, should, for our sake, stoop to learn in His Father's school. "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience." And though He was "over all, God blessed forever," yet did He increase in wisdom and stature, as a Boy and as a Man, and He con-

descended to be a Learner that He might speak as the learned and know how to utter words that would be in season to us when we are weary.

III. Now I want you to go down a step lower, to the next verse, in which we BEHOLD JESUS CHRIST AS THE SERVANT OF THE LORD—"The Lord God has opened My ears, and I was not rebellious, nor did I turn away." He stood upon earth, not like a prince but as the *Servant* of God! He was made to be under the Law and in all things to be subservient to the Father's will.

Notice that first of all, He speaks of Himself as being *prepared by Grace,* for He says, "The Lord God has opened My ears," as if there had been a work worked upon Him to fit and prepare Him for His service. Yes, and so it was—and the same Spirit which rested upon Christ must also open our ears. It often amazes me that our Lord should have been willing to be baptized in Jordan even though that Baptism was attended by the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Him, for, albeit that He was truly Human, we know that He was also just as truly Divine. Being found in fashion as a Man, He received of God the Holy Spirit the same anointing which is now bestowed upon His people. God forbid that our tongue should ever speak a word concerning Him that should confound His Deity and His Humanity, but, still, we do assert that He did need that the Spirit should rest upon Him, for, otherwise, the Spirit would not have come, for He never does anything unnecessarily. This is matchless condescension on His part—that He should, voluntarily, put Himself into such a condition of necessity for our sake!

Being thus prepared by Grace, He was *consecrated in due form* so that He could say of Himself, "The Lord God has opened My ears." Brothers and Sisters, there was never such an ear as Christ had! He heard the faint whispers of His Father's voice. He never neglected the will of God, nor needed to be reminded of it, or to be pressed and persuaded to do it. See how different it is with us. Our ears are dull of hearing, or, if the precept is plain to our apprehension, we often do not yield obedience to it. There are some professors who know their duty—they have been wakened to know it morning by morning, but, nevertheless, they pretend not to be aware as to what is required of them. The sound of God's voice has only reached their outward ear—it has never penetrated as far as the inward ear—their heart has not perceived its Divine force and power. But it was never so with our blessed Lord. Whatever His Father willed, He at once rejoiced to do. He could always say, "I always do the things that please Him."

That is the next point, for He not only heard His Father's voice, but *He was obedient to it in all things*. He says, "I was not rebellious." I cannot find anything in the life of Christ that even *looks* like rebellion. From the day when, as a Child, He said to His parents, "Know you not that I must be about My Father's business?" till the hour when, on the Cross, He cried, "It is finished!" He was always obedient to the will of God. "Being found in fashion as a Man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross." His obedience was absolutely perfect in all things. Think of this and remember that this is the same

Divine Being who clothes the heavens with blackness and makes sackcloth their covering when it so pleases Him!

In that obedience, *He was persevering through all trials*. He says that He did not turn away. Having commenced the work of saving men, He went through with it. He steadfastly set His face to go up to Jerusalem, though He knew that He was going to His death. He asked not that He might be delivered from completing the work that He had undertaken. There was a time when, in the horror of His spirit, He cried, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me," yet He never flinched from any suffering that was necessary to our redemption. It was Human weakness that spoke for a moment, but His inmost soul was fully set upon the work of redeeming His people unto Himself. He set His face like a flint and He would not turn back. Even in His direst agonies, His thoughts were all for others. He saved others—Himself He could not save—for it was impossible for Him to draw back from the work which He had once undertaken.

You know all this, Beloved. I do but remind you of what has been familiar to you ever since you have believed in Jesus, but I pray you to think of it again and again, for it must have been a matter of the utmost amazement to the angels to see their Lord acting as a Servant—to see Him, without whom was not anything made that was made, here below, dressed in a peasant's garb and, as a humble, way-worn Son of Poverty, sitting on a well to talk to a poor sinful woman about the Water of Life. You know what lowly service He rendered, even to the washing of His disciples' feet. There was nothing too menial for Him to perform, yet, all the while, He was truly Divine. Oh, this is a Truth that needs to be meditated upon by the hour, together, and to be considered again and yet again! This is one of the things which angels desire to look into and we may try to look into it as long as we will, for, beyond and above all controversy, great is this mystery of godliness—*God* manifest in the flesh!

IV. The last step in this wondrous ladder is revealed to us in the next verse—"I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting." BEHOLD THE MESSIAH AS THE PEERLESS SUFFERER. And this Sufferer, on whom men spat, was the Eternal God!

Scripture sometimes speaks concerning Christ in such a way that fastidious critics seek to correct it. There is a hymn, by Dr. Watts, in which there is this verse—

"Well might the sun in darkness hide,
And shut his glories in,
When God, the mighty Maker, died
For man, the creature's sin."

It has been asked, "Did God really die?" No, for God cannot die, yet He who died was God. So, if there is confusion in your mind, it is the confusion of Holy Scripture, itself, for we read, "Feed the Church of GOD, which He has purchased *with His own blood*." He who purchased the Church with His own blood was, indeed, God. There are clever men who could draw up this particular Truth of God as clearly as Athanasius drew up his Creed, and finish it up with a curse as loud as his, yet those men,

nevertheless, might make a great blunder, while another, who might not speak exactly according to logic, would nevertheless hit the mark which they missed. How are we to speak upon such a wondrous theme as this? How *can* we speak upon it? It belongs not to mortal man to comprehend Deity—and if Deity complicates its own incomprehensibility by taking into alliance with Itself, our humanity, who is he that may not be made an offender for many and many a word, and yet, for all that, may not have offended against the Truth of God?

He who was a prisoner in Pilate's Hall, accused of sedition, was the King of kings—He who was taken from that Hall and covered with an old red cloak, and set up in a chair as on a mimic throne—He who had a reed put into His right hand, was none other than the Almighty Lord who said, "Light be," and the light flashed forth out of the darkness! And He upon whose sacred shoulders fell the cruel flagellation of the Roman scourge till the plowers made deep scarlet furrows down His blessed back—He was that God who created and who still sustains the heavens and the earth and all things that exist, or ever have existed! He was a suffering Man, but, at the same time, He was the Son of God—and He is the Son of God, today—and God, the Son, too! As you think of His pain, couple with it the thought that He bore all that agony voluntarily that we might be saved—"I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting."

Even if God becomes Incarnate, yet none can touch Him unless He permits them to do so, but Jesus said, "I lay down My life for the sheep…No man takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself." No man could have scarred that blessed back of His unless Christ had been willing, out of mighty love, to suffer thus on His people's behalf! None could have plucked His hair unless He had put Himself into the position to have it plucked, in order that He might redeem us from all our iniquities! Many a martyr has suffered much, but he could not avoid it, for he was bound and he was not able to strike his foes or to escape. But here sat One to be spit upon, who could, if He had willed it, have withered into nothingness all who stood about Him! With one glance of those eyes of His, had He but grown angry, as He well might have done, He could have burned up their very souls, for it was He who dried up the river and who clothed the heavens with blackness, who was thus despitefully used! Blessed be the majesty of that Omnipotence which controlled omnipotence—that mighty love which bound the Godhead so that it came not to the rescue of the Manhood of the suffering Savior!

In addition, however, to the pain, we are asked, in this verse, to particularly notice the contempt which the Savior endured. The plucking of His hair was a proof of the malicious contempt of His enemies, yet they went still further and spit in His face. Spitting was regarded by Orientals and, I suppose, by all of us, as the most contemptuous thing which one man could do to another, yet the vile soldiers gathered round Him and spat upon Him. It is almost too terrible to think of or to speak of, but what must it have been for Jesus to endure it? I think you can realize the utter uselessness of human speech in trying to describe this scene. If the

Divine thought of the text could leap out among you, like some mystic fire, *then* you might feel it, but as for our poor words, they cannot convey the sacred flame to you. But there stands the mysterious Truth. Enlarge upon it as we may, we can never fathom it, nor half fathom it—that He, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, here declares that He hid not His face from shame and spitting!

I must again point out to you the beautiful touch of voluntariness here—"I hid not My face." Our Savior did not turn away or seek to escape. If He had wished to do so, He could readily have done it, but He hid not His face from any of the contempt that the most malicious and wicked of men wished to heap upon Him. Even when He came to die and they brought Him a drink which was customarily given to criminals—a strong, stupefying draught which would have somewhat relieved the pain—when He had tasted it, He would not drink it. The vinegar He did taste, but that wine mingled with myrrh He would not drink because He did not come here to escape any pain or any shame that His people deserved to suffer. He must go through with it all to the bitter end and, therefore, He will not, in any sense or way, endeavor to escape. "I hid not My face from shame and spitting." Oh, splendor of voluntary condescension and of marvelous love on the part of Him before whom the nations are as a drop in the bucket—who takes up the isles as a very little thing and to whom time is but a span compared with His own eternity! The express image of His Father, yet He bows to shame and spitting! Blessed be His holy name forever and forever!

I will close when I have noticed three combinations which the verses of my text will make. I will but mention them and ask you to meditate upon them at your leisure.

First of all, put the first and the last together, as I have already done—"Behold, at My rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stink because there is no water, and die for thirst. I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering...I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting." Those verses together show you the full ability of Christ to save. Here we have *the God and the Sufferer*. What a wondrous Christ He is—Divine and, therefore, able—Human and struck and suffering and, therefore, full of compassion! "It behooved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren." And see how like His brethren He is, yet He is God! The ladder that Jacob saw had its foot upon the earth and its top reached to Heaven. It would have been of no use if its foot had not been upon the earth, for what man on earth could have climbed it? It would have been of no use if, with its foot upon the earth, it had not reached to Heaven—there would not have been any connection, after all. Behold, then, in the Humanity of Christ, how the foot of this ladder rests upon the earth and see, in His Deity, how the top reaches to Heaven! Happy are the feet that tread the rungs of this celestial ladder—they shall climb into eternal rest! Glory, O Believers, in the Divine and Human Person of your Lord, and rest in Him in confidence and peace!

Now put the two middle verses together—"The Lord God has given Me the tongue of the learned," and so on. And then, "The Lord God has opened My ears, and I was not rebellious." Here you have *the Teacher and the Servant,* and the two together make up this Truth of God—that Christ teaches us, not only with words, but with His life. What a wonderful Teacher He is, who Himself learned the lessons which He would have us learn! Let us take His yoke upon us and learn of Him. Let us study His precepts, but also imitate His example. His track I see—I have not merely a map of the road, but His footsteps show me which way I am to go. Watch in all things that you follow Christ, for He still says to His redeemed ones, "Follow Me."

Now put the whole text together and think of Jesus Christ in all those various views which I have so feebly set before you and I think the result will be—at least, to God's people—that they will say, "This God shall be our God forever and ever! And it shall be our delight to do His bidding at all times." It is a high honor to serve God—and Christ is God. It is a great thing to be the servant of a wise teacher—and Christ has the tongue of the learned. It is a very sweet thing to walk in the steps of a perfect Exemplar—and Christ is just that. And, last and best of all, it is delightful to live for Him who suffered and died on our behalf. Those wounds of His have marked us as His own. That scourge, those bleeding shoulders, and that face so marred have won us altogether to Him and, henceforth, for us to live shall be Christ, that to die may be eternal gain! The Lord grant that it may be so, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 53.

This is one of the chapters that lie at the very heart of the Scriptures. It is the very Holy of Holies of Divine Writ. Let us, therefore, take off our shoes, for the place whereon we stand is especially holy ground.

This fifty-third of Isaiah is a Bible in miniature. It is the condensed essence of the Gospel. I thought that our Beloved Friend, Mr. Moody, answered with extreme wisdom a question that was put to him when he came to London some years ago. A number of ministers had come together to meet Mr. Moody and they began to discuss various points, and to ask what were the evangelist's views upon certain doctrines. At last, one Brother said, "Would Mr. Moody kindly give us his creed? Is it in print?" In a moment the good man replied, "Certainly. My creed is in print, it is the 53rd of Isaiah." It was a splendid reply. How could a man come closer to the very essentials of the faith than by saying, "My creed is in the 53rd of Isaiah"? I trust that many of you, dear Friends, cannot only say, "This is my creed," but also, "This is the foundation upon which I have built all my hopes for time and for eternity. This is the source of my sweetest consolation. This is the sun that makes my day and the star that gilds my night." In these 12 verses there is everything that we need to teach us the way of salvation. God, the infinitely-wise Teacher, has re-

vealed to us, within this short compass, all that is necessary to bring peace to troubled spirits.

First, the Prophets speak—

Isaiah 53:1. *Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?* This is a cause for sorrow upon sorrow—for the Prophets to have God's message to deliver and yet for men to reject it—for them to have to tell it, but to tell it in vain. Yet, dear Friends, this has been the lot of some of God's most faithful servants in all ages and we must not complain if it should be our lot, also. I should not have voluntarily chosen to be Jeremiah, the weeping Prophet, yet, I think not one of God's servants deserves greater honor than he does, for he continued to bravely deliver his Master's message even when none believed him and all rejected his testimony. Isaiah links himself with all the other Prophets who had been rejected and he says, "Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

2. *For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground.* This is why Christ was not received by those to whom He came—and why the testimony of the Prophets concerning Christ was rejected by those to whom it was delivered—because He was not revealed to them as a towering palm tree or widely-spreading cedar, but, like the humble yet fruitful vine, He was "as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground."

2. *He has no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.* To carnal eyes there was no apparent beauty in Christ—nothing of the aesthetic, as men call it, and nothing of the pompous, nothing outwardly attractive. He came here in the utmost simplicity. Remember the angel's message to the shepherds—"And this shall be a sign unto you; you shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." There was nothing of pomp or show about Him—"no form nor comeliness." He made no display of scholarship, no presence of deep philosophy, nothing that the carnal mind hunts after. But the all-glorious Deity, revealed in Human form, spoke simple but sublime Truth and, therefore, men rejected Him.

3. *He is despised and rejected of men.* This was written long before He came to earth—"He is despised and rejected of men" and, truly, though He is now in Heaven, I need not alter the tense of the verb. I do not say, "He *was* despised," though that would be true, for, alas, it is still true, "He is despised and rejected of men"!

3. *A Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief.* What an amazing expression that is! Our blessed Lord had made the acquaintance of grief. He knew it, understood it, was familiar with it—slept with it—rose with it—walked the livelong day with it and, therefore, my Brothers and Sisters, He knows your grief and He can meet it! He is such a master Comforter because He was such a mighty Sufferer.

3. *And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him.* Shame upon us that we, who have been redeemed by Him—we, who He has loved from eternity—we, who now delight in Him—"we hid, as it were, our faces from Him."

3. *He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.* Even we, to whom now He is all our salvation and all our desire—we, unto whom He is now most precious—"we esteemed Him not."

4. *Surely He has borne our griefs.* Can all of you say this? Can everyone of us unite in the reading of this sentence, "Surely, He has borne *our* griefs"? If you have truly learned that He bore your griefs, you may indeed bless His name, for it is the best news that ever reached your ears! Go and tell it to your fellow sufferers—"Surely He has borne our griefs."

4. *And carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.* They thought that God had smitten Him, and so He had, but they wrongly supposed that there was something of sin in Him that caused God to strike Him, whereas He was "holy, harmless, undefiled," and He was only stricken and smitten because He was bearing the sins of His people.

5. *But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.* Milton, Shakespeare, Cowper and the whole of the poets that were ever or are, all put together, could not write four sentences like those in this verse! There is more meaning, more deep philosophy, more music, more to charm and satisfy the human heart in those four sentences, than in the sweetest of merely human language. Let me read them again—and as I do so, let everyone of us take each line to himself—"But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed."

6, 7. *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. He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth.* These words have been the means of the conversion of multitudes. You recollect in the Acts of the Apostles, what that rich Ethiopian said to Philip when he read these words—"I pray you, of whom speaks the Prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?" If we read this chapter over and over again, and so read it as to find Christ, it will, indeed, be a blessed thing for us!

8, 9. *He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare His generation? For He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of My people was He stricken. And He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death; because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth.* All that He suffered was not because He was guilty, but because He was innocent! The only crime which I have ever heard rightly laid to His charge is that which the poet sweetly describes as "found guilty of excess of love." It was indeed so. He loved us beyond all measure and because of that love He died for us.

10. *Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief.* The Lord was at the back of it all. Not Pilate, nor Herod, nor Judas, nor Jew, nor Roman, but Jehovah bruised Him.

10. *When You shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed. He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.* Here the strain changes altogether. From the depths of woe, we begin to rise with hopes of a glad result of all the suffering and sorrow and shame. Glory be to the name of Christ, He has a mighty right hand into which God has placed that work which is according to His own good pleasure—even the work of saving guilty men—and that work, in His prolonged days, until the end of time, shall prosper in the hand of the Christ of God!

11. *He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.* Christ did not die at haphazard, as some seem to think. A sure and glorious result must come of "the travail of His soul." Such precious blood as His could not fall to the ground at a chance. Whatever the design of His cross was, it shall be accomplished. I could imagine failures in Creation, if so it pleased God, but never in redemption!

11. *By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities.* That is the top and bottom of it all—"He shall bear their iniquities." The red line of Substitution runs through the whole chapter.

12. *Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He has poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—282, 269.

—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.

STARTLING!
NO. 2828

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 26, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THE LORD'S-DAY EVENING, IN THE SUMMER OF 1861.

"And Hazael said, Why does my lord weep? And he answered, Because I know the evil that you will do unto the children of Israel...And Hazael said, But what, is your servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" 2 Kings 8:12, 13.

I SUPPOSE that none of us can doubt that Hazael acted with perfect freedom when he became the murderer of his master. Surely no one would dare to suggest that any constraint was put upon him. The glittering prospect of wearing the crown of Syria was before his eyes. Nothing stood between him and the kingdom but the life of his master. That master lies sick of a fever. A wet cloth is the usual remedy. He has but to select one that shall be thicker than usual and take care, in spreading it over his face, to place it so that the man is suffocated, and, lo, Hazael comes to the throne! What wonder is it that Hazael easily puts his master out of the way and then mounts the vacant seat? None of us will imagine for a moment that he was under constraint unless it was Satanic and yet, while he acted as a free agent, is it not quite clear that God foreknew what he would do and that it was perfectly certain that he would destroy his master? The Prophet speaks not as one who hazarded a conjecture. He foresaw the event with absolute certainty, yet did Hazael act with perfect freedom when he went and fulfilled the prophecy of Elisha.

I believe, my Brothers and Sisters, that it is quite as easy to see how God's predestination and man's responsibility are perfectly compatible, as it is to see how Divine foreknowledge and human free agency are consistent with one another. Does not the very fact of foreknowledge imply a certainty? Is not that which is foreknown certain? Is not the fact sure to be when God foreknows that it will be? How could it be foreknown conditionally? How could it be foretold conditionally? In this instance, there was no stipulation or contingency whatever. It was absolutely foretold that Hazael would be king of Syria. The Prophet knew the fact right well and he clearly descried the means—otherwise why should he look into Hazael's face and weep? God foreknew the mischief that he would do when he came to the throne, yet that foreknowledge did not in the least degree interfere with his free agency.

Nor is this an isolated and exceptional case. The facts most surely believed among us, like the Doctrines most clearly revealed to us, point all of them to the same inference. The predestination of God does not de-

stroy the free agency of man, or lighten the responsibility of the sinner. It is true, in the matter of salvation, when God comes to save, his Free Grace prevails over our free agency and leads the will in glorious captivity to the obedience of faith. But in sinning, man is free—free in the widest sense of the term, never being compelled to do any evil deed, but being left to follow the turbulent passions of his own corrupt heart—and carry out the prevailing tendencies of his own depraved nature. In reference to this matter of predestination and free will, I have often heard men ask, "How do you make them agree?" I think there is another question just as difficult to solve, "How can you make them differ?" The two may be as easily made to concur as to clash. It seems to me a problem which cannot be stated, and a subject that needs no solution. It is but a difficulty which we surmise—and theoretical dilemmas are always hard to deal with and difficult to disentangle.

When we look at matters of fact, the mist that clouds our understanding vanishes. We see God predestinating and man premeditating—God knowing fully, yet man acting freely—God ordaining every circumstance, yet man maneuvering to compass his own projects. In short, we see man accurately, but unconsciously, fulfilling all which was written in the wisdom of God and that without any impetus of the Almighty upon his mind constraining or inciting him to do so. You will observe, in this chapter, three or four distinct instances in which both the foreknowledge and foreordination of God are distinctly proven and yet, at the same time, the free agency of the creature is conspicuously set forth. That point, however, I have merely adverted to by way of introduction. My subject, on this occasion, as more immediately suggested by the words before us, is the common and too often fatal ignorance of men as to the wickedness of their own hearts.

I. LET US EXPOSE AND EXPOUND THIS IGNORANCE.

Our ignorance of the depravity of our own hearts is a startling fact. Hazael did not believe that he was bad enough to do any of the things here anticipated. "Is your servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" He might have been conscious enough that his heart was not so pure but it might consent to do many an evil thing, yet crimes so flagrant as those the Prophet had foretold of him, he thought himself quite incapable of committing! He could not believe that such wanton cruelty lurked in his breast, or that such barbarity towards women and children could be perpetrated with his sanction. Not yet, perhaps, was the ambition that aspired to the throne of Syria, or the treachery that issued in the murder of his master, fully ripe. Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, the ignorance of Hazael is ours to a greater or lesser degree! In our natural state, we are oblivious of the depravity of our own hearts. How commonly we hear men deny that their hearts are depraved! They tell us that though man is a little injured by the Fall, he is still a noble creature! His high and glorious instincts make amends they would persuade us for his low and beggarly vices.

Such foolish conceits we impute to ignorance. Men account crimes revolting when they hear of their comrades being convicted of committing

them, but they do not know the innate plague of their own heart. They have not yet learned that their own heart is base and depraved. Hence they challenge the Doctrine when we state it—because they are unconscious of the fact. We do not expect a man to accept it as an axiom merely upon our testimony. He had need have some experience, himself, before he will be able to lay hold upon a Truth of God so humbling, so self-abasing as that of total depravity! The baseness of our hearts has barely dawned on our apprehension, though we have a faint gleam of suspicion as to our real condition. Conscience is sensitive enough to let us know that all is not quite right. We feel that we are not pure, that we are not completely perfect. We admit that we make some mistakes, though we set them down to weakness rather than willfulness. We apologize for our infirmities and rather excuse than accuse our own hearts. Most of us, however, I trust, have enough Light of God to discern that there was something willfully wrong with our hearts before the Spirit of Christ began to deal with us. We would frankly and freely confess that we were not all that we desired to be, that there was some radical evil that defied our capacity to search it out. Ah, but how pale was that gleam! It was mere starlight in the soul—not like the sunlight which has since shone in and shown us the blackness of our nature!

We were ignorant, then, of the fact that our nature was totally corrupt. We did not know that it was essentially tainted with iniquity. We could not have endorsed that saying of the Apostle, "The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be." We could hardly understand it, when we heard the Christian minister say that the old nature was positively irreclaimable and must be crucified with its affections and lusts—and that a new nature must be given to us. If we ever heard a preacher speak of the fountains of the great deep of our evil heart being broken up, we thought he exaggerated. "At least," we said, "surely this might be true of some notorious criminals, or it might be even alleged of some ill-bred people who had seen an evil example from their youth up, but we could not imagine that this was actually the case with ourselves."

Yes, but, my Brothers and Sisters, we were, to a great degree, cured of this ignorance when the Spirit of God brought us under conviction. Oh, what a view of ourselves He then gave to some of us! I think we could say, with Bunyan, that we thought the most loathsome toad in the world to be a better creature than ourselves! We have been led, when under conviction of sin, to sigh and wish we had been made a viper, or some reptile that men would tread upon and crush, rather than that we should have been such base, such vile, Hell-deserving sinners as we felt ourselves to be. No discourse, then, about human dignity could have pleased us—it would have been rubbing salt into our wounds to have told us that man was, by birth, a pure and noble creature! In vain might they have attempted to persuade us, then, that though we were a little awry, a diligent pursuit of some orthodox plan or prescription might easily restore us and lift us up from the position into which we had been cast by Adam and by our sin. No, we felt that Divine Grace must make us new—that

there must be a supernatural work worked in such beings as we were—or else, surely, we would never be fit to stand before the face of God and see Him with joy and greet Him with acceptance.

Thus, I say, Brothers and Sisters, that much of our ignorance was taken away, but, alas, how much remained! We did not know, even then, how depraved we were. When Sinai's lightning was flashing abroad and all our hearts seemed lit up with its dread fire, that lurid flame was not bright enough to show us all our baseness! While we stood trembling there, and the Law of God was thundering over our heads, we bowed to the very dust—but we did not cower, even then, as we ought to have done in penitent humiliation. We were rather awed than melted, for we had only just begun to decipher the black letters of that volume of our total depravity!

We knew more about our moral obliquity afterwards, when Jesus came to us and, by His sweet love, bade us be of good cheer, for our sins, which were many, were all forgiven. Oh, how we saw the baseness of sin as we had never seen it before, for we now saw it in the light of His Countenance! The love of His eyes flashed a brighter light into our hearts than all the lightning of Mount Paran. Horeb's burning steep never gave us such illuminations as did Calvary's hallowed summit. Calvary might be the lesser height—it may not have seemed to stand out with such majesty and awe—but it exerted greater power over us. In its tender flush of mellow light, our eyes could see more clearly than in all the fitful flashes that had scared us before. I think we saw, then, to as full an extent as it was possible for us to bear, how vile, how desperately evil was our nature! When we perceived how great must be the Sacrifice which, by its virtue, could atone for sin, how vast that price of our Redeemer's blood, which only could provide a ransom from the Fall—then we had lessons, once and for all—taught us, never to be forgotten! And yet, since then, I think we have learned more of the evil of our own hearts than we could at first apprehend. We said, then, "Surely, now I have come into the innermost chamber of iniquity." But often, since that day, has the Spirit said to us, "Son of man, I will show you greater abominations than these," and we have been led to see, in the light of God's continual mercies, His perpetual faithfulness, His unfailing love—we have been led to view, in that Light, our continued wanderings, our idolatries of heart, our murmurings, our pride and our lusts—and we have found ourselves to be worse than we thought we were!

I appeal to you, Christian men and women, if anyone had told you that you would have loved your Savior so little as you have done—if any Prophet had told you, in the hour of your conversion, that you would have served Christ as feebly as you have done—would you have believed it? I appeal to you from the dew of your youth, from that morning blush of your soul's unclouded joy—if an angel from Heaven had said to you, "You will doubt your God, you will murmur against His Providence, you will kick at the dispensations of His Grace"—would you not have replied, "Is your servant a dog, that he should do this evil thing?" Your experience, I am sure, has taught you that you were not aware, when you put

on your harness, how much of a dastard was the soldier who then did gird himself for the battle. But mark this, we, none of us, know, after all, much of the baseness of our hearts! Some of you may have had more drilling in it than others have had. You may have made proof of it by sad backsliding. Your lusts may have outwardly betrayed their inward vigor. You may have been discarded by the Holy Spirit for a little season that the Lord might show you that you were weak as other men, that He might prove to you the hollowness of all your self-confidence and wean you from all trust in your own integrity! But the most sorely exercised among you have not yet fully learned this lesson.

Only God knows the vileness of the human heart. There is a depth beneath, a hidden spring into which we cannot pry. In that lower depth, there is a still deeper abyss of positive corruption which we need not wish to fathom. God grant that we may know enough of this to humble us and keep us always low before Him! Yet hold, Lord, lest we should yield to despair and absolutely lie down to die under the black thought of our alienation from righteousness, our naturalization in sin and the deplorable tendency of our heart to rebel more and more against You, the faithful and true God! Show us not all our wretchedness! As for the most of us, who cannot talk of this experience, let us not think ourselves doctors of divinity—let us sit down at once on the lowest step of the Divine School. We have only begun to know ourselves in part, albeit we do know something of the Savior, blessed be His name! That something is exceedingly precious. Yet how much more there is for us to learn! We have hardly begun to sail on that unfathomable sea. We have not yet dived into its depths. We know not its marvelous lengths and breadths.

I have often been startled—and if any should say, jeeringly, "The preacher speaks by experience," they may—I have often been startled when I have found in my heart the *possibilities* of iniquity of which I thought I never could have been the subject, in reveries by day or in dreams of the night. All at once a blasphemy, foul as Hell, has started up in the very middle of offering a prayer so earnest that my heart never knew more fervor! I have been staggered at myself. When God has called us into the pulpit—we thought, at one time, we never could be proud if God so honored us—this has seemed to quicken our step in the black march of our depraved heart. Or, when a little cast down and troubled in spirit, we have wished to leave the world altogether, and have been like Jonah, trying to flee to Tarshish that we might not go to this great Nineveh at our Lord's bidding. Little did we reckon that there was such cowardice in our soul! We have thus found out another phase in our own nature.

Does any man imagine that his heart is not vile? If he is a professing Christian, I much suspect whether he ought not to renounce his profession, for, I think any enlightened man who sincerely looks to himself and whose experience leads him somewhat to look within will surely find, not mere foibles, but foulness that literally staggers him! I question the Christianity of that man who doubts whether there are, in his soul, the remains of such corruption as drown the ungodly in Hell, or whether,

though a quickened child of God, he has another law in his members, warring against the law of his mind. What? Has he no such battle within that the things he would do he often does not, while the things that he would not do he often does? Has he no need to be in constant prayer to God to deliver him from the evil in his heart that he may be more than a conqueror over it at last? I do assert, once more, and I think the experience of God's children bears me out, that when we shall be most advanced and when we come, at last, to sit down in God's Kingdom above, we shall find that we have not learned all that there is to be learned of the foulness of our nature and the desperateness of our soul's disease.

"The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores." "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" "Cleanse You me from secret faults." "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there are any wicked ways in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Perhaps, if we knew more of this terrible evil, it might imperil our reason. Hardly could it be possible for us to bear the full discovery and live. Among the wise concealments of God is that which hides from open view the depravity of our heart and the corruption of our nature.

II. But now I turn to THE PRACTICAL USE OF OUR SUBJECT, looking at it in two ways—*what it forbids and what it suggests.*

The depravity of our nature forbids, first of all, *a venturing or presuming to play and toy with temptation.* When a Christian asks, "May I go into such a place?"—should he parley thus with himself—"True, temptation is very strong there, but I shall not yield. It would be dangerous to another man, but it is safe to me. If I were younger, or less prudent and circumspect, I might be in jeopardy, but I have passed the days of youthful passion. I have learned by experience to be more expert, I think. Therefore I may venture to plunge and hope to swim where younger men have been carried away by the tide, and less stable ones have been drowned." All such talking as this comes of evil and promotes evil! Proud flesh vaunts its purity and becomes a prey to every vice. This is the conception of iniquity! Only let it be nourished and it will soon bring forth in hideous form every development of sin! He who carries gunpowder about him had better not stand where there are many sparks. He whose limbs are out of joint is in danger of falling every moment and he had better not trust himself to walk on the edge of a precipice. Let those who feel themselves to be of a peculiarly sensitive constitution not venture into a place where disease is rife. If I knew my lungs to be weak and liable to congestion, I should shrink from foul air and any vicious atmosphere. If you know that your heart has certain proclivities to sin, why go and tempt the devil to take advantage of you? Satan will surprise you often enough—why, then, should you borrow fuel from his forge for your own destruction? Why will you go forth to meet him instead of trying with all vigilance to elude his insidious attacks? You have quite enough temptation already!

It is an evil thing for God's people when they leave their proper quarters and visit the localities where sin abounds. Were you an angel, were you sure you could never fall, then you might securely pitch your tent in the pestilential swamp, or frequent the haunts of sensual attraction whose house is the way to Hell, going down to the chambers of death, without apprehension of harm. But you are so prone to evil, so susceptible of contagion, that I warn you not to trifle with it! Were you hard as adamant, your duty would still be to keep out of the way of temptation, to go as far as possible from the forbidden Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. But you are not as strong as adamant, you are a creature whose moral power is weak, whose bias to evil is extreme—I implore you, therefore, as you would honor your God and stand in His brightness—to not go where the temptation to sin is glaring and flatter yourself that you will come out guileless.

There are some of us who are such poor soldiers that I think if we had our choice, we would rather be where there was the least danger. It is right for some brave men, when duty calls, to go into the thickest of the battle, but every Christian is not meant to be in the front rank. There are some men who have to deal with great sins, who are to seek to pluck sinners as brands from the burning. There are those who, like the physician, must go into the midst of the plague, that they may try to save such as are struck with it. Some men's calling necessarily demands that they should be in the midst of sin, yet they have need to keep a special guard over themselves, lest, while they seek to pluck others from the fire, they be like Nebuchadnezzar's men, who, in going near the furnace, were themselves burned! Let them take heed, then, to themselves, who seek to take care for others. In some of those charitable missions in which you, my dear Brothers and Sisters in the Church are daily engaged, take care lest you yourselves, exposed to temptation, should so slip and slide that Satan may have to rejoice that, instead of smiting the lion, the lion has smitten you and you are lying at his feet. Oh, keep out of temptation's way, or invade it armed with the entire panoply of God! Not many of us are called to expose ourselves to it. Keep as far off as you can. You had need be watchful.

But, again, knowing how vile we are by nature, knowing, indeed, that we are bad enough for anything, let us take another caution. *Boast not, neither in any wise vaunt yourselves*. Presume not to say, "I shall never do this. I shall never do that." Never venture to ask, with Hazael, "Is your servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" My experience has furnished me with many proofs that the braggart in morality is not the man to be bound for. I would not like to stand security for his virtue. He professed to hate drunkenness. He was certain *he* could never be intoxicated and yet he has indulged the vicious taste when his companions have lured him on—and stained the character that he vainly bragged of. If not that particular sin, yet there has been some other even more terrible, perhaps, more fatal to the soul, which has struck that man down to the dust who has dared to vaunt his integrity. He has said, "My mountain stands firm. I shall never be moved!" And in that very point where he

thought his firmness lay, or in some other which was next-of-kin to it, he has proved his weakness. Lo, the mountain tottered to its base and was cast into the midst of the sea! There are no men who are in such danger as the men who think they are not in any danger! There are none so likely to sin as those who say they cannot sin!

I remember a story, told me by a dear Brother who is present with us now. A tradesman who held office in the Church, asked him for a loan of money. Though rather inconvenient, he was about to comply and would have done so had not some such inducement as this been offered, "You know you may safely advance this money to me, for I am incorruptible. I am not young, I am past temptation." Thereupon, my friend promptly declined, as he did not like the security. The result justified his shrewdness. At that very time, the borrower knew he was on the verge of bankruptcy and, before long, was actually a bankrupt—and yet he could pretend to say he was above temptation! Above all, avoid those men who think themselves immaculate and never fear a fall. If there is a ship on God's sea, the captain of which declares that nothing can ever sink her, stand clear! Get into the first leaky boat to escape from her, for she will surely founder. Give a ship the flag of humility and it is well—but they that spread out the red flag of pride and boast that they are staunch and trim, and shall never sink, will either strike upon a rock, or founder in the open sea! Pride is the mother of soul-ruin! Self-confidence is next door to self-destruction. "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

Boast not, though you are ever so strong. Boasting becomes not any mortal. Neither the stature nor the strength of Goliath could furnish a pretext for his arrogance. Goliath never seemed so little as when he said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field." Leave your boasting until the battle is done! Do not begin to glory till you have trod all your enemies beneath your feet. Wait till you have crossed the Jordan and have reached the shores of the promised land. Do not begin to say, "I am out of gunshot. I am beyond the reach of sin." "Oh," said one, "I have so grown in Grace that I cannot sin!" Brother, I would not have you think so. "The man after God's own heart" sinned foully. What if you, also, are after God's own heart, why should you say, "I cannot sin"? Think of Lot—just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked—into what sin he was betrayed. Are you as wise as Solomon? Yet Solomon was a thorough fool. May you not be, in your old age, a fool, too? Are you a Believer? So was Peter, and yet Peter denied his Master! May not you deny your Master, too? Let the fact that many of God's saints have fallen when they seemed to be the strongest—Moses the meek failed in his temper, Abraham faltered in his faith, patient Job waxed irritable, and so forth—let their example teach you to take heed to yourself, lest you also be tempted and be cast down.

And let this fact, that we do not know our own baseness, *teach us not to be harsh, or too severe, with those of God's people who have inadvertently fallen into sin.* Be severe with their sin—never excuse it. Let your

actions and your conduct prove that you hate the garment spotted with the flesh—that you abhor the transgression, cannot endure it, and must drive it away. Yet always distinguish between the transgressor and the transgression. Think not that his soul is lost because his feet have slipped! Imagine not that because he has gone astray, he cannot be restored! If there must be a church censure passed upon him, yet take care that you so act that he, in penitence of spirit, may joyously return! Be as John was to Peter. Shut not out your fallen Brothers, for the day may come when men will shut you out, and when you may need all the pity and all the help which others can give you. Distinguish, I say again, between the sin that you condemn and the sinner whom you must still love—the child of God over whom you must still weep.

Ah, Sirs, there may be some of you here who speak with bitter contempt and scorn of those who, notwithstanding their frailties, are better men than yourselves! God may have suffered some sin to attain a great predominance over them for a season. Perhaps, if all were known, you might be proved to be worse than they and, oh, were the Lord to take His bit from your mouth, and the bridle of His Divine Providence from your jaws, you might run to a still greater excesses of riot! Who makes you to differ? What have you that you have not received? Say in your soul, "By the Grace of God I am what I am," but stand not up with the self-righteousness of the Pharisee, and say, "God, I thank You that I am not as other men are."

Leaving now this point of caution, let us consider, by way of counsel, what positive suggestions may arise. If we are thus depraved and know not the full extent of our depravity, what then should we do? Surely, *we should daily mourn before God because of this great sinfulness*. We are full of sin, so let us constantly renew our grief. We have not repented of sin to the full extent unless we repent of the disposition to sin as well as the actual commission of sin. We should deplore before God, not only what we have done, but that depravity which made us do it. See how David repents. He does not merely mourn for sin, but he says, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." He makes it a part of his confession that iniquity was in his inward parts and that his soul was tainted from birth! So let it be with you—weep over your sinful nature as well as over the development of that nature. Weep not merely over the fountain, but over the deep spring from which the fountain gushes! Not merely over the coin of sin which has been minted into outer acts, but over that base bullion of iniquity which lies uncoined in your heart! Every day expose this, as well as the sins you have committed before God. Lay before God, not merely your crutches, but your lameness—not merely your ceremonial defilement, but the deep leprosy that is in your skin and in your bones. Yes, mourn over it, and beg Him, by His Grace, to cleanse you, that you may enter into His Kingdom!

And when you have done this, *take heed that you walk every day very near to God, seeking daily supplies of His Grace*. Brothers and Sisters, I charge you and specially do I charge myself—let us look up to God, let us hourly depend upon Him, feeling that yesterday's Grace is of no use

whatever for today, that the Grace which saved us seven years ago is not the Grace that can save us now, but we must have fresh supplies! There are many, I think, who sit down, and say, "We once knew Christ." That is not enough, Brothers and Sisters! We must know Christ each day. We must have fresh Grace each hour. It is not once to be partaker of the Divine Nature, but to be daily a partaker of it. Does the tree bear the fruit by the sap of seven years ago? Is it not the sap of this year which will produce the seed of this year's fruit? And must it not be so with you? Must you not have a daily influx of the Divine influences of the Holy Spirit? Must you not receive from Christ each hour that life without which you must droop and die?

O Brothers and Sisters, let no day pass by without commending yourselves to God! Let no hour be spent without resting under His wing! May our daily habit be to cry unto Him, "Hold You me up, and I shall be safe." My dear Hearers, there are some of you who think you are not vile. That is because you have never had your eyes opened to learn your depravity. Let me tell you this, that you are so depraved that unless you are born-again, you cannot even *see* the Kingdom of God. You may reform, you may go and seek to make yourselves better, but you cannot do it. Think of the old proverb, "The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." Yes, our nature is so base—it is so depraved and so vile—that there must be a radical change of our whole self. How, then, can you change your nature? Can you renew your own heart? God forbid that you should be so vainly infatuated as to imagine it possible! No arm but the eternal arm can make you what you should be. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" Can you make yourself a new creature in Christ? You cannot create a fly, or a grain of dust much less can you create within yourself a new heart!

But there is One who can. The Holy Spirit is able and Jesus Christ is willing to do so. Do you say, "Oh, that He would renew my heart tonight"? I think He has already begun the work—that *desire* of yours, if sincere, would prove it. Remember that what He bids you to do is to trust Him. If you have longing desires for Him, cast yourself down at His feet and say, "Lord Jesus, Your salvation is brought near to me. I trust in You to make known in me this strange, this God-like Grace. Work in me the new heart, the Divine life, the new nature! Save me, save me, Jesus! Put my feet in the narrow way and then guide me all the days of my pilgrimage and bring me to Yourself, that where you are, in Heaven, there I may be with You."

Sinner, He will do it! He will hear your cry and answer your petition, and you, in the heights of Heaven, shall sing of the mercy which received you when you were not worthy to be received, of the love which loved you when you were wholly unlovely, and of all the Grace which changed your nature and made you meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light! God grant that we may not, any of us, be as Hazael was—the perpetrators of crimes of which we never suspected ourselves capable—but rather, feeling that we are men and women of the same kith and

kin as the vilest sinners that ever trod this earth, may it be our grateful surprise and our happy lot to be justified freely by God's Grace through the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus! So shall we be numbered with His saints both now and throughout eternity! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 KINGS 19.

Verses 1, 2. *And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and also how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more, also, if I make not your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.* She was too fast in uttering her threat and it often happens that malice outwits and overleaps itself. If Jezebel meant to kill Elijah, she should not have given him notice that she intended to do it.

3. *And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-Sheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there.* He did not feel safe even in the adjoining kingdom, for he fled through Israel, and then went almost the whole length of Judah, right into the wilderness. Note that he "left his servant there," at Beer-Sheba. Even in his anxiety about himself, he had tender consideration for others and, besides, he wanted complete solitude.

4. *But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.* Having presented this passionate and unreasonable prayer, he laid himself down to sleep—the very best thing that he could do under the circumstances.

5-8. *And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baked on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink and laid down again. And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you. And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb, the mount of God.* When he was hungry before, ravens fed him, but now an angel ministers to his needs! God uses all sorts of messengers and means, so that His children may be provided for. This man's one meal lasted him through a fast of forty days and forty nights and, dear Friend, if God gives not bread to you, He can take away your hunger, so that you have no need to eat and drink.

9. *And he came there unto a cave, and lodged there.* There was something congenial about the rugged sides of Horeb, the mountain of God, making it a suitable place for a man of Elijah's spirit—the very gloom of the cave gave him some sort of miserable comfort.

9. *And, behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and He said unto him, What are you doing here, Elijah?* "Why have you run away?"

10-12. *And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of Hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, thrown down Your altars, and slain Your prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. And He said, Go forth, and stand upon the mountain before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind split the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small Voice.* A mystic whisper and God was there, as He often is in little things.

13, 14. *And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entrance of the cave. And, behold, there came a Voice unto him, and said, What are you doing here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous.* He stands to what he had said before and now repeats his assertion—

14, 15. *For the LORD God of Hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, thrown down Your altars, and slain Your prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. And the LORD said unto him. Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when you come, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria.* It must have been a great comfort to Elijah to have some more work to do. It often takes the mind off very pressing sorrow if one is sent on some new employment.

16, 17. *And, Jehu the son of Nimshi shall you anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shall you anoint to be Prophet in your place. And it shall come to pass, that him that escapes the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and him that escapes from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay.* God heard the prayer that Elijah had prayed against Israel, for it was really a prayer against the people who had forsaken the Lord their God. There are times when men, who are most tender of heart, feel as if they must take God's side against sinners. But the Lord also comforted Elijah with good news:—

18. *Yet I have left Me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which has not kissed him.*

—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.

LOWLY SERVICE
NO. 2829

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 3, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 12, 1886.

"This is the service of the families, the Gershonites, to serve, and for burdens: and they shall bear the curtains of the tabernacle, and the tabernacle of the congregation, its covering, and the covering of the badgers' skin that is above upon it, and the hanging for the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the hangings of the door, and the hanging for the door of the gate of the court, which is by the tabernacle and by the altar round about, and their cords, and all the instruments of their service, and all that is made for them: so shall they serve." Numbers 4:24-26.

THIS is the gist of the whole matter—"This is the service of the families of the Gershonites, to serve, and for burdens: and they shall bear . . . so shall they serve." The Gershonites were part of the tribe of Levi which God selected, instead of the first-born of all Israel, to serve Him in a very special manner. They were to act as the representatives and substitutes for all the first-born, who were set apart, as the Lord's in a very peculiar sense. The Levites were, therefore, to be regarded as the first-born—a name which is applied by the Apostle Paul to all the regenerate when he speaks of "the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven." Jesus Christ is the true First-Born and all Believers are predestinated to be conformed to the image of Him who is "the First-Born among many brethren."

The chapter we read tells us how the Levites were to be consecrated to their service. They were to be sprinkled with the water of separation and both their bodies and their clothes were to be washed with water. "Be you clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord," is an injunction that is still binding upon Believers. We need to have both the water and the blood applied to us to prepare us for our solemn life-service as the consecrated Levites of God. "You are God's clergy," says the Apostle, according to the original. All who believe in Jesus, all the twice-born, all who are washed in His precious blood, all who are set apart by the Holy Spirit, are God's clerics, dedicated to His service even as the Levites were of old.

Besides this, the Levites had all the hair of their bodies shaved off, as if to show us that in the day when we are consecrated to God, even our external life becomes changed. That which appertained to our old flesh is taken away and if there is to be, in the future, any beauty or ornament to our manliness, it must be a new growth, springing out of that body

which has been dedicated unto God—but all our old comeliness is turned to corruption and that wherein we once gloried is altogether removed.

Judge you, my Brothers and Sisters, how far you are true Levites unto God! This is what you should be and this is what you are, unless, indeed, you are reprobates.

It is worthy of note that these Levites, although they were all equally consecrated, had not all exactly the same work to perform. God is not the God of uniformity. There is a wondrous unity of plan and design in all that He does, but there is also an equally marvelous variety. He did not command all these sons of Levi to carry one particular vessel, or order them to bear one special curtain or board belonging to the tabernacle—He divided unto every man his own work—one had to do this and another had to do something else.

There are some of the Lord's servants whom He raises up to teach, preach, exhort and guide. These may, for the moment, be compared, in a certain fashion, to the sons of Aaron, though the type must not be pressed too far. But the Lord has also a large number of His own dear children who do not open their mouths to speak for Him in public and who could not fulfill the duties of leaders in His Church. Shall they be left without any service? They have but one talent—they have a shoulder which is strong enough to bear burdens of the Lord—though they have not much power in their head to think, or a fluent tongue with which to speak. Is there no office for them to fill? Shall all the body be a mouth? If so, what a vacuum there will be! Surely there must be, in a well-ordered body, eyes, feet, hands, shoulders, as well as the open mouth and the speaking tongue. So God has appointed to many of His servants a position and a work like that of the Gershonites—"They shall bear: so shall they serve." I must not, however, forget to remind you that all the servants of our King are burden-bearers! None of us may hope to go to Heaven unless we are willing to take His yoke upon us and to learn of Him. But there are some who are not called to speak or preach, but whose special function it is to patiently bear the burdens of life, the burdens of the sanctuary, the burdens of the Church of God and so to be accepted of Him as a living sacrifice in that particular way. I am now going to try to speak *of* such and *to* such burden-hearers.

I. My first remark is that MANY OF THE LORD'S OWN PEOPLE ARE SIMPLY BURDEN-BEARERS, like these Gershonites.

Let none of them be discouraged or dissatisfied because that is all they are, for the Lord still needs burden-bearers, even as, in the days of His flesh, He sent word to the owner of the ass on which He wished to ride through Jerusalem, "The Lord has need of him." If the tabernacle is to be moved through the wilderness, all the holy vessels and furniture must also be moved. There must be somebody to carry them—and happy and blessed is that man who willingly yields his back to hear the burdens of the House of the Lord and counts it an honor that he is allowed to do so!

Well now, among the burden-bearers of the Lord, *the burdens are very various*. There are some of His servants who are called to bear the bur-

den of a very laborious life. I am sorry for some of my Brothers and Sisters, when I get an opportunity to speak with them, because the hours of their toil are so long and the strain of their service appears to be bringing them to a state of extreme feebleness of body. And sometimes they also get to feel despondency of spirit by reason of the excessive weariness which their almost incessant toil entails. I know some beloved Brethren, to whom the Master would not say a single angry word if He even saw them asleep in the Tabernacle. I have often thought of what He said when His disciples slept, not when He was preaching, but when He was doing even more than that—when, in Gethsemane He was praying even unto a bloody sweat. He did say, "What, could you not watch with Me one hour?" Yet, in His amazing pity, He added, "The spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak." It is still so. It is a pity that our present-day society, adapting itself more and more to a killing pace, works many men far too much as a general rule and, upon some of them, the stress of labor comes so heavily as almost to amount to actual slavery.

Yet, my Brothers and Sisters, albeit we would sympathize with you to the great degree, if, in the order of Providence, you are called to bear that burden, you will find it to be the part of wisdom to accept it as a burden from the Lord. I know it may sometimes be looked upon, and justly so, as the oppression of men—and in that light it is crushing—but if you can see at the back of that oppression, the eternal purpose of God, it will greatly tend to lighten your heavy load, or it will strengthen you to bear it. The poor Christian slave, in the olden times, although He might long to be a free man, yet often found, in his little hut at night, no small comfort by saying, "If, in the Providence of God, I am a slave, and cannot escape. I will bear even this as being permitted by my Heavenly Father and seek to glorify God even as a slave." So, you see, there are some who have to bear the burden of labor. They might, perhaps, escape from it if they did wrong—but they dare not do wrong, they scorn to do it—and so their burden becomes a burden from the Lord.

How many others there are who have to bear the daily burden of pain! Oh, how many daughters of pain do I know, and sons of affliction—perhaps even from their birth the subjects of some grievous infirmity which has cast a shadow over their whole lives! There lies, at Dundee, at this present moment, a man who has been confined to his bed, I think it is now 56 years. I have his photograph at home and the friend who sent it to me wrote, "I send you the likeness of the happiest man in Dundee and one of the most useful, too, for he is a great soul-winner though he cannot raise himself from a constantly prostrate position." He talks so sweetly of Christ and of the upholding power of Divine Grace that he leads many to put their trust in Jesus Christ. All over this land there are bed-ridden men and women who are the saintliest among the saints! It is an atrocious lie that some have uttered when they have said that the sickness is a consequence of the sufferer's sin. I could not select, out of Heaven, choicer spirits than some whom I know who have not for 20 years left their bed—they have lived nearer to God than any of us—and have brought Him more glory than any of us!

Although we deeply sympathize with them, we might almost covet their suffering because God is so greatly glorified in them. All over the world there is a brave band of these burden-bearers. I think, sometimes, that they are like soldiers who are on night duty. The sentinels must not sleep, lest the enemy should attack the camp unawares. The altar must never lose the glow and heat of its holy fire and the lamp of the sanctuary must never be permitted to go out, so these sufferers, as they lie, night after night, watching the long and weary hours, keep the lamp of prayer brightly burning and the incense of intercession perpetually ascending to the Most High. And so the earth is never without the sweetening influence of saintly supplication. Their main business, like that of the Gershonites, is to serve God by bearing burdens.

Need I describe all the burdens that the saints on earth have to carry? There are some who bear the burden of poverty. A very large proportion of the excellent of the earth can be found among the poor of the earth—poor in spirit as well as poor in pocket and, "theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." It is their constant portion to struggle and to toil hard to provide things honest in the sight of all men, but it does seem, with some, as if they could never rise out of a condition of bitter, grinding poverty. Well, if it must be so, let them feel and say, "As it has happened thus unto us, we are like the families of the Gershonites whose service was to bear burdens."

Some children of God are called to bear the very heavy burden of reproach. They have done no wrong and yet they are the subject of the jest and jeers of the ungodly. They have been faithful to Christ and their own conscience, but they are misunderstood and misrepresented. Their little peculiarities, which are scarcely faults, are exaggerated into crimes. A word which fell from their lips, perhaps too hastily, is caught up and echoed and re-echoed against them a thousand times. Men make them offenders for a word, and eat them up, as David says, "as they eat bread." I have known godly wives suffer thus from ungodly husbands and, oftentimes, a dear girl who is brought to the Savior finds herself as a speckled bird in the family. All that can be said against Christians and all that can be said against hypocrites who are, unhappily, too often found in Christian Churches, will be contemptuously cast at her—and she has to bear it all, patiently enduring reproach for Christ's sake.

If this is God's will concerning us, we ought not to endeavor to avoid it, but say, "Well, it is so. If somebody must be struck for Christ's sake, here is my cheek ready for the striking. If there is a handful of mud that is meant for a Christian, let it fall upon me. If the saints of God are to be scoffed at and scorned, why should I be allowed to escape the insults?" There was a king of the Crusaders, who, when they wanted to crown him in Jerusalem, spurned the golden coronet which they set upon his brow, for he said, "Why should I wear a crown of gold where my Lord and Master wore one of thorns?" Happy will you be if He shall enable you to say, as you look up to Him—

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

If You remember me."

There are some who have to bear this burden, so they had better bear it without wincing, for this is the service of the families of the Gershonites—to serve by bearing burdens.

I believe that some of God's people have to bear the burdens of this wicked world. In the order of Providence, their lot is cast in the midst of the ungodly. Even in their own home they can scarcely eat a meal without hearing blasphemy. And if they go down the court or street in which they live, especially in the evening, they cannot help being vexed with the sight and sounds of sin. There are some of us who can be very glad and merry, for we have naturally great elasticity of spirit, yet we are bowed down, day after day, by the apostasy of the professing church of this present age, and by the way in which everything is followed except Christ! Every kind of false doctrine is popular nowadays, but the Gospel of Jesus Christ is derided as old-fashioned and out of date and I know not what. Sometimes, the very bread we eat seems bitter, and the air we breathe is contaminated because of the sin that is everywhere around us. Well, dear Friends, whenever you feel depressed and burdened on this account, so that you go like one who misses the light of the sun, say to yourself, "It must be so. This is what must happen to those who are of an earnest, burning spirit. They must be consumed with grief by reason of the iniquities of the times, for it is appointed unto the families of the Gershonites that they shall serve by bearing burdens—and this is *our* burden."

I might say much more upon this head, but I will not, for you all know that the burdens which God puts upon His children, or allows others to lay upon them are very many and very varied. But this is the comfort of it, *their burdens are all for the Lord*. If they are in a right state of heart, this burden-bearing is true service for the Lord. Remember how Peter wrote, "For what glory is it, if, when you are buffeted for your faults, you take it patiently? But if, when you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were you called." If the buffeting comes upon you for Christ's sake, you are, in some sense, made partakers of His sufferings and you shall also be partakers of His Glory. A true child of God lives wholly for God. He is not merely a Christian when he goes up to the place of worship and sings the praise of the Lord, but he seeks to live for God as soon as he opens his eyes in the morning and until he closes them again at night. It is for God that he eats and drinks and for God that he buys, and sells, and works, and gives, or saves, or does whatever it is right for him to do. The Levite of old had no business to do in the world but the business of God—and the true Christian is in the same condition for, though he keeps a shop, or plows the fields—he keeps shop for Jesus and plows the fields for Jesus. He is not his own master, but he is the servant of Another, even the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is his joy to labor faithfully as a steward and a servant on behalf of his Master!

I wish all Christians realized this Truth of God. We have far too many professors who make their religion into a kind of off-hand farm. They cultivate it a little during the odds and ends of their time, but their chief

business lies with the world. Brothers and Sisters, there is no good to be gained by a religion of that kind! If you give God only the apple peeling of your life, He will give you simply the parings of religion, and they are generally very sour. But he who gives the whole fruit of his life to God shall receive from God the wines on the lees well refined, the choicest juice of the richest clusters of Eshcol shall be set to his happy lips. Blessed is the man whose very heart is in the ways of the Lord, and who has God's ways within his heart. May each one of us be such a man, for he is a happy man—a burden-bearer, but all his burdens are for his Lord.

And notice further, under this head, that *the burdens which are borne for the Lord educate the bearer*. I should suppose that the man who carried the golden candlestick knew more about that candlestick than anybody else did—at least it ought to have been a hint to him to study its typical meaning. As he bore that precious burden, it should have been his desire that his brethren should know what it was that he was bearing and, also, what was its spiritual significance. And in the service of God, this I know, whatever may have been the case in the typical instance before us, it is a fact that whenever God puts a burden upon the shoulders of any of His children, it is an educational process. We always learn much more by our griefs and woes than by anything else. God has often produced in us much richer and sweeter fruit by pruning than by any other process of His Divine husbandry. Take care, you that bear the vessels of the Lord and the burdens of the Lord, that you cry unto Him, "Teach us, Lord, by this affliction! Make this pain or this poverty to be a means of instruction to us. Make this burden to be the means of our growth in Grace, part of our spiritual training for a better world."

II. There is much more that might be said upon this point, but I must pass on to the second head, which is that THE LORD HAS MADE APPOINTMENTS CONCERNING THESE BURDEN-BEARERS.

First, *He thought upon them*, though they were but burden-bearers. Here is a whole chapter about them and there are other chapters about these Gershonites, Kohathites and Merarites. The Lord directed Moses to write all this about then. Possibly you have been thinking that the Lord only remembers Apostles and great leaders in His Church, but it is not so. He remembers the burden-bearers—the rank and file are dear to Him. "The Lord knows them that are His," whatever position they may occupy. And though some of you may have to go from this service to a very poor home and though others of you have only crept out from your bed for a little while, and will soon have to be back there to endure new pains. And though you feel as if all that you had to do was to lie and suffer—well, the Lord knows all about it. He is thinking of you burden-bearers who are so much like His Son, the great Burden-Bearer! If He could forget all others, He would not forget you. You have to take up your cross daily, as your Lord took up His Cross, and God takes delight in you, for you are very dear to His heart. Do not think that it can be otherwise, but comfort yourself with these words. The Lord remembered them.

More than that, *the Lord had appointed each of these burden bearers*. You take up an odd coin and you read on it, "George IV, by the Grace of God, king of Great Britain." Well, I really do not think that the Grace of God had much to do with that appointment, but, if any of you Christians sweep a crossing, you might say, "Thomas Jones, by the Grace of God, crossing-sweeper." Or if the poorest Christian woman goes out washing, she might say, "Sarah Smith, by the Grace of God, washerwoman," for, if you are in your right position and bearing the burden which God has allotted to you, then you are in your place by Divine appointment! It makes a person wonderfully happy if he knows that his occupation is according to Divine appointment. It has been well said that if there were two angels in Heaven and God had two works to be performed by them and He said to one of them, "You go down to earth and rule a kingdom," and to the other, "You go down and sweep a crossing," the angels would be equally pleased to do their Master's will, for it is their delight to, "do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word."

If any of you think that a very prominent position—a place of great usefulness and responsibility—is much to be desired, well, I would not recommend you to covet mine. I am satisfied to occupy it, for I believe the Lord has called me to this position, but sometimes when I go home with a very heavy heart through the many crushing cares of this great church, I cry unto God, "Woe is me that ever I should have been called to such a post," yet rejoicing all the while that I can say, with the Apostle Paul, "Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel!" If you, my Brother, have a little company of about a hundred people to deal with, be perfectly satisfied. Or if, my Sister, you have a class of ten or a dozen girls to teach, be content with that number and do the best you can to glorify God in your own proper place. Depend upon it, if you exchanged your burden for mine, you would not be able to bear it—and if I had yours, I dare say it would not fit my back so well as my own does!

Not only did the Lord appoint the man who was to bear the burden, but He also appointed the burden for each man to bear. In the 27th verse, we read, "At the appointment of Aaron and his sons shall be all the service of the sons of the Gershonites, in all their burdens, and in all their service: and you shall appoint unto their charge all their burdens." They had not to choose for themselves what they would carry. One might have said, "I will carry the golden candlestick," whereas it might have been his part to carry some of the curtains or hangings. At all events they had nothing to do with that matter. They had simply to do what they were told. One word that the Christian Church needs to spell, in these days, for she is very apt to forget it, is the word, "*subjection*." Be you Brothers and Sisters, *subject* to one another and be you all *subject* unto Christ.

But we do like to pick our work and choose our burdens. One says, "I like to do my work in my own way. I do not intend to drop into any kind of order and regulation." I do not know that I am speaking personally of anybody here. As far as I am concerned, I am quite satisfied with you, but I know that in many places, Mrs. So-and-So won't do this—she would have been quite willing to do something else. And Brother So-and-

So is hurt because he is not called upon to do that. Now, if Brother So-and-So would only be eager to take the lowest place, we could readily accommodate him, but his great ambition is to be over all the rest of his brethren and he is not at all qualified for such a position as that! Let us all ask the Lord to cast out that evil spirit and then to tell us what He would have us carry. "Lord, what will You have me do?" Down goes my shoulder ready to bear the God-appointed burden. "Send me to the top of the mountains, or to the bottom of the sea, only say what Your will is. It is all Your work and I will gladly do it. My cry is, "Here am I, send me, before I know where I am to go, or what I am to do! If I am but fitted for Your service, Lord, send me." Oh, that we all had more and more of this spirit!

Beside the Divine appointment of the man and the Divine appointment of the burden for him to bear, there was also *the Divine appointment of the time of each man's service*. These Gershonites were to be numbered "from thirty years old and upward until fifty years old." I am not going to say to any of you, "Wait till you are 30 years of age before you begin to serve the Lord." No, no, no! Let us hope you can do a great deal of good work long before you are thirty, and long after you are fifty! But this is the lesson for you—you have only to carry your burden for a certain length of time. The God who appointed you to bear it also determined when you were to begin to bear it, and when you are to leave off bearing it! When God says you are only to have 10 troubles, the devil cannot make 11 of them and *you* cannot reduce them to nine. Every particle of bitterness that is to go into your cup is dropped with all the care of a qualified dispenser—and there will not be one drop more of bitterness in your cup than the Lord knew was necessary to make the medicine just what it should be. I delight in this Truth of God, and I hope that you also do. It is an old-fashioned doctrine and this is an old-fashioned verse—

"Though plagues and deaths around me fly,
Till He bids, I cannot die!
Not a single shaft can hit
Till the God of love sees fit."

Everything is appointed and determined, not by blind fate, but by an all-wise predestination! The wheels of Providence do not crush the Believer, for they are full of eyes so that as they revolve, they work our lasting good and never do us harm. I hope all the burden-bearers here will believe this blessed fact, that the Lord has appointed to all His burden-bearers the burdens they are to bear and the time they are to bear them.

III. Lastly, and but briefly, EACH BURDEN-BEARER MUST FEEL THE SACREDNESS OF HIS OFFICE.

All these Gershonites, though only bearers of burdens, were ordained by God. There is a great deal of fuss made nowadays about "ordaining" a minister. I was never "ordained" by mortal men, for I did not believe in having their empty hands laid on my head. If they had, any of them, any spiritual gift to impart to me, I would have been glad to receive it, but, as they had nothing to give me, I could not accept it. I believe that every true Christian is ordained of God to his particular work and, in the strength of that Divine ordination, let him not bother his head about

merely human forms and ceremonies, but just keep to his proper work and shoulder his own burden.

But they were all to feel that this ordination by God made their service a very solemn thing. He who carried a pot, or a pair of snuffers, or a flesh-hook, was to feel that what he carried was sacred and that he was carrying it in the name of God and, therefore, that he was to do it in a solemn manner. So the first command to the burden-bearers was, *"Be you clean."* They were to wash themselves and to wash their clothes. O Sirs, if you mean to be foul, go and serve the devil! If you want to behave dishonestly, or lewdly, or selfishly, or unkindly, be a servant of Satan, because you will not do him any discredit! But do not pretend to serve God with those dirty hands of yours! What have you to do with touching that which is "all of blue" when you are all black? What right have you to drink out of the holy vessels of the sanctuary when your lips are leprous with iniquity? This is the most horrible thing about the Church of God—that there should ever be in it unworthy men! I have thanked God for Judas Iscariot many and many a time. I am glad he got in among the Apostles because we would have given up all our church life if we had not seen that even with Christ for the Pastor, and with His 12 Apostles around Him, one of them was a devil! It will always be so, but, oh, I do beseech you who are burden-bearers for Christ, be you clean! Go again every day to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, and wash there, and may the great Master take the basin and the ewer, as He did for His disciples, and wash your feet, that you may be "clean every whit"!

They were not only to be clean, but they were also to be *very reverent in their service*. It was not to be a kind of happy-go-lucky, hit-or-miss service—they must never lift up a corner of the covering to look curiously at anything that they carried—nor must they, even by their actions, seem to say, "We can carry these things anyway." Oh, no, but there must be real reverence about all their service. One man must take one part and another, another, with many a prayer and a continual looking up to that God whose holy vessels they were to carry on the behalf of His people through the wilderness. God still desires to have reverent servants—may He deliver us from a flippant Christianity! Oh, that He would save us, not from holy mirth, but from the careless handling of Divine things! It is an awfully solemn thing to be a servant of the Lord of Hosts. Jacob said, "How dreadful (how awe-full) is this place! This is none other but the House of God, and this is the gate of Heaven." He felt that the Presence of Jehovah was something that filled him with awe—and for us to stand before the God who is a consuming fire, is no subject for trifling.

At the same time, although their service was to be reverent, *they were always to be ready for it*. They could never tell when they would have to take up their burdens and march. Sometimes at break of day the trumpet sounded, "Up, and away," for the cloudy-fiery pillar was moving! At other times they may have been sitting at their noon meal and, as they looked up, they perceived that the pillar of cloud had begun to move, so, as soon as the priests had taken down the coverings, they must pick up their burdens and then, each man in his appointed place, the load was to

be carried till the cloud stopped. The special thing for us to remember is that they were always to be ready. Our friends over at the Southwark fire station, some of whom are members of this Church, tell me that they are always ready to go off to any fire that may break out. I have asked them, "When are you off duty?" and they have replied, "Never. If we come to the Tabernacle, or go anywhere else, we are always to be on the watch for the signal that would tell us that a fire is raging. No matter what we are doing, at dead of night, or in the dawning of morning, eating our bread, or even if we are asleep, we must be up in a moment as soon as the call is given."

I have heard of a certain parson who was out hunting, one day, and someone said to him, "It does not look right for a servant of Christ to be wearing a red jacket like yours." "Oh," he said, "you see, I was off duty at the time." But when is a Christian minister off duty? When is *any* Christian off duty? We are never off duty and we are to count it a high privilege that we are always to be ready, at the summons of our Master, to take up our burden and bear it wherever He pleases.

Finally, *they were to do it cheerfully*. It is not recorded, in God's Word that any one of these sons of Gershon ever complained that his load was too heavy. I do not even read that one of them said, "Look, Moses, I am a full-grown man, yet Ithamar has bid me carry only a tent-pin. I think I ought to be allowed, at the very least, to carry one of the boards of the tabernacle." There is no record that any one of them ever talked like that. Their load was neither too heavy nor too light. In like manner, Brothers and Sisters, let us drop into our proper places. He who has redeemed us with His precious blood and made us to be the first-born among men, calls us to this service or to that. It is not our place to reason why, or to make reply, but to obey our Master's orders at once—and to do for Him anything, great or small—which He may command us.

I greatly fear that some of you are not the servants of my Master. Then you are serving another lord and his burdens, though they may seem little or nothing to you now, will grow, and grow, and grow, and grow until they sink you into the bottomless Pit forever! Have you never heard of the man who served a tyrant master? The tyrant called at the man's smithy and said to him, "Make me a chain. Find your own iron and out of it make a chain for me." "How long shall I make it, your majesty?" "Make it as long as you like and keep on at it till I come here again." He worked for 12 months and forged a long, long chain. When the tyrant came, he gave him nothing for what he had done, but he said, "Make it as long again." So the poor man had to go on hammering away at the chain. And when he had finished it, what do you think was the payment he received? The tyrant said, "Bind him, hand and foot, with this chain, and hurl him down into the abyss, bound by the very chain that he has, himself, forged." That is what the black prince of Hell will do with you who serve him! Therefore, flee from him while you may.

"I will think about it," says one. You will never get away from him if you act like that. The only way to escape from the devil is to run away from him without giving him any notice. Just as you are, at this moment,

escape for your lives! Look not behind you, for the only hope for you is to flee at once from the wrath to come. Do as the prodigal son did—say, "I will arise and go to my father." And then, like he, rise up at once and go! He who deliberates about such a matter as this is lost. It is now or never with you! "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." The Lord help us all to escape, this very hour, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
NUMBERS 8:5-22.

Verses 5, 6. *And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, Take the Levites from among the children of Israel and cleanse then.* These men were to be the servants of God. They are the type of God's elect—a people set apart unto Divine service, to be zealous for good works. "Take the Levites from among the children of Israel and cleanse them." That is just the way that God the Holy Spirit takes Christians out of the mass of mankind and cleanses them.

7, 8. *And thus shall you do unto them, to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purification upon them, and let then shave all their flesh, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean. Then let them take a young bullock with his grain offering, even fine flour mingled with oil, and another young bullock shall you take for a sin offering.* There are still, typically, these three things in the cleansing of God's people—the blood, the water and the razor. There is blood, the emblem of the putting away of sin by Christ's atoning Sacrifice. The water, typical of the Holy Spirit, by whom the power of sin is overcome. And then that razor, cutting off that which grows of the flesh—that which was their beauty and their glory is all taken away from them. There are some of God's people who have not felt much of that razor, but if they are to serve God perfectly, it must be used. "Let them shave all their flesh.

9-12. *And you shall bring the Levites before the tabernacle of the congregation and you shall gather the whole congregation of the children of Israel together: and you shall bring the Levites before the LORD: and the children of Israel shall put their hands upon the Levites: and Aaron shall offer the Levites before the LORD for an offering of the children of Israel, that they may execute the service of the LORD. And the Levites shall lay their hands upon the heads of the bullocks: and you shall offer the one for a sin of offering, and the other for a burnt offering, unto the LORD, to make an atonement for the Levites.* There is no true way of serving God without the Atonement. Leave that out and you have left out the vital part of the whole. What service can we render to the Most High if we begin by disloyalty to Him whom God has set forth to be the Propitiation for sin, even His dear Son?

13, 14. *And you shall stand the Levites before Aaron, and before his sons, and offer them for an offering unto the LORD. Thus shall you separate the Levites from among the children of Israel: and the Levites shall be mine.* We are to offer up to God our spirit, soul and body, which is our

reasonable service. And if we are, indeed, God's children, we are to feel that, henceforth, we are not our own, for we are bought with a price. We belong wholly to God—all that we are and all that we have is to be His through life and in death—and throughout eternity.

15. *And after that shall the Levites go in to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation: and you shall cleanse them, and offer them for an offering.* An offering must be presented for us before we can offer ourselves as an offering unto God.

16. *For they are wholly given unto Me from among the children of Israel.* Listen to this, you who trust that you are made like unto the elder Brother and the First-Born from among the creatures of God—

16-18. *Instead of such as open every womb, even instead of the first-born of all the children of Israel, have I taken them unto Me. For all the first-born of the children of Israel are Mine, both man and beast: on the day that I struck every first-born in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for Myself. And I have taken the Levites for all the first-born of the children of Israel.* God's people are the elect—they have escaped from death. In that day when the sword of the Lord was drawn, they were shielded by the blood of the lamb sprinkled on the lintel and on the two side posts and, henceforth, because they have been thus preserved, they belong to the Lord.

19-22. *And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the service of the children of Israel in the tabernacle of the congregation, and to make an atonement for the children of Israel: that there be no plague among the children of Israel, when the children of Israel come near unto the sanctuary. And Moses, and Aaron, and all the congregation of the children of Israel, did to the Levites according unto all that the LORD commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so did the children of Israel unto them. And the Levites were purified, and they washed their clothes; and Aaron offered them as an offering before the LORD, and Aaron made an atonement for them to cleanse them. And after that went the Levites in to do their service in the tabernacle of the congregation before Aaron, and before his sons: as the LORD had commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so did they unto them.* How instructive all this is to us! We are not to begin blunderingly to serve God while we are yet in our sins—before we have been sprinkled with the blood—before we have been washed in the water which flowed with the blood—before we have felt that razor that takes away from us all our own pride and glory! No, but when all that is done, then there is to be no delay—"After that went the Levites in to do their service."

—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 GOOD MAN IN AN EVIL CASE
NO. 2830

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 10, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 19, 1886.

"Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you: He shall never allow the righteous to be moved."
Psalm 55:22.

Those of you who were here last Thursday evening will recollect that the sermon was concerning those sons of Gershon who were burden-bearers in connection with the tabernacle in the wilderness. [Sermon #2829, Volume 49—LOWLY SERVICE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at http://www.spurgeons.org.] They were not appointed to preach. They were not ordained to fight—their service consisted in bearing burdens. There were some here, on that occasion, whom I had never known before who had been, by the space of 30 years, great sufferers. They were carried into this place last Thursday evening—I did not know of their presence until afterwards, when they told me that the sermon seemed to have been made for them and that it had given them great comfort.

I thought I would follow up that sermon about burden-bearers by a discourse upon another text which shows us that there are some burdens which we need *not* carry. Burdens of service, or burdens of which come through our consecration to the Lord Jesus Christ—these we will never lay down so long as we live. It shall be our joy to daily take up our cross and follow Jesus, but there are certain burdens of care and sorrow, of which the text speaks—especially the burdens which come from the slander, reproach and oppression of ungodly men—which we need not carry. David says, "Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."

Beloved Friends, the very best men in the world may be slandered! And if you should hear them evilly spoken of, be you not among those who straightway condemn them. There are some who say, "Where there is smoke, there is sure to be fire." And although it is well known that "common fame is a common liar," yet there are some who are so fond of hearing or telling lies that they are sure to believe such a lie as this, especially if it is spoken concerning a servant of God. Be you not, therefore, ready to believe all the reports that you hear against any Christian people. The best of men, as I have already reminded you, have been

worst spoken of and there are some who turn upon them directly, like lions scenting their prey.

I may be just now addressing some who are the victims of the malice of ungodly men or women. I am sorry, dear Friends, that this should be your lot, for it is among the most bitter of human afflictions. But at the same time I would remind you that nothing unusual has happened to you. You remember the three brave men who were cast alive into Nebuchadnezzar's burning fiery furnace when it was heated seven times more than it was known to be heated? You are scarcely enduring such a fiery trial as *that* and, certainly, you are not suffering as did your Master, the Lord of all pilgrims who have made their way to Heaven! But if, in any degree, it should happen that you are bearing a burden of this kind, the text will have a special message for you.

In speaking upon this passage, I want to keep it in context with the whole Psalm. I do not think it is dealing properly with the Bible to pick out one verse here, and another there, without looking to see what the context of the passage is. If men's books were treated as God's Book is often treated, we should make many a grand and noble literary work to appear to be an insane production! It is true that God's Book can endure even such treatment as that. It is such a wonderful Book that even a sentence torn out of it will convey a most precious Truth of God, but it is not fair to the Book, and it is not fair to yourself, to treat the Bible so. A text of Scripture should always be viewed in the setting in which God has placed it, for there is often as much that is admirable in the gold which forms the setting of the jewel as there is in the jewel itself.

I. So, looking at our text in that light, I shall begin by saying that WHEN WE ARE MUCH TRIED AND BURDENED, THERE IS SOMETHING THAT WE ARE TEMPTED TO DO. The text does not mention it, but the Psalm does. And the text is an antidote to the malady which the Psalm describes or implies. "Cast your burden upon the Lord," is an injunction concerning that which we are to put in the *place of something else* which more naturally suggests itself to our poor foolish minds.

And, first, when we are in very severe trouble, *we are tempted to complain.* The Psalmist says, in the second verse, "I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise." I am not sure that our version is quite fair to David in this instance, but it suits my present purpose admirably. As the children of God, we ought to avoid even the semblance of a complaint against our Heavenly Father. But when our faith is sorely tried, when some sharp reproach is stinging our spirit, we are all too apt to begin thinking and saying that God is dealing harshly with us. You know Job, that most patient of men, became very impatient when his so-called "friends" poured vinegar instead of oil into his wounds. Smarting under their cruel treatment, he said some things which he had far better have left unsaid. O Brothers and Sisters, pray that whenever the Lord lays His rod heavily upon you, your tears may have no rebellion in them! Whatever His providential dealings with you may be, may you be enabled to say, with the Patriarch,

"The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." May you even join Job in his triumphant declaration, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him." It is grand faith that enables a Believer to say, "Though I should die at God's altar, I will die like the lamb that is brought to the slaughter, or be like the sheep that is dumb before her shearers and makes no complaint."

The next natural temptation is that of *giving up altogether and lying down in despair*. You get that in the fourth and fifth verses—"My heart is sorely pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror has overwhelmed me." Have not some of you been sometimes tempted to say, "There, I can do more. I must give up—that last cruel blow has utterly broken me in pieces and I feel that I can only lay down and die in the bitterness of my spirit"? Brothers and Sisters, this is a temptation against which you must strive most earnestly! As no living man should complain, so no living man should despair—and especially no child of God! Up with you, poor Heart! You have not yet come to the end of God's delivering mercy, even though you have come to the end of your poor puny strength. The Lord shall light your candle, now that your night is so dark. You shall yet sing for very joy of heart, though now you can only, like David, mourn in your mourning. He will bring you again from Bashan, and from the depths of the sea if you have sunk as low as that. Therefore, talk not of dying before your time. Yet, if you do so, you will not be the first who has talked like that, for there was one who never died, who said, "O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." That was Elijah, the Prophet of Fire! Yet, just then he seemed as if he were only cold ashes rather than a vehement flame—another proof that the best of men are but men at the best!

The next very common temptation is *to want to flee from our present trials*. You get that in verses six to eight—"I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest." Possibly you are the pastor of a church and things do not prosper as you could wish. I wonder where they do? But, in your case, you think there is such little prosperity that you must give up your position and run away. Young gunners, before they have become accustomed to the smell of gunpowder and the noise of cannons, have often been known to desert their guns. And even old soldiers have sometimes felt what the "trembles" are! But, my Brother, if this is your case, I beseech you not to run away. If you did flee, where would you go? You think you will run away, as Jonah did, do you? I guarantee you that Jonah was very sorry that he had run away when he found himself in the whale's belly at the very bottom of the mountains in the depths of the sea! And you and I will be sure to get into greater trouble in we run away from the path of duty.

Fight it out, Man! Stand your ground in the name of God and in the strength of God! It may be that there are better days just now coming and that Satan is seeking to drive you away just as you are on the brink of success! Dr. Watts has a good paraphrase of this Psalm and also writes wisely concerning the temptation to flee the post of duty. He says—

"Oh, were I like a feathered dove,
And innocence had wings!
I'd fly, and make a long remove
From all these restless things.
Let me to some wild desert go,
And find a peaceful home;
Where storms of malice never blow,
Temptations never come.
Vain hopes and vain inventions all,
To escape the rage of Hell!
The mighty God, on whom I call,
Can save me here as well.
God shall preserve my soul from fear,
Or shield me when afraid;
Ten thousand angels must appear,
If HE commands their aid."

Possibly the special case in point is not that of a minister. It is some Mary, weeping at home because her brother Lazarus is dead. Martha is not a very congenial sister to her, so she does not even go with her when she goes to meet the Lord. Yet, strangely enough, each of the sisters says the same words to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother had not died." In due time the Master sends for Mary and soon she has the joy of welcoming Lazarus back from the grave. Some of us get strange ideas into our head at times—we resolve that we will go, we know not where, and do, we know not what! Ah, my dear Friends, he whose great trouble lies in his own heart cannot run away from it, for he bears it about with him wherever he goes! The old man of the mountain who sits upon your shoulder and clings so tightly to you, if he is yourself, is not to be shaken off by your running away! Far wiser will it be for you to do as the text says, "Cast your burden upon the Lord." Then you will need no wings like a dove, nor will you wish to fly away to the wilderness, but you will be willing to stay in the very midst of the battle and even there you will be in perfect peace—

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

I have often enjoyed the greatest solitude amid the crowds in Cheapside and I believe that there is many a Christian who has experienced the deepest peace in the midst of the wildest turmoil. Some of us know what Madame Guyon meant when she wrote—

"***While place we seek or place we shun,***
The soul finds happiness in none!
But with a God to guide our way,
'Tis equal joy to go or stay."

Trust in Him! Cast your burden on Him, for so you will escape from this temptation of wanting to flee away from the place where He would have you be!

There is one other temptation that this Psalm suggests to me, and that is *the temptation to wish ill to those who are causing us ill.* Perhaps mistaking the meaning of the passage, we are apt to pray the prayer in the ninth verse, "'Destroy, O Lord!' Our foes have slandered us, they have spoken evil of us and we wish that they were dead, or that some great judgment might overtake them." It will never do, dear Friends, to indulge such a feeling as that! We shall be injured if we desire that others should be injured. Slander has, indeed, stung you when you harbor the wish to sting another! Someone said, in my hearing, attempting to justify revenge or retaliation, "But if you tread on a worm, it will turn," and I answered, "Is a poor worm that only turns because of its agony through man's cruelty, the pattern for a Christian man to follow? Will you look down to the dust of the earth to find the example that you are to imitate?" Wicked men trod upon Christ—who even compared Himself to a worm—yet He did not turn upon them, except to cry, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Let that be the only kind of turning that you ever practice towards your enemies! Do not be driven, by their evil speaking or their cruel deeds, into harshness of speech or even harshness of thought! I have known some persons, under sore trouble, who have at last become quite soured and bitter of spirit—that is all wrong and very sad—and no good can ever come of such a state of heart as that. The bruising of the sycamore fig results in its growing sweeter—let your bruising produce a similar effect upon you. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus in His wondrous Sermon on the Mount, "I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that you may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven." If you do not act thus—which is the right thing for you to do—you will almost certainly do the wrong thing in some shape or other. Therefore, God help you to do what is right! Child, is your father rough on you? Then, love him until he becomes tender and gentle. Wife, is your husband unkind to you? Then, win him back by your sweet smiles. Servant, is your mistress harsh to you? Even good women have sometimes dealt as harshly with their servants as Sarah dealt with Hagar. Well, if that is your case, be not like Hagar who despised her mistress. Submit to her, for so shall you yet win her, as many a Christian slave of old, far worse treated than you have been, won his master or his mistress to Christ in those earliest and happiest days of Christianity. What is there for a Christian to do but love his enemies? This is the most powerful weapon that we have in our armory! We shall be wise as serpents if God teaches us wisdom. And we shall also be harmless as doves if the Holy Spirit, like a dove, rests upon us and

makes us, also, to abound in gentleness. By this sign we shall conquer, for it is love that always wins the day!

Thus I have shown you what we are tempted to do when we are like this good man who was in such an evil case.

II. Now I am going to show you, from the text, as the Holy Spirit shall help me, WHAT WE ARE COMMANDED TO DO. That is, "Cast your burden upon the Lord." You have a burden upon your back. It is too heavy for you to bear? Cast it upon the Lord!

"How shall I do that?" someone asks. Well, if you are a child of God, I invite you, first of all, *to trace your burden back to God.* "But it comes from the treachery of Ahithophel, or from the rebellion of Absalom!" I grant you that it does, but those are only the second causes, or the agents—trace the matter back to the Great First Cause. If you do that, you will come, by a mystery which I will not attempt to explain, to the hand of Divine Providence and you will say of every burden, "This, also, comes from the Lord." You have probably seen a dog, when he has been struck with a stick, turn round and bite the staff that struck him. If he were a wise dog, he would bite the man who held the stick that dealt the blow. When God uses His rod upon one of His children, even a godly man will sometimes snap at the rod. "But, Sir, surely you would not have me turn upon my God?" Oh, no! I know you will not do *that*, for you are His child. And when you see that God is holding the rod in His hand, you will cease to be rebellious and you will say, with the Psalmist, "'I was dumb with silence.' I was going to speak, but I opened not my mouth because I saw that it was in Your hand that the rod of chastisement was held." It is always well to trace our trials directly to God and say, "It may be Judas Iscariot who has betrayed me, but, still, it was planned in God's eternal purpose that I should be betrayed, so I will forget the second cause, except to pray God to forgive the malice of the betrayer—and, by His Grace, I will look to the Lord who permitted the trial to come upon me for His own Glory and for my good."

The next thing you have to do is this. Seeing that the burden is from God, *patiently wait His time for its removal.* There are some people, who, if they had a task set to them by some great one whom they respected and revered, would cheerfully perform it. If, in the middle of the night, you were called up by a Queen's messenger and bid to do something for Her Majesty, you would be glad to rise and dress, even though it might be a cold night and you might have far to go to fulfill your commission. And if you feel that your burden is from the Lord—if the King's arms are stamped upon the affliction or trial that comes to you—straightway you will say, "As the Lord wills it, I will bear it without complaining. When it is His time to deliver me, I shall be delivered. And as long as it is His time for me to suffer, I will, by His Grace, suffer patiently."

I wish that all Christians could be like that good old woman who was asked whether, as she was so very ill, she would prefer to live or to die. She said that she had no preference whatever, she only wished that the

will of the Lord might be done. "But, still, if the Lord said to you, 'which will you have?' which would you choose?" She said, "I would not even *then* choose, but I would ask the Lord to choose for me." You see, whenever anything comes to us from God, we have not the responsibility of it—but if it came through our own choice, then we might say to ourselves, "What fools we were to choose this particular trial!" You say that you do not like the cross God has sent you. Well but, at any rate, it is not by your own choice that you have to carry that particular cross. It is God who chose it for you, whereas if *you* had selected it, you might well say, "Oh, dear me, what a mistake I made when I chose this burden!" Now you cannot say that and I pray that you may have Divine Grace to see that "the whole disposing" of your lot is, as Solomon says, "Of the Lord."

The Hebrew of our text would bear such a rendering as this, "Cast on the Lord what the Lord gives you. Cast on Him what He casts on you. See the marks of His hands on your burden and you will be reconciled to your load. Know that God sends it to you and patiently wait till He takes it away." F. W. Faber very sweetly writes—

"I have no cares, O blessed Lord,
For all my cares are Yours.
I live in triumph, too, for You
Have made Your triumphs mine.
And when it seems no chance nor change
From grief can set me free—
Hope find its strength in helplessness,
And patiently waits on Thee.
Lead on, lead on, triumphantly,
O blessed Lord, lead on!
Faith's pilgrim-sons behind You seek
The road that You have gone."

One blessed way of casting our burden upon the Lord is to *tell the Lord all about it*. It is a high privilege to get away, alone, and talk to God as a man talks with his friend. But I know what you often do, my Brothers and Sisters, when you get into a predicament and cannot tell what to do—then you begin to pray. Why do you not, every morning, tell the Lord about all your difficulties *before* they come? What? Will you only run to Him when you get into trouble? No, go to Him *before* you get into trouble. Half our burdens come from what we have not prayed over! If a man would take the ordinary concerns of life distinctly to God, one by one, it is marvelous how easily the chariot of life would roll along! Things over which we have not prayed are like undigested food that breeds mischief in the body—they breed mischief in the soul. Digest your daily bread by first praying, "God give it to me and then God bless me in the use of it. And then God bless me afterwards in the spending of the strength derived from it to Your praise and Glory." Salt all your life with prayer, lest corruption should come to that part of your life which you have not thus salted. Tell the Lord, then, your griefs, just as, when a child, you told your troubles to your mother!

"I cannot find words," says one. Oh, they will come! They come fast enough when you complain to man and they will sweetly come if you get into the blessed habit of talking to God about everything. A friend said to me, not long ago, "I was on the Exchange and I saw that I had made a mistake in a certain transaction. I had lost money by it and if I had gone on dealing in the same fashion, I would have been ruined. I just stepped aside for a minute or two into a quiet corner of my office. I stood still and breathed a prayer to God for guidance. Then I went back, and felt, 'Now I am ready for anyone of you.'" "So I was," he said, "I was not confused and worried, as I would otherwise have been, and so liable to make mistakes, but I had waited upon God and I was therefore calm and collected." There is much wisdom in thus praying about everything, although, possibly, some of you may think it trivial. I believe that the very soul of Christianity lies in the sanctifying of what is called secular—the bringing of all things under the cognizance of our God by intense, constant, importunate, believing prayer.

When you have told the Lord everything, the next thing for you to do, in order to cast your burden upon Him, is to *believe that all will work together for your good*. Swallow the bitter as readily as you do the sweet and believe that, somehow, the strange mixture will do you great good. Do not look out your window, judging this, and that, and the other, in detail, but, if God sent it to you, open the door and take it all in, for all that has come from Him will be to His Glory and to your profit. Believe that if you shall lose certain things, you will really be a gainer by your losses. Even if your dearest one is taken from you, all shall be well if you have but faith to trust God in it all. If you are stricken with mortal sickness, it will still be well with you and if you do steadfastly trust in the Lord, you shall know that it is so. "We know," says the Apostle Paul—he does not say, "We think, we suppose, we judge," but—"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." If you know this, my Brother, or my Sister, it shall help you to "cast your burden upon the Lord."

When you have done this, then *leave your burden with the Lord*. In the process of trusting God with your burden, get to the point that you have done with it. If I cast my burden upon the Lord, what business have I to carry it myself? How can I truthfully say that I have cast it upon Him if I am still burdened with it? Throughout my life, which has not been free from many grave cares, there have been many things which I have been able to see my own way through and, using my best judgment, they have passed off well. But in so large a church as this, there sometimes occur things that altogether stagger me. I do not know what to do in such a case as that and I have been in the habit, after doing all I can, of putting such things up on the shelf and saying, "There, I will never take them down again, come what may. I have done with them, for I have left them wholly with God." And I wish to bear my testimony that somehow or other the thing which I could not unravel, has unraveled itself! When Peter

and the angel "came unto the iron gate," it "opened to them of its own accord." And the same thing has happened to me many a time. "Who shall roll away the stone for us from the door of the sepulcher?" asked the holy women when they came to the tomb of their Lord? "And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away." Learn to say, "My God has made this difficulty and there is some good result to come of it. I have done the little I can do, so now I will leave it all with Him."

Ah, but I know what some of you do—you say that you have left it all with God and then you lie awake all night fretting about it! Is that casting your burden upon the Lord? Oh, for a blessed literalism about the promises of God and our faith in them, so that we take them to mean just what they say and act upon them accordingly! Now, if some poor woman here were sadly in debt for her rent and she met with a Christian Brother who said to her, "Do not fret, my good Sister, I will see it all paid tomorrow," do you think she would go running about, and saying, "O dear, I shall lose my things, my rent will not be paid"? No, she would say, "Mr. So-and-So, whom I know and trust, said that he would pay it for me, and I feel perfectly at peace about it." Now, do you so with your God if you know Him! David said, "They that know Your name will put their trust in You." If you truly love the Lord, it will be a proof of your love to repose your care upon Him without questioning. And when you have cast your burden upon Him, it will prove the truth of your having done so if you are unburdened and your heart is at rest. If He bears my burden, why should I also bear it? If He cares for me, what have I to do to vex myself with fretful, anxious cares?

I have thus done my best to show you what we are commanded to do—"Cast your burden upon the Lord."

III. And now thirdly, and very briefly, WHAT WE SHOULD ENDEAVOR TO DO.

If I read the text aright, we here have David talking to himself. And what we are to endeavor to do is *to talk to ourselves, just as David talked to himself*. He says of his enemy, "The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart" and so on. And then he seems to say, "Come, David, do not fret yourself like this, but cast your burden upon the Lord." Have you not noticed how often David seems as if he were two Davids—and one David talks to the other David? It was so when he said to himself, "Why are you cast down, O my Soul; and why are you disquieted within me?" And I want you, dear Friend, to chide yourself and say, "Come, fretful Heart, what are you doing? Cast your burden upon the Lord. What are you doing? Has God forsaken you? Has God refused to help you? Be gone, Unbelief! Come, Faith, and dwell in my soul and reign over my spirit, swaying your gracious scepter of peace."

And when you have thus been chiding yourself, *argue with yourself about the matter*. Say to yourself, "See how the text puts it—'Cast your burden upon the Lord.' Well, if it is your burden and God meant it for

you, then do not quarrel with it. And as it is your burden, so is God your God, the covenant-keeping God, your Father and your Friend. Come, my Soul, cast your burden upon your God! Where else should you put your burden when He bids you cast it upon Him? You cannot sustain yourself under such a load, but God will sustain you and your burden, too." Think of the righteousness of God and say, "It is impossible that the righteous God should leave the righteous to perish. If they are slandered, that is a further reason why God should take up their cause. He is their Advocate and their Defender. Come, my Heart, it shall never be truly said of the Judge of all the earth that He leaves His people to perish, especially when their good name is assailed because of their fidelity to Him!"

I want you, dear Friends, to talk thus with yourselves, especially those of you who are rather apt to give way to despondency. There are some such here, I know. You come to me, sometimes, with your griefs, and I do the best I can to cheer you. But I have often said to myself, "That dear Sister had a father who was a member with us. He used to come to me in just the same way as she does. This despondency seems to run in their2 blood." Some of you must have been born in December and you never seem to get out of that month—it is always winter with you. But now I want you just to take the language of the text and say to yourself, "Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." And, possibly, God will bless your own sermon to yourself more than He would bless my sermon to you! At any rate, try it.

IV. Lastly—and here I need the time for a whole sermon, let us think of WHAT WE MAY EXPECT IF WE FULFILL THE COMMAND OF THE TEXT—"Cast your burden upon the Lord."

There are two grand things in the text—sustenance and sufferance. The old Puritans would have made a book about those two words and we might preach a dozen sermons upon them and still not exhaust their meaning! What does the Lord do with His people when they cast their burdens upon Him? *He gives them sustenance*. "He shall sustain you." The word, "sustain," is the same that is used when God told Elijah to go to Zarephath, saying, "Behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain you," that is, "to feed you," "to nourish you." Perhaps that would have been a better rendering of the original. "Cast your burden upon the Lord," and what will He do? Deliver you out of your trouble? No, but He will feed you till you can carry it, and that will be an even better thing than relieving you of the burden.

Here is a dear child that has but a little load to carry, yet he staggers under it. It would be a kind thing for his father to pick up the child and his load, too, and carry both him and his burden. But the wise father says, "I will so provide for that child that he shall grow in strength and, at last, shall be able to carry his load." "Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you." That is, "He shall feed you. He shall nourish you." I believe that when Paul was attacked by that viper that came out

of the sticks, it was a very ugly thing, indeed, but Paul just shook it off into the fire. Why do you think that snake came? Why, it came to feed them all! "No," you say, "that serpent did not do that!" It did, for the islanders said that this man was a god and straightway they began to gather around him and his companions and to provide for their needs with all the greater alacrity because of the reverence that they felt for the Apostle! So you shall often find that what looks like a horrible thing will be the best way in which God could bless you.

"Cast your burden upon the Lord." "It will crush me." No, it will not—you shall grow under it and then grow out of it! And you shall prove the truth of those precious lines—

"From all their afflictions My Glory shall spring,
And the deeper their sorrows, the louder they'll sing."

Only by faith leave your trouble with your God and He will nurture you. Even out of the very rock of trouble will He feed you and give you oil out of the flinty rock of your afflictions.

Then, the other point is *sufferance*. I am obliged to hurry over these Truths of God and leave you to meditate upon them afterwards. "He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." Learn, from this declaration, that nothing will happen to you but what God permits. There are some things which are very grievous, which God does allow to happen to His people. But there are other things which He will not allow. He will never allow them to be moved. "No," He says, "My child who has walked uprightly before Me, My righteous one, the man who spoke the Truth, the man who did the right thing, I will not suffer that man to be moved. He may be moved as the boughs of a tree sway to and fro in the breeze, but not as the roots of a tree are torn up by a storm. He may be moved a little, like a ship riding at anchor, which just swings with the tide, but he shall not be driven out to sea, or drift onto the rocks to his destruction."

"He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." Do you catch the Psalmist's idea? It is as if God interposed and said, "No, I will not permit that." A father may see his child somewhat put upon, yet at first he may not interfere. But, at last, a cruel blow is struck and he says, "No, I will not stand that! While I have an arm to defend my child, he shall not be treated in that fashion." Well, then, leave everything with your Heavenly Father, for He will not allow you to be moved! If you are really righteous, trusting in the Righteous One, justified by the blood and righteousness of Christ, and are doing what is right in His sight, He will not allow you to be moved. The next time you are sorely vexed by the tongue of slander, go and tell your Father, just as the little boys tell their big brothers. Go and tell your Father all about it and do not fret over it. If somebody has done you a great wrong, you may say to him, "I shall be obliged to refer you to my solicitor." But after you have done that, I hope you do not go writing letters to him on your own. Refer everything to God and leave all with Him, for, so, a blessed peace will bedew your spirit, making your life on earth like the beginning of life in Heaven!

In closing my discourse, I must say that I do feel, in my inmost soul, the deepest pity for those of you who have no God to go to when you are in trouble. You have a burden to bear, but you cannot cast it on the Lord. He *will* allow you to be moved, for you do not cry unto Him to help you. I feel that I would rather be a dog than be a man without a God. I think I could make myself happy if I were only a mouse in its hole, but if I were a prince in a palace, without God, I should be utterly miserable! O poor Hearts, if you really want Him, He is to be had! If you are longing for Him, His door is open to receive you. If you will come to Him, He will come and meet you much more than half way! Yes, all the way will He come to everyone who wills to come to Him. As soon as you say, "I will arise," He has already arisen and is on His way to meet you! Practically, there is no distance for you to go, for He is there, waiting to welcome you. Believe in His dear Son and live! First cast your great burden of sin upon the Lord and then cast upon Him all other burdens that He is willing to take from you and, soon, He will put a new song into your mouth and establish your going. The Lord grant it, for His dear Son's sake! Amen!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—35 (SONG 1), 70, 688.

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"Bear you one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ...Every man shall bear his own burden." Galatians 6:2, 5.

OBSERVE, dear Friends, that the Apostle says in the second verse of this chapter, "Bear you one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." These Galatians had been trying to bear the heavy burden of the Law of Moses. They had, as far as they could, put themselves, again, under the old Ceremonial Law. They had forsaken the Gospel way of justification by faith and had sought to be made perfect by their personal obedience to the Law of God. Now, the Apostle, as though he would expel one affection by another, says, "You want a law? You wish to be under a law? Well, here is the law of Christ—yield yourselves to it! Instead of observing the outward ceremonies of the Levitical law, here is a living law which touches the heart and influences the life—obey that law. You are Christians. You have come under law to Christ by the very fact that you are not your own, but have been bought with a price by Him—now see to it that you yield implicit obedience to the law of Christ."

It is somewhat remarkable, I think, that many of those who are self-righteous and apparently pay much regard to the Law of Moses are usually quite forgetful of that which is the very essence and spirit of that Law. They are so righteous that they become stern, severe, censorious—which is being unrighteous—for the righteousness even of the Law of God is a righteousness of love, "for all the law is fulfilled in one word," that is, "love." A self-righteous man is not generally a man with a tender spirit. He looks at that which is hard and stern in the Law and he begins to be hard and stern himself—there is none of the softness, sweetness, gentleness and graciousness which even the Law, itself, required when it said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." Paul did well, in the mood in which the Galatians were—as they wanted to be under law, to remind them of what is the essence of the Law of God and he did still better by reminding them that they *were* under law—to Christ, whose law emphasizes the love which even Moses, himself, had taught under the old dispensation!

These Galatians had most foolishly sought to burden themselves with a load which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear. After being

set free by the Gospel, they had gone back to the yoke of bondage, so the Apostle, in effect said to them, "As you have been so bewitched and fascinated that you want burdens to rest upon you, here are burdens for you—'Bear you one another's burdens.' And, as you want law, here is law for you—so fulfill the law of Christ." It was characteristic of that sacred craftiness, that holy ingenuity, which was so conspicuous in the Apostle Paul that he worded his argument thus, that he might draw the attention of these Galatians to it, fix it upon their memories and, if possible, reach and influence their consciences.

Should there be any of you here who desire to come under the yoke of bondage, or who wish to be burden-bearers, or who find great music in the word, "law," I hope you will discover all these things in the text. I see in it, first of all, *community*—"Bear you one another's burdens." Then the latter part of the text teaches us *immunity*. You are not bound to consider other people's burdens so much as your own, that you become responsible for them. No, "every man shall bear his own burden." Then the third point, which will be a further opening up of the fifth verse, will be *personality*: "Every man shall bear his own burden."

I. First, I see, in the text, A MARVELOUS COMMUNITY. "Bear you one another's burdens." What does this mean?

Well, dealing with it first, *negatively*, it does *not* mean that we are to burden one another. There are some whose religion consists in laying heavy burdens upon other men's shoulders while they, themselves, will not carry them for a single yard. You recollect that sect of Pharisees with whom our Master was always in conflict—they have their representatives in these modern times. Why, even this text, itself, is twisted by some into a reason for burdening others. "'Bear you one another's burdens,'" they say —"do you not see, Friend, that you *have* to help me?" Yes, friend number one, but do you not see that you are not to go and burden that other friend? It is true that you have to bear his burdens. Let the first application of this passage be to *yourself*, and be not eager to apply it to your neighbor from whom you want to draw something. You have begun by violating the spirit of the text, not only by not bearing your brother's burden, but also by thrusting upon him your own burden without taking his in exchange! I say this because I have often found that men naturally draw this inference—"We are to help one another, therefore, please help me." The proper inference would be, "We are to help one another—where is the man whom I am to help?" Is not that the most logical conclusion from the text? Yet such is the selfishness of our nature that we begin straightway to say, "This text is a cow, I will milk it," not, "this text gives me something to *do*, so I will do it," but, "This text gives me a chance of getting something and I am going to get it." If you talk like that, it proves that you are out of gear with the text and have not entered into the spirit of it at all.

The text does *not* mean that we are to spy out our brother's faults. Its context shows that the word, "burdens," here means, "faults." "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in a fault, you who are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering yourself, lest you also be

tempted. Bear you one another's burdens." To a good man, a fault is a burden. The worst burden that he has to carry is the fact that he is not perfect—that is what troubles him. Now, you and I are not to go about the world spying out everybody else's faults. "He is an excellent man," says one, "but." Now stop there! You have said already quite enough, you will spoil it if you say another word. "Ah," says another, concerning someone else, "she is an admirable woman, an earnest worker for the Savior." Stop there! I know what you are going to say something that might make it seem that you are about as good as she is and perhaps a little better, and you are afraid that the light of your star would not be seen unless you first covered up that other star! But it must not be so! "Bear you one another's burdens." Bear with one another's faults, but spy not out one another's faults.

I think I have heard a story of Mr. Wesley going several times to a certain town where he thought that there was a band of earnest Christian people, but he was met by a Brother who told him how dead they all were, what little life there was in their Prayer Meetings and how much of inconsistency there was among them. When he got there, he did not notice anything of this sort, so, the third time he went, he said to this Brother, "How is it that you always meet me and tell me of these things about the Brethren! Nobody else ever seems to say it." "Well, you see," he said, "Mr. Wesley, I have a rare gift of discerning spirits." "Oh," said the good man, "then wrap that talent up in a napkin and bury it, and you will have done the best thing possible with it. The Lord will never ask you what you have done with it if you will only keep it to yourself." I believe that there was great wisdom in that advice. There are still some who have only that gift of spying out other men's faults. That is shocking, dreadful, horrible! So, after all that, my Brother, shut your eyes and bend your back. If you know that the burden is there, bow down to help bear it, but do not stand and point at it, and seem as if you wished to do that Brother a discredit.

Further, the text does *not* mean that we are to despise those who have heavy burdens to bear. For instance, those who have the grievous burden of poverty. "Oh," some say, "there is a large number of persons attending at such-and-such a place, but they are all poor people." So you think little of poor people, do you? Then what poor souls you must be! "Oh, but," says one, "such-and-such a person is always afflicted and very sad." And do you despise the afflicted, especially the mentally afflicted, the desponding, the sorrowful among God's people? Do you turn away from them and say, "I cannot endure talking with persons of that sort—they are so sad in temperament and disposition"? But the Apostle says, "Bear you one another's burdens," which means—do not run away from other people because you see that they are burdened. If you say, "I like to be with the cheerful and the happy, I cannot go and spend my life in comforting the mourners in Zion"—is that mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who was meek and lowly, and who did not break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax? O Brothers and Sisters, we need to be schooled in this matter of showing sympathy with the sorrow-

ful! No doubt it will drag our own spirits down if we really have fellowship with those whom God has sorely afflicted in mind, but we must be willing to be dragged down—it will do us good! If the Lord sees that we are willing to stoop to the very least of His people, He will be sure to bless us. I sometimes like to sing that verse that Dr. Doddridge wrote, and I hope I can sing it truly—

"Have You a lamb in all Your flock
I would disdain to feed?
Have You a foe, before whose face
I fear Your cause to plead?"

The second half of the verse is much easier than the first half. You might be able to stand up like young David before Goliath, himself, for there is something grand and noble in such an action as that. But to go looking after the poor little lambs of the flock that scarcely seem as if they are alive, is quite another matter. Yet that is what the text means—"Bear you one another's burdens." Carry the lambs in your bosom, be tender to such as are afflicted. Be, as your Master was, of a gentle, loving spirit, seeking to bear the infirmities of the weak, especially you who are strong, for, if you are like those fat cattle described by the Lord in the prophecy of Ezekiel that thrust the lean cattle with side and with shoulder, and pushed with their horns those of the herd that were sickly, then the Lord will order you to be taken to the slaughter-house, for that is the lot of the fed beasts that are so big and brutal! The tall tree is uprooted in the breeze which only bends the lowly willow. Blessed are they who never exalt themselves over the weak and afflicted among the children of God!

Nor do I think, dear Friends, that our text could be made to mean that any of us may dare to live as if all things existed for our own use. Are there not some people who seem to feel that they are the center of all creation and that all things were created for their honor and glory? The working people round about them are so many "hands" to be employed by them at the lowest possible rate. The whole stream of trade must be so directed as to conduct the golden liquid into their capacious reservoirs. Politics and everything else must be so arranged that they shall prosper, whoever else may suffer loss. As they go through the world, their great concern is to mind the main chance. "Every man for himself," is the motto of their lives and they try to get as much as they can—and to keep as much as they can. Perhaps even their benevolence is only self-indulgence thinly veiled, for they give alms that they may be seen of men.

There are some Christian people—at least, I call them Christians by courtesy—whose main thought is about saving their own souls. Their favorite hymn is not in "Our Own Hymn Book"—

"A change to keep I have,
A God to glorify—
A never-dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky."

That is nothing but a kind of spiritual selfishness—living unto yourself! There is something that you want to get and that something is what you strive after. Blessed is that man who is saved beyond all fear and who, for the love he bears his Lord, lives wholly and only to prove the power of

the Grace of God that has been bestowed upon him—and earnestly seeks to be the means of saving the souls of others. The Doctrines of Grace do this for us, by delivering us from all fear with regard to the future and fixing us firmly upon the Rock of Ages. They turn our thoughts away from self to the service and the glory of our God. I delight to sing—

"'Tis done! The great transaction's done.
I am my Lord's, and He is mine"

and to feel that as He will never lose me, nor permit me to lose Him, I can turn all my thoughts to the rescue of my fellow-sinners who are going down into the Pit. If God shall grant us Grace to enter into the true spirit of the Gospel, having been delivered from every burden—both of this life and of that which is to come—we shall be prepared to bear one another's burdens and so to fulfill the law of that Christ who has set us free from the law of sin and death which was in our members.

I have thus shown you, negatively, what the text does *not* mean.

But, dear Friends, to take our text *positively*, we can see that it must mean, first, that we are to have great compassion upon those who are bearing the burden of sin. You cannot bear the burden of their sins for them—only Christ can do that—but you can help them to bear their burden. I mean this. Here is a troubled soul who has begun to seek the Lord and the poor creature is in great sorrow of heart. Get alongside that burdened one and say, "Now, dear Friend, I am very sorry for you. I feel as burdened about you as if it were my own soul, not yours, that was in trouble." Ask the Lord to help you when you have left that person—after speaking with much prayer and many tears, go home so grieved that you cannot sleep and keep on crying to God in secret about that soul. Then, when you get up in the morning with no burden concerning your own soul, because God has saved you, still feel that you have to carry the burden of this poor soul who does not know the Lord and, at last, you get to feel as if you could not live if that soul did not also live! If it will not repent, you seem to feel the burden of its guilt. If it will not believe in Christ, you wish you could believe for it. Of course you cannot repent and believe for it, but you *can* believe *about* it and you can, by faith and prayer, bring it to Jesus' feet and lay it there! The Holy Spirit often draws sinners to the Savior by means of the love of Christians. We can love them to Christ and if we love them as the Apostle Paul did when he travailed in birth for them until Christ was formed in them, it will not be long before we shall see them converted. I am sure that it is so—and that one great secret of soul-winning lies in the bearing of the burdens of the unconverted.

But we must take special care, dear Friends, that we do this in the case of backsliders because the text, in its context, alludes to them most particularly—"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in a fault, you who are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering yourself, lest you also be tempted. Bear you one another's burdens." If that backslider has been awakened to a sense of his true condition, he will feel very unhappy—so be very sympathetic towards him. He may be afraid to come back into membership with the church—if so, go after him and encourage him to return. If he says, "I have brought disgrace upon

the name of Christ," try to bear part of the shame that he feels. If he says, "I cannot face So-and-So," say to him, "I will stand between you. Or I will go and plead for you." Take to yourself, as far as you can, the shame and the disgrace which belong to the backslider. Try to get right into his place. I am sure that there is no other way of setting broken bones that is equal to this. There is no way of bringing back the wandering sheep like that which the good shepherd took when he lifted the poor creature right up on his own shoulders. It was too worn and weak, and weary for him to lead it back, or drive it back, so he carried it all the way! And, Brothers and Sisters, let us carry the backsliders on our own shoulders in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. As far as it is possible, let us compel them to come in once more that God's House may be filled—and let us take the burden of their grief and of their shame, upon ourselves. Thus shall we carry out the injunction of the text—"Bear you one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

Next, the text seems to me to mean, "Be very patient with the infirmities of your brethren." "Oh, but, So-and-So is very quick tempered!" I hope that it is a burden to him to be quick tempered and if so, that is an additional reason why you should bear with him. "But So-and-So is really very bitter in spirit." Yes, alas, there are still some people of that sort, but you are to bear with them. I hope it is a burden to them if they have even a tinge of bitterness in their nature, so bear with it. "I do not see why I should," says one. Well, then, open your eyes and read the text! "And so fulfill the law of Christ." If the Lord Jesus Christ can put up with *you*, you ought to be able to put up with *anybody*! "Oh, but some people are so exacting!" Yes, some of you know that I am sometimes very exacting. When I am suffering very greatly from gout, if anybody walks heavily and noisily across the room, it gives me pain. Well, then, what do you think happens? Why, they go across the room on tiptoe—they do not say to one another, "We cannot help it that he is ill and that our noise gives him pain. We shall walk just as we always do—we have a right to walk like that." No, no, they do not need even to be asked to move about quietly, but they say, "Poor man, he is so ill that we must be as gentle as we can with him." Could not you look in that kind of spirit upon Brothers and Sisters who are not quite all that you would like them to be, and say, "They are not well spiritually," and deal very gently with them, "and so fulfill the law of Christ"? We who are Christians are to live together in Heaven forever, so do not let us fall out by the way. Come, my Brother, I have to bear a great deal from you and you have to bear a great deal from me, so let it be give and take all the way through. "Bear you one another's burdens," not I bear yours without you bearing mine, but I bear yours and you bear mine—you put up with me, and I put up with you. And in that way we shall both "fulfill the law of Christ."

Does not the text also mean that we are to bear one another's burdens by having a deep sympathy with one another in times of sorrow? Oh, for a sympathetic heart! Seek after it, beloved Christians! Seek to have large hearts and tender hearts, for the world is full of sorrow and one of the sweetest balms to sorrow is the sympathy of Christ flowing through the

hearts of His own redeemed ones. Be tender, be full of pity, be full of compassion.

But this sympathy must show itself by actual assistance, rendered wherever it is possible. "Bear you one another's burdens." Let the burden of poverty be borne by those of you who have no poverty of your own. Succor your brethren in their times of need. Light their candle when their house grows dark. Blessed are those men and women who addict themselves to the ministry of the saints and who seek, wherever they can, to lighten the burdens of life for their fellow-Christians, lending their shoulders whenever they can give support to the weak.

Brothers and Sisters, we should also bear one another's *spiritual* burdens by helping one another in our soul-struggles. I am afraid that in some places of worship Christian men and women come up to the House of Prayer and go home again without ever speaking to one another! I do not think that is the case, here, but it is the case in many places, especially in very respectable places of worship. There they go in and out as if they were all self-contained and could not speak to one another, especially if they happen to be half-sovereign people and a half-crown person is anywhere near—they cannot speak to him at all. This is all contrary to the mind of Christ. In our Church fellowship, there should be *real* fellowship and we should converse with one another. In the olden times, "They that feared the Lord spoke often, one to another," and Christian people should do the same today—and you who are elders in the church might often say a word that would help a poor young friend who is struggling to do right. You who are joyous might often lend some of your sunbeams to those who are in the dark. And you ought to do so—it would be to your own profit as well as to the profit of others. Trade produces wealth and the inter-trading of Christians, exchanging their good things, one with the other, would tend to the spiritual enrichment of the entire body. God help you to do so by fellowship with one another!

"Bear you one another's burdens" also by much prayer for the other. When you have prayed for yourself, do not end your supplication. Keep a little list of people to be prayed for and try to put down, on your list, certain things which you know trouble them and which also trouble you—and bring them before the Lord. In some way or other, bear you those burdens which God lays upon your brethren!

II. The time flies so quickly that I can only speak very briefly upon the second point, that is, IMMUNITY. "For every man shall bear his own burden."

Let us always, for our comfort, remember that there is a point beyond which we cannot go in bearing one another's burdens. After you have prayed for anyone and conversed with him—and he still continues in sin, you are ready to break your heart about him. Yes, it is right to feel like that, but *do not be so unwise as to take his sin actually to yourself.* If you have warned, prayed, instructed and set a godly example—and men will still sin—their sin is their own and their blood will be upon their own head.

And, next, *do not take the shame of other people's sins upon yourself beyond a certain point*. I have known a good man ashamed to come to the House of God because his son had disgraced himself. Well, his sin does dishonor his father, but, still, as you did not commit the sin and you did not do anything to contribute to it, do not feel ashamed as that! I have known some Christian people very seriously injured by the shame which they have felt because some distant relative or some near relative has misbehaved himself. Go to God with it, but recollect that it is not your sin and it is not your shame, either. Bear it so as to sympathize and pray about it, but not so as to be, yourself, ashamed and depressed because of it!

Remember, also, that *we cannot take other people's responsibilities upon ourselves*. I am responsible for faithfully preaching the Gospel, but I am not responsible for your reception of it. If I preach the Truth of God and there is not a soul saved by it, I am not responsible for that. And if you, dear teacher in the Sunday school or if any of you Christian workers have labored in vain, if you have been faithful to God, I do not think that will happen—but if it does and it may happen in some measure—do not seem to bear that responsibility, for the text says, "Every man shall bear his own burden." I find it difficult to make young Brothers, when they begin to preach, feel sufficiently the burden of souls. But every now and then, I have met with a Brother who has felt the burden of souls so much that he has scarcely been able to preach at all! That is a pity, because, after all, the salvation of souls lies not with *us*, but with God. And if we have faithfully declared the whole counsel of God and can call God to witness that we have not kept back anything of His Truth that we knew, or failed in faithfulness or earnestness, we must leave the matter there and fall back upon the eternal purpose of God and throw the responsibility of the result upon our unbelieving hearers.

III. I have not time to speak as I would like upon the last point. That is, PERSONALITY. "Every man shall bear his own burden."

That is to say, *every man, if he has any religion at all, must have personal religion*. You cannot get to Heaven by your mother's godliness, or by your father's graciousness—there must be a work of Grace in your own souls. No man can be a sponsor for another in spiritual things. There is no more gigantic lie than that one person should promise that another shall do this and that, which he cannot even do himself! No, "every man shall bear his own burden." Everyone must come, with his own sin, to his own Savior and, by his own act of faith, must find peace through the blood of Jesus Christ. Do not trust to any national religion, for it is utterly worthless. It is only *personal* religion that can save you. If the blood of saints is flowing in your veins, it brings you nothing except greater responsibility, for salvation is not of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God, and of God alone.

And every man should bear his own burden *by personal self-examination*. I would never think of asking another man to give me his opinion of me and I hope you will not do so. Search your own souls, "examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith." "Oh, I do not like self-

examination!" says one. So the bankrupt said—he did not like casting up his accounts. But when a man in business does not cast his accounts up, his accounts will soon cast him up—and when a man does not like to examine his own heart, depend upon it, the time will come when Another will examine him and he will be found lacking and be cast away as worthless!

Next, this text means that *there must be personal service.* "Every man shall bear his own burden." That is, if you and I are saved, we must, each one, have a work of his own and we must set to work and do it personally. The Lord has put each one of us into a position where there is something we can do which nobody else can do—and we are bound to do it and not to begin thinking of how little others do, or how much others do, but to say to our Lord, "What will You have me do?" Let each Christian Levite bow his shoulder and carry some burden for the Lord's House.

And every man should *make a personal effort to bear his own burden.* We have a certain number of persons about who seem as if they never can do anything for themselves—they have to be carried wherever they go. I think I have told you of a set of portraits that I have at home—they represent my two sons, taken on their birthdays while they were quite little boys, and then taken every birthday till they had grown to be young men. Well, at first, they are in a baby carriage and it is very interesting to see how they have grown every year. But there are some of you who have been in baby carriages ever since I knew you—and you are still in baby carriages—and I have to keep wheeling you about! Oh, I wish you would grow up! We are all pleased to have dear little children and we do not mind how little they are at first. But if, after they were fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, or 20 years old, our boys were the same size as they were when they were a year old, we should feel that we were the parents of poor little dwarfs and it would be a great trial to us. And it is a great trial to us spiritual parents when we are the fathers of dwarfs! Oh, that you would grow up, Brothers and Sisters! God help you to grow out of yourselves, your inactivity and your listlessness, that every man and woman shall say, "I am big enough to bear my own burden. By the goodness of God, I will get so much Grace and so much help that I will do some work for the Lord, and do it thoroughly. I will bear my own burden—not sit on the top of it and fret and cry, and ask somebody else to bear it for me—but I will bear my own burden."

I will finish by saying that the text indicates that *everybody has own burden.* "Every man shall bear his own burden." You look at somebody else and you say, "Ah, I wish I had his load to carry!" I do not think that I ever met with more than one person in the world with whom, upon mature consideration, I would change places in all respects. I have thought, once or twice, that I might do so, but soon there has been a hitch somewhere, and I have said, "No, I will go back into my own shell, after all." I think, sometimes, that I would not mind changing places with George Muller for time and for eternity, but I do not know anybody else of whom

I would say as much as that. But I daresay that even he has his own burden, though he has not told me about it when I have talked with him.

And that good woman who always looks so smiling, God bless her! She has a skeleton at home in the closet. And that good Brother who is always so bright and cheery—yes, he has a burden, too. There is a cross for everyone and I want you to feel that it is so, because it would take away all thought of envy whenever you meet with another who seems so much happier than yourself! That Bother has the sense to turn the smooth side of his coat outside—he wears the rough side of it inwards—a very sensible thing to do. Do not, therefore, begin to say, "Oh, but I am so much worse off than he is!" You do not know what he has to endure, "for every man shall bear his own burden." Let us end the whole matter by not envying others, or caring or wishing to be other people, but just saying, "What can I do to help somebody else? What I can do to help *anybody*? I will do it by the Grace of God."

But what can some of you do in carrying burdens for other people? Why, even while I have been talking, you have said, "I do not care to do that. What have I to do with other people?" You are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity while you talk like that! Any man who is selfish is an unsaved man, for the chief point in salvation is to save us from ourselves. As long as you live simply within your own ribs, you live in a dungeon. You will never come into the palace where the many mansions are—the liberty of our great Father's House—until you can say, "I love others more than I love myself. Above all, I love the great Burden-Bearer who took my burden of sin upon His shoulders and carried it up to the Cross and away from the Cross and now, through love to Him, the love of self is gone and I will live to glorify His name forever and forever."

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

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
GALATIANS 5:13-26; 6:1, 2.

Galatians 5:13. *For, brethren, you have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love, serve one another.* Do not turn your liberty into license. The Apostle, in this Epistle, had began urging the Christians of Galatia to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, and never to be, again, entangled with the yoke of legal bondage. He warned them against that error into which many have fallen. But you know that it is often our tendency, if we escape from one error, to rush into another. So the Apostle guards these Christian against that Antinomian spirit which teaches us that freedom from the law allows indulgence in sin—"Use not your liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love, serve one another."

14. *For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this—You shall love your neighbor as yourself.* Oh, if that "one word" were so engraved on our hearts as to influence all our lives, what blessed lives of love to God and love to men we should lead!

15. *But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that you be not consumed one of another.* When dogs and wolves bite one another, it is according to their nature, but it is indeed bad when sheep take to biting one another. If I must be bitten at all, let me be bitten by a dog rather than by a sheep. That is to say, the wounds inflicted by the godly are far more painful to bear and last much longer than those caused by wicked men. Besides, we can say with the Psalmist, "It was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it." It is natural that the serpent's seed should nibble at our heel and seek to do us injury, but when the bite comes from a Brother—from a child of God—then it is peculiarly painful. Well might the Apostle write, "If you bite and devour one another, take heed that you be not consumed one of another." I have lived long enough to see churches absolutely destroyed, not by any external attacks, but by internal contention.

16. *This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.* If your life is guided by the Spirit of God—if you are spiritual men and women, and your actions are worked in the power of the Spirit, "you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."

17. *For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.* They will never agree—these two powers are always contrary, one to the other. If you think that you can help God by getting angry, you make a great mistake. You cannot fight God's battles with the devil's weapons. It is not possible that the power of the flesh should help the power of the Spirit!

17, 18. *And these are contrary, the one to the other: so that you cannot do the things that you would. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.* The Law of God is always to you the blessed rule by which you judge your conduct, but it is not a law of condemnation to you—neither are you seeking salvation by it.

19-21. *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these—Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envies, murders, drunkenness, revellings and such like.* The list is always too long to be completed! We are obliged to sum up with a kind of *et cetera*—"and such like."

21. *Of which I tell you beforehand, as I have also told you in times past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.* A very solemn, searching, sweeping declaration! Let each man judge himself by this test! "The *fruit* of the Spirit" is equally manifest, as the Apostle goes on to say.

22, 23. *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.* Neither human nor Divine! Good men make no law against these things, nor does God, for He approves of them. What a wonderful cluster of the grapes of Eshcol we have here! "The fruit of the Spirit"—as if all this were but one, after all—many luscious berries forming one great cluster. Oh, that all these things may be in us and abound, that we may be neither barren nor unfruitful!

24. *And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.* It is not yet dead, but it is crucified. It hangs up on the cross, straining to break away from the iron hold, but it cannot, for it is doomed to die. Happy, indeed, shall that day be when it shall be wholly dead.

25, 26. *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain-glory, provoking one another, envying one another.* Do Christian people need to be talked to like this? Yes, they do, for the best of men are but men at their best—and the godliest saint is liable to fall into the foulest sin unless the Grace of God prevents it. Oh, that we could expel from the Church of Christ all vain-glorying, all provoking of one another and all envying of one another! How often, if one Christian Brother does a little more than his fellow workers, they begin to find fault with him! And if one is blessed with greater success than others are, how frequently that success is disparaged and spoken of slightingly! This spirit of envy is, more or less, in all of us, and though, perhaps, we are not exhibiting it just now, it only needs a suitable opportunity for its display and it would be manifested. No man here has any idea of how bad he really is. You do not know how good the Grace of God can make you, nor how bad you are by nature, nor how bad you might become if that nature were left to itself!

Galatians 6:1. *Brethren, if a man is overtaken in a fault.* If he travels so slowly that his faults catch up with him and knock him down. "If a man is overtaken in a fault."

1. *You who are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.* Set his bones for him if they have been broken. Put him in his proper place again.

1. *Considering yourself, lest you also be tempted.* What would you wish others to do to you if you were in the position of this fallen one? The Apostle does not say, "Considering yourself lest you *also be overtaken* in a fault." No, but, "lest you also be *tempted*"—as much as to say, "It only needs the temptation to come to you and you will yield to it."

2. *Bear you one another's burdens, and fulfill the law of Christ.*

—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 YOKE AND BURDEN
NO. 2832

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 24, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 2, 1886.

"My yoke is easy and My burden is light."
Matthew 11:30.

OBSERVE dear Friends, that our Lord Jesus Christ does lay a yoke and a burden upon His followers. He uses those words that none may presume to enter His service without due consideration. Religion is not a matter for trifling. The service of the meek and lowly Christ is no child's play. There is a yoke that is to be borne by all His disciples and the neck of self-will must be bent low to receive it. There is a burden to be carried for Christ—and all the strength that God gives us must be used for His honor and Glory.

But, lest those words, "yoke," and, "burden," should sound harsh to our ears and any of us should start back because we have had our shoulders galled by another yoke and our backs bent beneath a very different burden, the Master very graciously and sweetly says, "My yoke is easy and My burden is light." It appears to me that He spoke thus so that none may despair—that despair may not even come near us and that we may not despond as to the possibility of our salvation. Christ has a yoke for us to wear, so let us seriously wear it. But it is an easy yoke, so let us wear it hopefully. He has a burden for us to carry for Him, so let us be in earnest in bearing it—but it is a light burden, so let us be full of joy at the very prospect of carrying it. Our Savior's adjectives are always emphatic and they are especially so here. His "yoke is *easy*"—easy in the fullest sense, and His "burden is *light*"—light in the most joyous meaning of the term! You may always be sure that in Christ's words there is never less than He seems to say and, more than that, you can scarcely ever be wrong in believing that every statement made by Him contains far more than appears on the surface of it.

I want you to feel, at this time, that whatever yoke and burden there may be connected with Christ, that yoke is easy and that burden is light. I hope you will not pervert this text as some people do. They misquote it by saying that "the yoke of *Christianity* is easy and the burden of *Christianity* is light." I am not greatly concerned about the yoke or burden of Christianity—to me, the charm of our text is that, here, we have Christ Himself saying to us, "My yoke is easy and My burden is light." I want you to have before you not some impalpable, visionary, imaginary thing,

but the very Lord that bought us with His precious blood speaking with those lips which are as lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh and, pointing with His pierced hand to the yoke and to the burden which He calls especially His own and saying, as He said when He was here upon the earth, "My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Coming, then, to our text, I ask you to notice, first, that *the context explains it.* Secondly, *a little word of distinction in the text clears it.* And, thirdly, *the experience of all who know the Lord proves it to be true.*

I. First, then, THE CONNECTION OF OUR TEXT EXPLAINS IT.

Our Savior did not speak these two sentences by themselves and, therefore, we may not take this verse by itself. It is true, but you may make it untrue to yourself unless you take it in its proper connection. How often shall we have to tell people that the Bible is not a mere collection of separate sentences which they may tear from their context just as they please? We are not to treat the verses of the Bible as pigeons might treat a bushel of peas—picking out one here and another there, without any thought of the surroundings of that particular passage! No, this blessed Book was written for men to read right through—and if they are to understand the meaning of it, they must read each sentence in the connection in which it is found.

So, keeping this Truth in view, I begin by saying that *some of you would not find Christ's yoke easy or His burden light.* That is the very last thing you would find them to be to you in your present condition—you would find His yoke heavy, and His burden impossible for you to bear! Some of you are mere worldlings—"lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." It may be that some of you are self-righteous and proud of that which should be your shame. Anyhow, if you are unregenerate, our text would not be true to you in your unconverted state. There is something else which must come before this. If any unsaved man thinks that he can, just as he is, shoulder Christ's Cross and yield himself up to be Christ's servant, he has made a great mistake. Before him, these burning sentences must flash like Sinai's lightning—"You must be born-again." "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be." God will not be served by men whose sins have not been washed away by the precious blood of His dear Son! He will have none to bear His burdens but those who have, first of all, received of His Grace through faith in the great "Mediator between God and men, the Man, Christ Jesus." So you see where you have to begin. "Come unto Me," said Christ, "all you that labor and are heavy laden." By that He means, "Do not suppose that because you are already laborers in another master's service, you can wear My yoke. Do not imagine that because you are already heavily laden, you can bear My burden. You must first get rid of that which now makes you labor. You must first be rid of that which is a burden to you, for 'no man can serve two masters.' Your old, toilsome labor must be done with, for no man can carry the double burden of his own guilt and of the service of God. That cannot be."

So, dearly-beloved, if you wish to be servants of God. If in your heart there burns a holy desire to serve the Most High, begin at the right place! Christ directs you to the door of entrance into His service and into everything else that is worth having when He says, "'Come *unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'* I will give it to you—you are not to buy it, you are not to earn it, or deserve it—I will give it to you freely, for nothing is freer than a gift! I will give it to you—nobody else can do so, but I, in My own Personality, will give to you who are the most weary with your laboring, and the most heavy laden with your sin—I will give to you rest and I will give it to you immediately, on the spot! Come to Me now, by believing on Me, by trusting wholly to Me, by getting away from yourself and forgetting, for a while, any hope you ever had in yourself—just coming to Me to find your all in Me—and so coming, I will give you rest."

You cannot take Christ's yoke upon you, or bear His burdens—and therefore you cannot prove them to be easy and light—till first of all you have entered into this rest which He so freely gives! If you are first perfectly rested, then you can work. I have told you before how the change which our Lord has made in the Sabbath is indicative of the change which He has made in our life. The Law of God says, "Work six days, and then observe the seventh as the Sabbath," but, under the Gospel, the arrangement is, "Rest on the first day before you have done a stroke of work. Just as the week begins, take your rest and, after that, in the strength derived from it, and from the grateful motives which arise out of that one blessed day of rest, give to the Lord the six days of the week." There is a change from Law to Gospel indicated in that very change—so let it be with you. "Come unto Me," said Christ, "all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." When you have done that, the text will be true to you, "My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

There is something more than that, however. We began with the Master's gracious invitation, "Come unto Me." Then follows the command, *"Take My yoke upon you."* You will prove that His yoke is easy when you take it upon you. But, instead of doing so, I know what a man often does. He draws his chair up, sits down and says, "I will consider what Christ requires of me. I will think of what it is to lead a Christian life—all the self-denials, the struggles and the conflicts that will be involved in wearing His yoke which seems to me a very hard one." Get up, Sir, from that chair and, instead of being a critic of Christ's yoke, put it on! "'Take My yoke upon you,' says the Lord Jesus. Take it upon your shoulder by a humble yet confident faith. First be rid of your old burden and so get rest—and then take upon you this yoke of Mine."

Let me put it practically to you and then see whether Christ's yoke is not easy, and His burden is not light. Suppose a number of persons say to me, "That mass of white substance yonder is salt." I say, "No, it is not salt. It is sugar." "But from this distance it looks like salt." I tell them that it is sweet, the very essence of sweetness, but they do not believe me. We may have a long talk over the matter, but we shall never get to the end of the controversy till they come to the sugar and taste it. Then

the controversy will be ended at once. So is it with men who have not proved the sweetness of Christ. They say, "There is nothing in religion except that which is burdensome and sad." It may seem to be to you who do not know anything about it, but we who trust and love the Lord say to you, "Taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusts in Him." That is the test—come and prove it for yourselves, for there has never yet been a case in which a man has really taken Christ's yoke upon him, in which he has not, by that very fact, proved that Christ's yoke is easy and His burden is light!

There is still more to follow, for the Savior says, "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."* There are two rests for a Christian to enjoy. The first is the rest that Christ gives him when he believes. The next is the rest that he finds when he takes Christ's yoke upon him. These two rests will be distinctly enjoyed by anyone who truly comes to Christ and learns of Him—and no one will find Christ's yoke easy in any other way. To put it in humble phraseology, when we are bound to Christ, as apprentices are bound to their master, to learn of Him, we shall find a new and yet deeper and fuller rest to our soul than we have ever known before. And this will prove to us that His yoke is easy and His burden is light. There is a use and habit in the service of Christ that brings much sweetness with it. To the beginner, the yoke may seem strange and, perhaps, galling, but, after a while, when we have learned of Christ—even as He, Himself, learned obedience when He made Himself a Servant for our sakes—then we shall discover that His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

There are some, even among real Christians, who do not yet know the joy of service for the Savior because they have not been long enough bound apprentice to the Master. See, that work is very hard to that young lad. He has been only two or three months in that workshop and, though he is trying his best, he does not succeed at it yet. But if he remains long enough by his master's side and learns of him, you will then see how deftly he will do it. Just as the master now does it and makes little of it because he is accustomed to it, so will this lad, by-and-by, find it quite easy—and he will then wonder that he ever thought it to be difficult! And he will agree with his master that, after all, the yoke is easy and the burden is light because he has learned the knack of carrying it.

When I am at Mentone, I frequently see women with bare feet, tripping down from the hills, carrying a basket, perhaps full of lemons and, very likely, with a child on the top of it. They never put up a hand to steady it, but they swing along, knitting their stockings as they come down the hill, using all their fingers for their work and cheerily saying, "Good morning," as they come by us! It is amazing how they carry such a load! I could not even lift the basket which they carry on their heads. How is it that they can do it? I do not suppose they could tell you, but they have done it since they were girls, and they have kept doing it! And feeble as you would suppose them to be, their strength has seemed to grow with the burden and they are able to carry their load easily and cheerfully. So,

when you come to Christ and get rid of your old burden, He puts upon you His burden—and you stay with Him and learn of Him till, at last, you, also, prove that His yoke is easy and His burden is light!

I must ask you to go one step further with me. *He who would enter to the fullest into the sweetness of this text must know Christ Himself,* for, observe, the Master puts Himself into it—"I am meek and lowly in heart; and you shall find rest unto your souls." I do most firmly believe that there is nothing that makes such men of us as knowing the Son of Man! After all, the most sublime science in the world is to know Christ and, especially, to know the meaning of the wounds of Christ. The man who has most studied the agony in the Garden and on the Cross, and who has most studied his Master in all conditions, will be the best fitted to be a burden-bearer—either to serve or to suffer, according as God would have it. The very sight of Christ makes cowards brave! One glance at that blessed Countenance of His, all smeared with bloody sweat, makes us ashamed that we ever murmured—disgusted with ourselves that we counted anything a self-denial for His dear sake!

When we see Him so gentle under all reproaches, bearing even to be spit upon without an angry look or word. When we really begin to know His very heart—that heart which was entirely subject to the will of God for our sakes—yes, even for the sake of those who were His enemies and who crucified Him—knowing Him thus, His yoke becomes indeed easy, and His burden becomes light! When the Cross of Christ was fresh in the memory of His Church, she bore martyrdom for Him with joy. His yoke then became so desirable that men even pressed into the court of justice to avow themselves Christians with the hope that they would be martyred! Men, did I say? Yes, and women and children, also, flocked in and seemed as though they courted torture for Christ's yoke had grown so light and so easy, on account of their having known Him, and His death being so fresh a thing! Oh it was marvelous! They have handed down to us, by their traditions, enough to make us blush if ever we dream of shrinking from any service or suffering for the sake of the Master who loved us so much that He even died for us!

II. But now, secondly, and may God the Holy Spirit help me to speak with power upon this important point!—THERE IS A LITTLE WORD OF DISTINCTION IN THE TEXT WHICH VERY MUCH HELPS TO CLEAR IT.

Perhaps somebody says, "I do not find the yoke of life easy, or the burden of life light." Christ does not say that they are. What He does say is, *My* yoke is easy and *My* burden is light." What was Christ's light burden and what was Christ's easy yoke? I believe that I might illustrate the text by saying that He thought thus of that yoke and that burden which He bore—the yoke which rested upon the shoulders of "the Prince of the kings of the earth"—the burden which lay on that blessed back which once wore the robe of universal empire. Never before was there such a yoke, or such a burden, but, for love of us and for delight in what He would accomplish thereby, His yoke to Him was easy, and His burden was light. For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame. So, whenever you have to bear a yoke or a burden,

count it easy for the same reason as Christ did—but it must be *Christ's* yoke that we carry, for that alone will be easy to us.

For, first, *the yoke of Christ is easy and light as compared with the yoke of others.* The yoke of Moses was heavy. The yoke of the Law of God was burdensome to the Jews, so that neither they nor their fathers were able to bear it. But the yoke of Christ's law is easy and the burden of Christ's command to His Church is light. The yoke of the world is heavy. If any man will wear it, he will find that he may serve this cruel taskmaster till he is gray and then he will be discarded. Cardinal Wolsey lamented, all too late, that had he but served his God with half the zeal he served his king, he would not, in his age, have been left naked to his enemies. The yoke of sin—the yoke of selfishness, the yoke of greediness, the yoke of drunkenness, the yoke of unbelief—is the heaviest yoke of all! The crux of infidelity is heavier than the Cross of Christ. You may depend upon it, that Christ's yoke, compared with any other, or with all others, is truly easy and light!

But then, *it is not easy if we are rebellious against it.* "I find it hard," says one, "to do the Master's will." Do you? I expect the difficulty is the result of *not doing the Master's will.* If you really did it willingly, it would be easy. "Oh, but I find such-and-such a thing, which Christ requires of me, to be hard." No, you do not find that to be hard—it is your own heart that is hard. The hardness is in the sin that rebels against Christ. There would be no hardness in the tenderness that would yield to Him, or that would come to you as the result of yielding. I struggle, and then the cords that bind me cut my flesh. I quietly yield, and then I do not injure myself. A man will float if he will lie still upon the top of the water, but he will drown if he begins to struggle. It is the complete yielding to Christ that makes the yoke to be easy—but the difficulty comes when it is not His yoke that we take, but one made by our self-will. We must have everything according to our own will. We must do everything in our own way and so, Lord Will-Be-Will comes prancing down the street on his high horse and then everything goes amiss! But Christ's yoke is easy and His burden is light.

"Still, the burden of life is very heavy," says one. Yes, but how far is it Christ's yoke and His burden? *It is not His yoke if we are burdened with forbidden cares,* for His yoke is that we should be free from care because we have cast all our care upon Him who cares for us. Has He not pointed us to ravens and to lilies and bid us learn from them the lesson of living without care? Your cares, poor anxious one, are not Christ's yoke! They are a heavy yoke that is all of your own making. But if you took another kind of care—the care of not caring—then you would find Christ's yoke to be easy, His burden to be light and your life would be joyous and happy!

Nor is it Christ's yoke when we add other burdens to the one He lays upon us. "Oh, but I want"—yes, I know. You want to get on, to be rich, to be famous and all of that! But is that Christ's yoke? He says, "I am meek and lowly in heart." Ambition is your own yoke, not His! And the lust of wealth, the desire for power, the craving for human love—all that is a yoke of your own making—and if you will wear it, it will gall you. There is

more joy in being unknown than in being known and there is less care in having no wealth than in having much of it. We often go the wrong way to work in seeking true restfulness and happiness. We set our minds on getting this and that, and then blame our Master because we have a heavy burden on our backs. He meant that we *should* have a heavy burden if we would make one of our own! But if our only care was to seek His Glory, to imitate Him, to put our feet down into His footprints—if, like He, we were submissive even in our greatest agony and closed our most intense petitions with His own words, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will," then we should find that His yoke is easy and His burden is light! God grant us Grace to prove the difference between His yoke and that which we make for ourselves—between His burden and that which we pile up by our own willfulness!

The yoke of Christ is His word, His precepts, His commands, the following of His example, the bearing of suffering which He appoints, the persecution which comes to us for His sake. This is His yoke, and His burden, quite as much as we need desire to carry. So, let us be content that we are not our own masters, but that we are our Lord's servants and that we have not even a pennyworth of our own to carry, but only mean to be carriers for Him. We have hired ourselves out to carry the vessels of the sanctuary—and we will carry no other burden than that. You remember that Nehemiah gave orders to his servants, "that there should be no burden brought in on the Sabbath day," and the Lord has graciously brought us to a Divine "Sabbatismos" already. If we bear no burdens but His burdens, and do no service but His service, then we shall find that His yoke is easy and His burden is light! May God the Holy Spirit lead us into this kind of life and then, indeed, shall we be truly happy!

III. Our third point is to be that OUR EXPERIENCE PROVES THE TEXT TO BE TRUE. Many of us have proved that Christ's yoke is easy and that His burden is light. In speaking upon this point, I must go over part of the ground I traversed just now.

Experience—that is to say, use and habit again—*proves Christ's burden to be light.* Those of you who have known the Lord these 25 or 30 or 40 years, what do you say about this matter? Do you not find things somewhat different from what they were when you first came to Christ? Then, He gave you rest, did He not?—and you have never lost it, but, since then, you have gone on bearing His Cross and learning of Him—and you have found a more complete rest, have you not? I think that I shall describe your experience, as well as my own, when I say that we now have a calmness and serenity of spirit which we did not know at first. We have learned to do, almost spontaneously, some things which used to cost us a great effort. We now, almost instantaneously, think and say what before would have caused us deliberation to think and say—and many a burden that almost broke our backs, then, is no burden at all to us now!

See how it is with those who have been long sick. At first they dread the thought of being a week without coming downstairs—but after being bed-ridden for 20 years, they get accustomed to it and even smile when

we pity them. Well, that is a strong illustration of what I mean. To those who are not sufferers, I might give other illustrations, but it is true that there is a sacred use and habit that comes to us through the Grace of God. We say that "use is second nature" and, being accustomed to bear this burden, we are like the bullock which at first is restive and will not plow, but when, year after year, he has plowed with his true yokefellow, he gets almost to love the yoke. And when he is brought out in the morning, he looks round for his yokefellow and adjusts his neck so that he may bear his part of the yoke without distressing his companion that is to be yoked with him. And almost before the farmer bids them move, the two bullocks begin steadily to go their usual round. There is less need of the ox-goad, now, because they have become accustomed to the yoke. They seem to know when to turn at the end of the furrow and how to do it all—and blessed is that Christian who, by experience, has acquired the blessed habit of serving or suffering as his Master wills. He finds that Christ's yoke is easy and His burden is light.

But, dear Friends, we also, by experience, prove Christ's yoke to be easy and His burden to be light *because of the motive that leads us to bear them*. What is the motive that leads a Christian to bear Christ's yoke and burden? Why, the master motive is love! And what will we not do for love? Things which no money could induce us to do are freely done out of love. Well does our poet sing—

"'Tis love that makes our willing feet
In swift obedience move."

In our ordinary domestic life, nothing is too heavy. Nothing is too demeaning if it is done for love. And so is it with the yoke of Christ. When we really come to love Him, we are willing to do or to suffer anything for His dear sake! His love makes the burden light and the yoke easy.

Further, experience shows us that these things are light *because there is a new nature given us with which we bear the burden and the yoke*. Our old carnal nature cannot endure it—you might as soon try to yoke the sea or to harness the wind as seek to put the yoke of Christ upon a carnal man's shoulder, or make him open his mouth to receive the bit of the Divine Law. But God creates in us a new heart and a right spirit—and that new nature as naturally takes to obedience as the old nature took to rebellion! And so the yoke becomes easy and the burden light. Is not that the true answer to the riddle? Is not that the great reason why that which otherwise would crush us becomes so light?

Then, Christ's yoke is easy and His burden is light *because the Divine Trinity comes to our help.* When the Trinity comes in, all thought of difficulty vanishes. If our Heavenly Father is with us, we can do or bear anything. The feeblest among us could stand, like Atlas with a world upon his shoulders and never feel the strain if God the Father were with him! Then, how uplifting is the sympathy of Christ! We can bear *anything* when He says to us—

"'I feel in My heart all your sighs and your groans,
For you are most near Me, My flesh and My bones!
In all your distresses your Head feels the pain,
Yet all are most necessary, not one is in vain."

Dr. Watts wrote truly—

"Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows."

Then there is the blessed co-operation of the Holy Spirit. When He comes to us as Comforter, Quickener, Guide, Strengthener and Friend—then the yoke is easy and the burden is light—especially when He comes with manifestations of God to the soul and when faith, and hope, and joy, are all shedding their benign influence over the heart. Well might the Apostle say that he could do all things through Christ who strengthened him! And when the Holy Spirit comes and reveals Christ in us, then nothing is difficult, but everything is light and easy. Experience cracks this nut which otherwise might break our teeth. Have you ever tried it, Brothers and Sisters? If so, I know that you have proved Christ's word true to you, "My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Another thing that helps to make Christ's yoke easy to some of us is *the consciousness of the benefits which we have derived from it.* I can bear my personal testimony that the best piece of furniture that I ever had in the house was a cross. I do not mean a material cross—I mean the cross of affliction and trouble. I am sure that I have run more swiftly with a lame leg than I ever did with a sound one. I am certain that I have seen more in the dark than ever I saw in the light—more stars, most certainly—more things in Heaven if fewer things on earth! The anvil, the fire and the hammer are the making of us—we do not get fashioned much by anything else. That heavy hammer falling on us helps to shape us! Therefore let affliction and trouble and trial come. Rutherford said that he thought Christ might almost be jealous of His Cross, for he loved affliction so much! It had brought him so much benefit that he began even to love the cross—it had drawn him so close to his Lord that they ran each other pretty evenly.

Well, I do not think that there is much fear of that, but, really, Christ and His Cross do so sweetly go together that I have sometimes felt like the man who had such blessed times in his sickness and who became so dull when he recovered, that he said, "Take me back to bed, again, and let me have all my pains, again, for then I proved the preciousness of Christ." Many an old Covenanter, when he met in the kirk in Edinburgh and sat there in peace and quietness, had not half the fellowship with Christ which he had experienced when the cruel Claverhouse was after him! And he said, "Let me go back to the moors and worship God as I did when the text was read by the light of the lightning flash, for God was very near His people beside the moss and among the hills." It is certainly so, still, Brothers and Sisters. Not only is Christ's yoke easy and His burden light, but I have often felt as if His yoke were wings and His burden feathers—as if, by their help, I could mount and soar above all ordinary experiences! You know what weights are and how they hold you down—but any engineer will tell you that there is a way of managing weights so as to make them lift you up—and our great Engineer lifts us by that which seems as if it would drag us down! Blessed be His name for this!

And, lastly, His yoke becomes easy and His burden light *as we think of what will come of them at last.* The deeper our sorrows, the louder we shall sing. Heaven will be all the brighter because of the darkness through which we have passed on the way to it. Oh, what a Heaven it will be to the sick, the poor, the despised and the afflicted, to burst their bonds and soar away to everlasting bliss! It will not be long before you and I will be where Jesus is—therefore, till then, let us patiently bear all that He lays upon us.

But this is not true of you all. Some of you have heavy burdens to carry, but you have nobody to help you. How do you manage to live without a God? O poor creatures! Perhaps you, Sir, came here in a carriage and pair, but you are, indeed, a poor creature if you have not a God. You draw large dividends from the bank, but you are poor, indeed, if you have not Christ as your Savior. As for me, I will take Christ and His Cross, and count them greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt! The Lord bring you all to think and say the same—and if you ever do, then you can begin with, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," and you can go on to the text and claim Christ's words as applying to you—"My yoke is easy and My burden is light." The way of holiness is an easy way! May God the Holy Spirit graciously guide you to walk in it, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—775, 493, 495.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 49:24-26; 50.

Isaiah 49:24. *Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered?* Yes, this shall happen when God makes bare His arm and stretches it forth to rescue His captive people.

25, 26. *But thus said the LORD, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contends with you, and I will save your children. And I will feed them that oppress you with their own flesh; and they shall be drunk with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I, the LORD, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.* This is the promise of Christ to His Church, both the Jewish and the gentile Church. He will deliver her from all her afflictions and distresses. And her enemies shall feed upon their own flesh, or they shall be overthrown by mutual enemies. As it was of old when those that were confederate against Israel suddenly fell to quarreling and slew each other, so is it, sooner or later, in the battle between the Truth of God and error. By-and-by there is a split in the adversaries' camp and they devour one another! Let any wrong thing alone and it will break in pieces of itself. All real and abiding cohesion is gone when men seek to be united against the Lord and against His Anointed. They shall confute one another, or they shall eat their own words and so they shall, as it were, feed upon their own flesh.

Isaiah 50:1. *Thus says the LORD, Where is the bill of your mother's divorce, whom I have put away?* Sometimes, the headings to the chapters in our Bible give us the meaning of the passage. They are, of course, not Inspired, and are merely put there by the translators, but, sometimes, they are little comments upon the text. It is so in the heading of this chapter—"Christ shows that the dereliction of the Jews is not to be imputed to Him, by His ability to save, by His obedience in that work, and by His confidence in that assistance," so that the Lord Jesus, here, speaks to the Jewish Church. The great Redeemer, "the Mighty One of Jacob," thus speaks to His chosen people Israel, "Where is the bill of your mother's divorce, whom I have put away?"

1. *Or which of My creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have you sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.* It was *sin* that caused the alienation between Israel and her God, and it is sin that is the cause of all the estrangement from God in the world. A sinful man, so long as he continues to live in sin, cannot love a holy God!

2, 3. *Why, when I came, was there no man? When I called, was there no one to answer? Is My hand shortened at all, that it can't redeem? Or have I no power to deliver? Behold, at My rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stink because there is no water, and die for thirst. I clothe the heavens with blackness and I make sackcloth their covering.* What a glorious God this is who says that He has not divorced His people! How mighty He is—yes, Almighty! All power is in His hands. Notice who He is, for He goes on to describe Himself—

4. *The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary: He wakens Me morning by morning, He wakens My ears to hear as the learned.* Just as scholars learn from their teacher. It was a wondrous stoop for the Omnipotent to become a Learner, but He descended lower than that.

5. *The Lord GOD has opened My ears and I was not rebellious, neither turned back.* This was another step in the ladder of Christ's humiliation, but He went lower still! Read the 3rd verse, again, and then read the 6th . "I clothe the heavens with blackness and I make sackcloth their covering."

6, 7. *I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting. For the Lord GOD will help Me, therefore shall I not be confounded, therefore have I set My face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.* Even though He had to stoop so low as to endure shame and spitting, He knew that the ultimate result would be Glory to God and to Himself. He had no thought of despairing. It had been already written of Him, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged." He shall surely accomplish the work which His Father gave Him to do. The next verse is probably the one from which Paul took that grand challenge of his, "Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died," and so on. He takes out of the mouth of Christ his words of confidence and puts them into the mouth of all Christ's people.

8. *He is near that justifies Me; who will contend with Me?* Our Lord Jesus Christ was justified in His Resurrection. He took His people's sin upon Him and, therefore, He had to die in their place—but His work was so complete that He was Himself justified as well as all His people—and He challenges anyone to lay anything to His charge!

8-10. *Let us stand together: who is My adversary? Let him come near to Me. Behold, the Lord God will help Me, who is he that shall condemn Me? Lo, they all shall wax old as a garment, the moth shall eat them up. Who is among you that fears the LORD, that obeys the voice of His servant, that walks in darkness, and has no light?* It is the Savior still speaking, for He knew what it was to walk in darkness and to have no light. And what terrible darkness it was, my Brothers and Sisters! What an awful thing it was to Him to have so suffer the withdrawal of the light of His Father's Countenance from Him! He knows, therefore, what this trial means, and being full of compassion, He offers to us the kindest counsel if we are in a similar condition. What does He tell us to do? Listen, you who love the Lord, yet who are in the dark.

10. *Let him trust in the name of the LORD, and rely upon his God.* In darkness or in the light, take heed that you do this! When everything about you seems contrary to the Divine promises and your spirits are ready to sink, take heed to this good counsel of your Savior—"Let him trust in the name of the LORD, and rely upon his God."

11. *Behold, all you that kindle a fire.* You who would gladly save yourselves.

11. *That compass yourselves about with sparks.* Or firebrands.

11. *Walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks.* Or flambeaux.

11. *That you have kindled.* That will be the end of it. This grand illumination of yours—all your good works, all your glorious intellect and I know not what—what will come of it?

11. *This shall you have of My hand; you shall lie down in sorrow.* God save us all from such a lying down as that at the last, 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.

LESSONS ON DIVINE GRACE
NO. 2833

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 31, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, IN THE SUMMER OF 1861.

"But by the Grace of God I am what I am.
1 Corinthians 15:10.

THIS confession, suitable on the lips of Paul, is equally appropriate in the mouth of each one of us who have known and proved the Grace of God. We must consider Paul, according to his own account of himself, as being "not meet to be called an Apostle"—though "not a whit behind the very chief Apostles"—because he had persecuted the Church of God. In respect of personal merit, he knew that he did not deserve to be accounted of at all, yet, when the sole ground of approbation was not the service he had rendered to his Sovereign, but the favor which his Sovereign had bestowed upon him, he could say, "By the Grace of God I am what I am." Take the meanest lamb in Jesus' fold, the feeblest heir of Grace, the most timid and fearing—the most hopeless and helpless of all disciples, the man most devoid of talent, the man who stands the very lowest on the list of the saints of God—surely he may and must say that "by the Grace of God" he is what he is, so far as he is in Christ—a Believer, with all the privileges that Believers have a gracious right to claim! Let this be your comfort, you little ones, that the same Grace that made an Apostle of Paul has made a Christian of you. The same power that has quickened the mightiest man in the army of the Lord of Hosts has also quickened you. The Grace that saves the greatest saves the least. If the largest and brightest gem in the crown of Christ reflects His Grace and glorifies His love, even so shall you, though you are as the smallest pearl that shall be set in His glorious diadem of honor!

Then, next, take the Apostle Paul in the other way he describes himself in our text. In the preceding verse, he says he is the least of the Apostles, yet he also says, "I labored more abundantly than they all." It is equally true, whether you put him in the meanest place among converts, or in the very forefront of the army of faithful soldiers of Christ—among the feeblest of pensioners or the most zealous of all the laborers in the vineyard of the Master—the acknowledgment must be made, "By the Grace of God I am what I am." Be our attainments never so eminent, our knowledge never so extensive, our usefulness never so great, yet still we stand, in the sight of God, on the same footing as the very meanest member of the Church of Christ! The song which begins among the little

and the timid gathers strength among the great and the brave. It is not altered in the slightest degree—the language is the same, the strain the same, the song the same—"By the Grace of God," we, all of us, must say, "we are what we are"!

I am going to speak of my text, first, *doctrinally*. Secondly, *experimentally*. And, thirdly, *practically*.

I. First, DOCTRINALLY. Each one of us who is a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ can take this sentence as his creed and say, "By the Grace of God I am what I am."

That is to say, first, I am not what I am *as the result of something good which God foresaw would be in me*. God has not vouchsafed His love, His favor, His mercy to me because He foresaw that I would repent of my sin and trust in His dear Son. No, there is a deeper cause for His love than anything that could be found in me! Indeed, there is nothing that could be found in me that is lovely in His sight, but it would be proved, immediately, that He had, first of all, freely given that lovely thing to me, or created it within me. If I am a child of God, an heir of Heaven, the wellspring of God's love to me is in His own Sovereign Grace. Nothing in my disposition or character could move His heart to me. His heart must have moved spontaneously—it must have welled up because of its own deep love—and it must have flowed towards me in its own Divine channel simply because God, in His Sovereignty, would have it so! "By the Grace of God," I am elected unto eternal life—

"Grace first inscribed my name,
In God 's eternal book."

'Twas Grace which set me apart, in distinguishing love, before the stars were made! 'Twas Grace that separated me from the mass of mankind. 'Twas Grace that laid hold of me while I was but as a pebble in the brook—and ordained that I should be a bright diamond in Christ's crown! It was God who, in the beginning, by His own Grace, decreed that I should be what I am and, therefore, to begin there, we take this as our creed, "By the Grace of God"—as manifested in eternity and, by that alone have I been caused to be "what I am."

Then, next, my text also means I am not what I am *as the result of any creature strength, or any means of my own*. I am not what I am because I chose to be what I am, for if I had been what I chose to be, I would still have been "dead in trespasses and sins." If I had followed my poor, blind free will, it would have been, to this day, leading me to Hell! It would never have led me Heaven. If I had made it my guide, I would have wandered further and further, and further away from God. With my back to the Savior, I would never have moved towards God. It is the same with all of us—if there is anything good in any of us, we must confess that God Himself put it there. He taught our souls to pray. He made us feel our need of Divine Grace. He stripped us of our boastful pride. He delivered us from our refuges of lies. He leveled the legality of our hearts by bringing us low with labor, exhausting all our strength. 'Twas He who cast the first ray of hope into our soul! He opened our blind eyes to see the beauty of Christ! He gave us the first glimmering of faith! He enabled us to see

that our sins were washed away by the precious blood of Jesus and He has kept us alive to this day and will not let us go!

We will maintain this Truth of God against all comers, that saints are what they are "by the Grace of God" and not by their own free will! I have sometimes heard men preach doctrines contrary to this. They have said that men are what they are as the result of the improvement of "universal Grace," and that the distinction which is apparent in them is made by themselves. God gave them a Grace which they were to use—not a Grace which operated upon them, but a grace which they operated upon. According to that teaching, Divine Grace is given to men as a tool with which they are to work, not as a seal which God sets upon a man—Grace is subservient to man—he is not subservient to Grace. Yet I must say that although I have heard such doctrine as that preached from the pulpit, I have never known it to be practically received in the heart of a child of God. When you come to the point and ask a true Believer, "Why are you, now, a child of God and an heir of Heaven?" he tells you, once and for all, "God made the difference." He will, perhaps, tell you that men can do much towards their own conversion, but He will deny that he has done anything towards his. He will loyally put the crown on the head of Christ, even though being clouded in his understanding, he may have talked as if he denied the Truth. But, Brothers and Sisters, what we hold is the Doctrine of the effectual working of God in the hearts of His chosen ones, as the Lord said to Zerubbabel, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, said the Lord of Hosts." And as Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "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."

Now let us look at our text in another aspect. Some suppose that even if Divine Grace begins the work, we must at least carry it on. It cannot be denied that the living child of God has power, but it must not be forgotten that the power of the living child of God is not in himself, but in his Heavenly Father. For it is as true of him as of any sinner—"dead in trespasses and sins" that, without Christ, he can do nothing. The living child of God is still as powerless as the dead sinner apart from the constant indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the constant inflowing of the Divine Life into his soul. "By the Grace of God" we not only are what we are, but we also *remain* what we are. We would long ago have ruined ourselves— and damned ourselves—if Christ had not kept us by His Almighty Grace!

There has not been one hour in our whole Christian experience in which we have preserved ourselves! We cannot look back to any stage in our history and say, "Here I worked mighty marvels by my own unaided power." We dare not say, when we have been made to stand on our high places, that we stood there by our own wisdom. Nor can we say, when we have run without weariness, that we did it in our own strength. No, Beloved, whenever we discover our own strength in our pilgrimage, it is in going backward and in tumbling down—never in going forward, or in mounting upward. With the Psalmist, we have to say to the Lord, "All my

springs are in You" and, as all the springs are in the Lord, so are all the streams as well. As for myself, I must continually sing—

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

Not only am I debtor to Grace, once and for all, but each day adds to the debt and each hour the bulk of my obligation grows. I must still say, "By the Grace of God I am what I am." Some of you could say this 20 years ago, but you can say it with even greater emphasis now! And when you get gray-headed and totter down to Jordan's brink, you will not be able to say, "By my own goodness I am what I am." Even there must you give all the glory to that Divine Grace which, having been the Alpha, will also be the Omega—which, having been the beginning, will also be the end.

So, doctrinally, I state the Truth of my text thus, "By the Grace of God I am what I am." I am elect. My election is of Grace. I am redeemed. Redemption is a mighty masterpiece of Grace. I am called—called by Grace. I am preserved— preserved by Grace and whatever there is in me that is commendable and virtuous, whatever there is in me which the Son of God can admire and which gives to my own soul real comfort, must be all of Grace and of Grace alone! I have spoken so much in the first person because the text is in the first person. Will each of you, also, speak in the first person and say in your heart, "By the Grace of God I am what I am," endorsing the text from your own experience, setting your seal to this part of God's Word and declaring it to be true and going forth with this motto emblazoned on your banner as the Doctrine which you will hear, and which, if you are called to the ministry, you will preach, "By the Grace of God I am what I am"?

II. Now, in the second place, I am going to take the text EXPERIMENTALLY.

By this I mean that there are times in our experience when this Truth of God starts up in letters of light and we recognize it as an indisputable fact, not only taught to us as a Scriptural Doctrine, but proved to us by our own personal experience. Let me just narrate a few instances. Brothers and Sisters, have you ever had times when the fountains of the great deep of your depravity have been broken up? Have you ever been taken into the chambers of imagery and has the Spirit of God said to you, "Son of man, I will show you greater abominations than these!" And has He taken you, first, into one room, and then into another and made you stand aghast while He has shown you the idols of your heart, the deep depravity that still remains in you, the pride, sloth and various forms of sin which still lurk and find shelter there? Have you ever had the filthy rags unrolled before your eyes? Have you heard the chattering of the unclean birds in the cage of your heart? Have you ever been fully conscious of the stench arising from your Old Adam nature? Has your spirit sickened at the very thought of the depravity of manhood in general and of yourself in particular? Have you ever had your secret sins set in the light of God's Countenance? Have you ever been made to see the blackness of your own sin, side by side with the brightness of Divine favor? Have you ever been made to taste the exceeding bitterness of your sin even at the

Communion Table—even while you realized the preciousness of the blood of Chris and renewed your former fellowship with Him? If so, then I know that my text has been true to you, as it also has been to me, and that you have said, as I have often been compelled to say, "By the grace of God I am what I am."

You have looked at your heart and you have seen its barren soil. And if there has been any wheat growing upon it, you have said, "This is the result of the Grace of God." You have looked at the huge black rock of your Old Adam nature and when you have seen rivers of Living Water flowing out of the very midst of it, you have been obliged to say, "This mighty miracle could only have been worked by the Grace of God." Flimsy views of human depravity lead to very indistinct ideas of the Grace of God. There is nothing but deep sub-soil plowing that ever makes a man sound in the Doctrines of Grace—and I will defy any man who has had a deep experience of his own odious depravity to believe any other doctrines but the Doctrines of Grace which are commonly called Calvinism! No, more than that, the mind, unless it is most graciously taught by the Spirit of God, will be apt to go beyond the true Scriptural Doctrine and to push the term beyond its legitimate sphere.

There have been other occasions on which you and I have been forced to cry, "By the Grace of God I am what I am," namely, *after some strong and terrible temptation*. Have you ever known what it is to feel some old lust which you thought was dead, suddenly come upon you with a whirlwind power and drive you before it like a sere leaf of the forest that could not resist its might? I have, sometimes, had this trying experience. When quietly meditating upon the things of God, some fierce and fearful impulse to sin has assailed me—as if a giant had seized me by the neck and pushed me onward until, at last, I came to the very brink of some awful iniquity and looked down upon it. And, just as it seemed as if I must plunge into it, my eyes have been opened and I have seen the horror of great darkness and I have exclaimed, "O God! How is it that I have not committed that sin? How is it that You have come to save me just in the nick of time and stretched out Your hand to rescue me just when 'my feet were almost gone,' when, 'my steps had well-nigh slipped'? Not only had I thought of slipping, but 'my steps had well-nigh slipped.' Then, Your mercy, O God, held me up!" I do not know whether you have had strong impulses of that kind. Many of God's people have, and especially those who, before conversion, plunged deeply into sin. You have sometimes had almost on your lips the oath which you have hated in your inmost heart. Iniquity has come before you in a fascinating guise and, although you abhorred it, yet, for the moment, a strange hallucination of dazzling witchery seemed to lay hold of your spirit—and if you had yielded to it, you would have been like Samson when he fell into the hands of the Philistines! So it is that we are often compelled to say, as we look back upon marvelous Providences and Divine interpositions, "Truly, by the Grace of God we are what we are, and by that Grace, alone, have we been preserved from falling into sin."

I think, too, that this Truth has often been brought home to us when *we have witnessed the fall of others*. You have, perhaps, walked to and from the House of God with some notable professor of religion and he has instructed you on many points. He seemed to be a man of deep experience and devout life. Your heart has been knit to him and you have said, "Here, indeed, is a Brother," and you have, possibly, envied him his great attainments and his fluent speech. Then, all of a sudden, you heard that he had fallen into some terrible sin. You made enquiries and you found that it was only too true. You were present, one night, at the Church meeting when the solemn sentence of excommunication was pronounced upon him—and while the minister uttered it, all the members wept and prayed that the poor fallen one might be brought to repentance and that his soul might not be the prey of Satan. At such a time as that, you have said, "By the Grace of God I am what I am," and you have said, with good John Newton—

"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 they at last!"

Such instances may act as beacons to warn us of pride and to teach us, again, the lesson that by the Grace of God we are what we are.

Then, Brothers and Sisters, I think there are other seasons when we learn this lesson. That is, *in times of great dullness in spiritual matters.* Heavenly trade is not always brisk, even in the best market—that is, in the breast of the Believer. Spiritual mariners do not find that the wind always blows and thus, though we should always have our sails up, (which, alas, is not always the case with us), even then the wind would not always blow, for it "blows where it wishes." Like the sea, we have our ebb as well as our flood-tide. Do you not know what it is to go to the Throne of Grace when— as for words, you can find plenty of them, but as for heart and soul, and vigor in prayer—if your salvation depended upon your fervency, you must perish? Have you not gone to the Mercy Seat and groaned there—and groaned most of all because you could not groan as you ought? You have taken your needs to the Throne of Grace, but you have had to bring them away again. You have gone up to the House of God and though you could find no fault with the sermon, there was, somehow or other, nothing in it for you.

You went home to read your Bible and though you knew that it was a precious Book, it did not seem precious to you. It might be like a honeycomb, but you could not get any of the honey out of it. You had lost all spiritual appetite and you felt as if you were drawing near to the gates of death. You remember, too, how you then sought the society of the godly, yet you received no consolation from them. Heavenly things seemed to be but dreams—the substantial things of eternity did not affect your spirit as they should have done and you could only cry, with the Psalmist, "My soul cleaves unto the dust: quicken You me according to Your word."

And at such times, and especially if your prayer has been graciously heard, you have been compelled to say, "It is my natural state to be cold and dull and if, at any time, I run swiftly in the heavenly race—if my sails are filled and my boat is carried towards Paradise—surely this is by the Grace of God."

Just one more remark upon this point. *Times of great mercy often operate* upon some of us so as to bring us very low and to make us feel, "By the Grace of God we are what we are." Simon Peter had this experience. When his boat was full of fish, so that it began to sink, he fell on his knees before his Master and said "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Their greatness of God's mercy to him convinced him of his own unworthiness and it has been the same with some of us. The more the Glory of God's Grace has been revealed to our souls, the humbler have we been made to lie at His feet. When the Lord has piled up His mercies till they were like the great mountains and His faithfulness has been like the bottomless depths, then have we been obliged to say, "These great things are, indeed, of God—they could not have come of man." At such times we have felt that we could sit before the Lord, as David did, and ask, "Who am I, O Lord God? And what is my house, that You have brought me to this point?" God sometimes overwhelms His children with mercy quite as completely as He ever does with affliction. Pride may be overcome in two ways. It is sometimes overcome by trouble that crushes a man, but, at other times, the same result is produced by Almighty Grace which, in overwhelming waves of love, rushes in upon the man's spirit, till, submerged in love and mercy, he can only resign himself to its depths and feel—yet always feel that he cannot feel enough—the wonders of God's Grace and his own littleness in comparison with God's amazing favor! God sometimes humbles His children by putting them in the dark, but He sometimes does it in another way, as David said, "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars which You have ordained; what is man, that You are mindful of him? And the son of man, that You visit him?" How often have we also had to say, with David, "How precious, also, are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!" So I hope it will be with each one of us, that the greatness of God's mercy to us, as a Church, and as individuals, will lead us to say, "By the Grace of God we are what we are."

III. Now, in closing, let us consider our subject PRACTICALLY. What is the practical use of this text, "By the Grace of God I am what I am"?

Surely, as I have already reminded you, it is designed *to keep us humble*. Depend upon it, if we do not take this text for our motto every day, there is the rod of the Covenant ready for us. He will soon be in a storm who does not see God's Grace in the sunshine. If His mercies surround us and our days roll happily along, but we begin to ascribe our greatness and our riches to ourselves, it will not be long before God will bring us down. It may be so in your experience, especially if you soar upon the wings of self-confidence. As surely as you begin to get strong in your own strength, there is an hour of weakness close at hand! Whenever you are full of self, it will not be long before you learn your own emptiness, for he

who begins to grow rich in himself is next door to poverty—no, he is already clothed in rags. No, my Brothers and Sisters, there is no safe walking unless we make this the staff on which we lean—"By the Grace of God we are what we are." While we stick to this as our hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, yearly, everlasting motto, we shall not go astray, nor shall we experience those terrible downcastings which are the inevitable result of our flying up in self-confidence. Come then, Beloved, from this day let us learn humility, let us tread our pride in the dust and say, "Why should we be proud? By the Grace of God we are what we are."

Then, in the light of our text, *let us learn charity*. Why should I be harsh towards those who are not what I am? I wish that some persons who think themselves very sound in Doctrine, would recollect our text. If another Brother is thought to be unsound, they are ready to cut him in pieces! It would be better if they were to say, before using their sword for such a purpose, "By the Grace of God we are what we are." Though you should be ever so sound and right, yourselves, be gentle with the Brother who has not received so much Grace as you have. Good John Newton used to say that for a Calvinist to be proud was the most inconsistent thing in the world, because, by his own profession, there were Truths of God which no man could receive or understand of himself—so, why should he boast of his own attainments and why should he blame others for not doing what he knows they cannot do of themselves? If our Brothers and Sisters cannot see as well as we can, why should we be angry with them because our eyes are better than theirs? I see no reason for being angry with a blind man because he cannot see—that is the very reason why we should pity his infirmity. So, let us seek to relieve those who are burdened, to bring back those who have wandered, to strengthen the weak hands, confirm the feeble knees and, to the best of our power, lead others into that glorious Light of God in which we ourselves are walking, for, by the Grace of God we are what we are!

Moreover this should teach us *hopefulness concerning other men*. There is a drunken man—you think he can never be converted, but why not? The Grace that saved you is sufficient to save him. You sometimes meet with an infidel. Perhaps you have one in your family—a father, or brother, or sister—and you are apt to say, "Well, it is no use trying to get such an one to go to the House of God—all he would do would be to mock and jeer. If the minister should make a mistake, he would seize upon it and use it as his stock-in-trade for the abuse of the week. If there is a fault among God's children, he is sure to notice it and to make it the theme of his reproach, so he had better be kept away from them." But again I say the Grace that saved you is sufficient to save him—never give anyone up, even as God did not give you up! I always think that as God has converted me by His Grace, He can convert anybody! The conversion of any other sinner is not any more difficult to Omnipotence, neither is it any easier, for Omnipotence knows nothing of degrees. What marvelous things Christ has done and done in some of us, too! Some of you must weep over that verse in which the Apostle says, "And such were some of you, but you are washed." And you say, "Yes, and to God be all the Glory

that He has made us what we are." Therefore let us continue to look after those whom Satan has ensnared—even the most hardhearted sinners—and seek to bring them under the saving influence of the Grace of God.

Then, lastly, if we are what we are "by the Grace of God," this should *teach us greater thankfulness*. Children of the Heavenly King, never forget to praise your God! We sometimes fail in this duty. We have had many meetings for prayer to ask God to bless us in our manifold labors. Now let us have some meetings for praise—to bless the Lord for His great goodness to us. I have heard that in some parts of New England, there used to be a day of fasting every month to mourn for the iniquity of the land and so on. And, at last, some senator proposed that they should have a feast and thank God for the mercies which they had received—and, truly, he was in the right. It is not good always to be fasting—we must sometimes feast! An old Puritan says that we take in breath by prayer by a sort of heavenly Inspiration—and that we breathe it out again by praise. Dear Brothers and Sisters, if you and I were to sing as heartily as we ought to sing, what a joyous song of praise there would be! If our voices could but be tuned to the goodness of God, what songs and sonnets would make glad this wilderness!

You remember Ralph Erskine's sonnet on the battle in Heaven—the great contention of the bards in Paradise? He pictures them all contending as to who should have the lowest place and which should most loudly praise the Lord! There were the babes snatched from their mothers' breasts—they claimed the lowest place because they had gone straight to Heaven without any trials or troubles. But the gray-headed men who had been Divinely supported under the afflictions of many years said that they owed the most to Sovereign Grace. Then came those who had been converted in their early years and who said that they had already had a Heaven below, so they could sing the loudest of all. Then came the penitent thief who said that he had the greatest cause to praise the Lord for he had been converted at the last. While some declared that they must praise God most because they had been the blackest sinners, others said that they would praise Him most for the restraining Grace which had kept them from sin. And so the strife went on until they agreed, each one, to sing with all his might to the praise of that Everlasting Love which inscribed their names in the Lamb's Book of Life, that great Love which bought them with Jesus' precious blood and that Omnipotent Love which attended them all their journey through and landed then at last in Heaven!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: NUMBERS 4:1-33.

Verses 1, 2. *And the LORD spoke unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, Take the sum of the sons of Kohath from among the sons of Levi, after their families, by the house of their fathers.* There were three families, those of Kohath, Gershon and Merari—and to each of these families a

different service was allotted. First, they were to be numbered. "The Lord knows them that are His," and He takes count of all His people.

3. *From thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old, all that enter into the service, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation.* They were to take up this work as a warfare, for, though it was a peaceful work, yet it is described as being a warfare. And he who serves the Lord, though that service is perfect peace, will not serve Him without also finding it to be a warfare.

4. *This shall be the service of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation, about the most holy things.* They were to have to do with the Most Holy Place, to carry it and to carry the vessels of it—a very honorable position.

5, 6. *And when the camp sets forward, Aaron shall come, and his sons, and they shall take down the covering veil, and cover the Ark of Testimony with it: and shall put thereon the covering of badgers' skin, and shall spread over it a cloth wholly of blue, and shall put in the staves thereof.* These Kohathites might not so take the Ark as to handle it, much less might they ever look at it. But the priests and the sons of Aaron went in first and, after carefully covering the Holy Place, they covered up the sacred Ark with a cloth of blue. Blue was the token of holiness—of separation. Hence, every Israelite wore a border of blue upon his garment, but this, which was the symbol of the Divine Presence, was "all of blue." It is all holiness. We wear, alas, but a border of blue, but this holy thing was "all of blue."

7. *And upon the table of showbread they shall spread a cloth of blue, and put thereon the dishes, and the spoons, and the bowls, and covers to cover all: and the showbread shall be thereon.* When they moved the sacred table, the bread was always there—twelve cakes for the twelve tribes—for the bread of God's House is never lacking.

8-10. *And they shall all spread upon them a cloth of scarlet, and cover the same with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put in the staves thereof. And they shall take a cloth of blue, and cover the candlestick of the light and its lamps, and its tongs, and its snuff dishes, and all the oil vessels thereof, wherewith they minister unto it: and they shall put it and all the vessels thereof within a covering of badgers' skin and shall put it upon a carrying beam.* There were means for handling these vessels without touching them. I mean the Ark had staves, and the vessels were put upon a bar for carrying them.

11. *And upon the golden altar they shall spread a cloth of blue, and cover it with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall insert its poles.* A type of the holiness veiled in our Lord's Humanity—the badger skin made apparent the simplicity, the poverty, the humility of our Lord—covering evermore that wondrous cloth of blue.

12, 13. *And they shall take all the instruments of ministry, herewith they minister in the sanctuary, and put them in a cloth of blue, and cover them with a covering of badgers' skins and shall put them on a carrying bar: and they shall take away the ashes from the altar, and spread a pur-*

ple cloth thereon. A royal altar is this, always grand and glorious in our eyes, covered with a purple cloth.

14-20. *And they shall put upon it all the vessels thereof, wherewith they minister about it, even the censers, the forks, and the shovels, and the basins, all the vessels of the altar; and they shall spread upon it a covering of badgers' skins, and insert its poles. And when Aaron and his sons have made an end of covering the sanctuary, and all the vessels of the sanctuary, as the camp is to set forward; after that, the sons of Kohath shall come to bear it: but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die. These things are the burden of the son of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation, and to the office of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, pertains the oil for the light and the sweet incense, and the daily meat offering, and the anointing oil, and the oversight of all the tabernacle, and of all that therein is, in the sanctuary, and in the vessels thereof. And the LORD spoke unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, Cut you not off the tribe of the families of the Kohathites from among the Levites: but thus do unto them, that they may live, and not die, when they approach unto the most holy things: Aaron and his sons shall go in, and anoint them, everyone to his service and to his burden: but they shall not go in to see when the holy things are covered, lest they die.* This is a very awful thing. I mean something which should produce a great awe and solemnity in our hearts. These men were chosen to carry the vessels of the Most Holy Place, yet they must never see them! They must be covered up by the hands of the priest—and they must never touch them. They must bear them by their staves, or upon the carrying bar upon which they were placed. Oh, how terrible a thing it is to draw near to God! The Lord our God is a jealous God. He will be served with holy reverence or not at all. Hence he says to Moses and Aaron, "Take care that you do not lead these men into any mistake. You go in first, and point out to each man what he is to carry. See that all is covered up, for if you do not, they may die in their work. Do not be accessories to their act and bring upon them this terrible judgment."

I often wish that God's people would be careful not to cause sin in any of His servants when they are engaged in the ministry. Perhaps in preaching, or otherwise, there may be something done which vexes the Holy Spirit and causes trouble and sin. And, oh, he who stands in the holy place and bears the holiest of the vessel, needs to fear and tremble before God! And he needs to ask his brethren to see that they do nothing which might inadvertently cause him to sin.

21-24. *And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, Take also the sum of the sons of Gershon, throughout the houses of their fathers, of their families, from thirty years old and upward until fifty years old shall you number them; all that enter in to perform the service, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation. This is the sequence of the families of the Gershonites, to serve, and for burdens.* They were to bear the external coverings of the Holy Place. The Most Holy Place was in the custody of the Kohathites, but the Gershonites were to carry as follows—

25-28. *And they shall bear the curtains of the tabernacle, and the tabernacle of the congregation, its covering, and the covering of the badgers' skins that is above upon it, and the hanging for the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the hangings of the court, and the hanging for the door of the gate of the court, which is by the tabernacle and by the altar round about, and their cords, and all the instruments of their service, and all that is made for them: so shall they serve. At the appointment of Aaron and his sons shall be all the service of the sons of the Gershonites, in all their burdens, and in all their service: and you shall appoint unto them in charge all their burdens. This is the service of the families of the sons of Gershon in the tabernacle of the congregation: and their charge shall be under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron, the priest.* There was a wise decision of labor. I wish we had the same kind of thing in every church, and that every member occupied himself in that to which God has appointed him. But there are some who want to do what they cannot do, and who do not care to do what they can do.

29-32. *As for the sons of Merari, you shall number them after their families, by the house of their fathers; from thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old shall you number them, every one that enters into the service, to do the work of the tabernacle of the congregation. And this is the charge of their burden, according to all their service in the tabernacle of the congregation, the boards of the tabernacle, and the bars thereof, and the pillars thereof, and sockets thereof, and the pillars of the court round about, and their sockets, and their pins, and their cords, with all their instruments, and with all their service: and by name you shall reckon the instruments of the charge of their burden.* They had the heaviest load to carry, but they were the more numerous. They carried the solid columns upon which the covering of the tabernacle rested. And notice that they had also to carry the pins. Sometimes God's servants dislike carrying pins. They feel themselves too big—but blessed is that servant who, in his place, can be content to carry "their sockets, and their pins, and their cords, with all their instruments."

33. *This is the service of the families of the sons of Merari, according to all their service, in the tabernacle of the congregation, under the hand of Ithamar, the son of Aaron, the priest.*

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

CONCEIT REBUKED
NO. 2834

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 17, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 5, 1877.

"Should it be according to your mind?"
Job 34:33.

ELIHU thought that Job had spoken too boastfully and that there was too much of self about him and, therefore, he reproved him by asking this question, "Should it be according to your mind?" It is a question which, in the original, has a great wealth of meaning in it and, as the language of the Book of Job is extremely ancient and very terse, it is not easy to get the fullness of Elihu's meaning. But it has been said that upon the whole, our translation not only gives the meaning of his enquiry, but also more of the meaning than can be conveyed in any other words, so that we may be perfectly satisfied with it and may pray God the Holy Spirit to apply it to us. And if we have grown to be high and mighty, and have begun to criticize the way of God in dealing with us, this question may come to us very sharply, "'Should it be according to your mind?' Should everything be arranged just to suit your whims and wishes? Should everything in the world be fashioned according to your taste and the whole globe revolve just to serve you and please your fancy? Should it be according to your mind?'"

There are four things I am going to say concerning our text. First I shall ask, *Are there really any people in the world who think that everything should be according to their mind?* Then, secondly, I shall enquire, *what leads them to that notion?* Thirdly, I shall try to show you *what a mercy it is that they cannot have everything according to their mind.* And then, fourthly, I shall urge you *to keep this evil spirit in check*, so that, henceforth, you will not wish that things should be according to your mind.

I. Our first question has a measure of astonishment about it. ARE THERE REALLY ANY PEOPLE IN THE WORLD WHO WOULD HAVE EVERYTHING ACCORDING TO THEIR MIND? Oh, yes, there are such people! I should not wonder if there are some of them here right now. In fact, I question whether we have not, all of us, at times, drunk very deeply into this naughty, haughty spirit. If we have done so, may we be speedily delivered from it!

First, *there are some people who would have God, Himself, according to their mind.* Now, as a matter of fact, all that I can know of God I must

learn from God revealing Himself to me. I cannot discover Him by myself—He must unveil Himself to me—and that He has done in Holy Scripture. All that He intends us to know about Himself, He has revealed in the written Word and in the Incarnate Word, His ever-blessed Son. But there are some people who get their idea of God out of themselves. You may have heard of the German philosopher who evolved the idea of a camel out of his own consciousness—at least, so he said. I do not think it was much like a camel when he had evolved it, but there are many persons who try to evolve the idea of God out of their own consciousness. It cannot be, they say, that certain statements in the Bible are true because there is something or other, in their inner consciousness, that contradicts the Scriptural declarations. God, as they believe in Him, is what they think He ought to be, not what He really is. And there are some, in these days, who have even gone so far as to reject the Old Testament altogether because its teaching concerning God does not meet the approval of their very marvelous minds.

Practically, these people are idolaters, for an idolater is one who makes a god unto himself. The true worshipper of God—the accepted worshipper—is one who worships God as He is and as He reveals Himself in His Word. But there are many persons who make a god out of their own thoughts. The teachers of the modern school of theology work in a kind of god-factory. The people in some heathen lands make their gods out of mud, but these men make their gods out of their own thought, their imagination, their "intellect." That is what they call it, though I am not sure that it is that organ which is at work in this instance. But when a man makes a god of thought, he is just as much an idolater as if he had made a god of wood or of gold. The true God—the God of Scripture thus revealed Himself to His ancient people, "I am the Lord your God, which have brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." This God is our God, "the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," "the God of the whole earth He shall be called." Many a man refuses to accept this God as his, but I would like to ask him, "Should God be according to your mind?" That would be a strange god, indeed! Should He have no other attributes but such as you would give to Him? Should His Character and conduct be only such as you can comprehend and justify? Must there be nothing in Him that shall puzzle you? Are there to be no Divine deeps that shall be beyond the reach of your finite mind? Are there to be no heights beyond your power to soar?

That is what seems to be your notion and if there is anything that staggers you a little, you say, "I cannot believe it." If it were possible, you would eliminate from the Character of God everything that is stern and terrible—though these attributes clearly appertain to the Most High as He has been pleased to reveal Himself in Scripture. I beg you, dear Friends, never to attempt to mold the Character of God with the fingers of your own fancy! Worship Him just as He is, though you cannot comprehend Him. Believe in Him as He reveals Himself and never imagine that you could, by making any change in Him, effect an improvement in

Him. By toning down His justice, you think that you are increasing His love and, by denying His righteous vengeance, you imagine that you are honoring His goodness. But, instead of doing so by the removal of these things which alarm and annoy you—if you could do so—you would take away part of God's grandeur and strength which make His goodness and His mercy to shine as brightly as they now do!

Leave God just as He is, remembering how He has said, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." The Infinite God must be past finding out by the creatures whom He has made. I confess that it is one of my greatest joys to find myself completely baffled when I am trying to comprehend the Character of God. Sometimes, when I have tried to preach upon the Deity of Christ, I have been fairly staggered under the burden of that stupendous Truth and I have felt the utter uselessness and poverty of human language to describe our great and terrible, yet loving Lord! And I have been glad to have it so, for, verily, God is altogether above our comprehension and none of us can speak of Him as He deserves to be spoken of! But never let us try in any way to diminish His glorious perfections.

A more common way of offending God and setting up our self-will, is by *quarreling with His Providential dealings.* If anyone here is doing so, let me ask, "Should it be according to your mind?" You look, sometimes, upon the arrangements of Providence on a great scale in reference to the nations of the earth. You see them at war with one another and you note how slow the progress of civil and religious liberty are and how few there are to rally in defense of right principles. Sometimes you get greatly distressed about the general state of affairs and you wish you could alter it—but the Lord looks down from His eternal Throne and He seems to say to you, "Should it be according to your mind?" The world was wisely ordered by God before we were born and it will be equally well ordered by Him after we are dead!

When Alexander Peden, the Covenanter, was dying, he sent for one of his brethren, a fellow-minister of the Word, James Renwick, and he bade him stand out in the room and turn his back to his departing friend. When he had done so, Peden said to him, "I have looked at you and I perceive that you are only a little man and you have but feeble shoulders and weak legs." "Yes," replied Renwick, "that is true, but why have you made that observation?" "Because," said Peden, "I perceive that you cannot, after all, carry the whole world upon your back—you are not made for any such work as that." And I may say of all of us who are here that we were not made to carry the world on our backs. Yet some of us attempt to play the part of Atlas and not only try to carry the world, but seek to set the Church right as well! We fancy that we can do that, poor worms that we are, but the Lord knows that we can do nothing of the kind. "He remembers that we are dust," though we are apt to forget it ourselves!

Well, Beloved, after all, "should it be according to your mind?" Will you, like Jonah, sit pining, mourning and complaining? Does not the

Eternal Ruler understand the politics of nations and the best way of governing the world infinitely better than you do? Do not attempt to drive the horses of the sun—your puny hands are unfit for so tremendous a task as that. Leave all things with God! As long as they are ordered by Him, they are well ordered!

Probably, however, it is with the minor Providence that we more often quarrel when we are in an ill state of heart. You think that you would like to be rich, yet you are poor. "Should it be according to your mind?" You would have liked to be healthy and strong, but you are weak and sickly, or you have a suffering limb that troubles you and you sometimes think, "Mine is a very hard loss. I wish it could be changed." "Should it be according to your mind?" Should the fashioning of yourself and your circumstances have been left to you? What do you think? Possibly you have recently sustained a great loss in business and you cannot quite get over it. "Should it be according to your mind?" Should Providential circumstances have been arranged otherwise so as to suit you? Should God have stopped the great machinery of the universe and put it out of gear in order to prevent you from losing a few pounds? "Should it be according to your mind?"

Perhaps it is worse than that—a dear child has been taken away just when he had become most closely entwined around your heart. You would gladly have kept him with you, but was it right that he should go, or right that he should stay? Come now, there is a difference of opinion between you and God—who is in the right? Should it be according to His mind, or according to your mind? "Ah," says someone else, "it is the mainstay of the home who has been taken away from us—the husband—the father of the family." Well, though it is so, again I ask concerning this bereavement, or any other trial that comes to you, "Should it be according to your mind?" It should be sufficient for you to know that the Lord has permitted it or actually performed it.

Should it be according to your mind, or according to His mind? It is not easy, I know, to submit without murmuring to all that happens to us. I am probably touching very tender places in many who, at divers times and seasons, have really felt that God, in His Providential dealings with them, had been unkind to them, or that, at least, He had been showing His kindness in a very strange way.

There are some who carry this difference between them and God into another sphere, for *they do not approve of the Gospel as it is taught in the Bible.* You know that the Gospel, as revealed in the New Testament, is so simple that a child can understand it. And you may go and teach it to the poorest and the most illiterate and many of them will leap at it, and grasp it at once! But there are others who think that it should be something which is much more difficult to understand, something which would need a higher order of intellect than the common people possess. Do you really think so, my dear Sir? "Should it be according to your mind?" Would you shut out the poor and the needy and the illiterate from the privileges of the Gospel—and keep them to yourself and to a few others who have been highly educated? Surely not! O Brothers and Sis-

ters, if it were possible for us to preach a Gospel that we had made obscure, or which could only be comprehended by the elite of society, we would soon have cause to sadly deplore before God that we had lost that simple, blessed, plain way of instruction which the wayfaring man, though a fool, can understand, and in which he need not err!

Many try to bring down the Doctrines of Grace. They would get rid of Election if they could. Anything like the specialty of the Atonement of Christ they cannot bear! The sweet and blessed Doctrine of Effectual Calling they abhor and they would gladly make a Gospel of their own. But should they want to do so? Is it not your duty and mine, Brother, rather to try to find out what the Gospel really is than to seek to make it what we consider it ought to be? "Should it be according to your mind?" We have known some people take a text of Scripture and, because it did not square with the system in which they were brought up, they tried to cut it down to make it fit in with their notion! But, Sirs, is not the Gospel grander than any of our comprehension of it? Are there not in it great Truths of God that cannot be cut down to fit any system that the human mind can make? And ought we not to be thoroughly glad that it is so? For, surely, it is better that the Gospel should be according to God's mind than that it should be according to the mind of Toplady, or the mind of Wesley, or the mind of Calvin, or the mind of Arminius! The mind of God is greater than all the minds of men, so let all men leave the Gospel just as God has delivered it unto us.

Sometimes this difference comes up *concerning the Church of Christ.* Some people do not like God's order of Church membership and Church government—they would like to see the world welcomed inside the Church. They do not approve of the ordinances as they were instituted and observed by our Lord Jesus Christ. Believers' Baptism is peculiarly objectionable to them. Sometimes they disapprove of God's ministers—they pick holes in the most useful of them. This man ought to be so-and-so, and that other man ought to be something else. I can only ask again, with regard to the whole matter, "Should it be according to your mind?" Are you to make the ministers and to teach them what they are to preach? Are they your servants or God's servants, and are they to deliver their message in your way or in God's way? Let the question be honestly considered and then, perhaps, much of the murmuring that is sometimes heard, and much of the discord that often arises among professing Christians would be cleared away. For, surely, these things should not be according to our mind, but we should let God appoint, equip and send forth His own servants just as He pleases—not as we please. Christ must decide everything concerning His own Church! He must be free to choose whom He likes to be members of it and to fashion His Church after His own model.

II. Now, secondly, we are to enquire—WHAT LEADS PEOPLE TO THINK THAT EVERYTHING SHOULD BE ACCORDING TO THEIR MIND?

My answer is, first, that *there is a great deal of self-importance in such a notion.* There are some people who seem to fancy that they are the center of the whole universe. The times are always bad if they do not pros-

per. If the earth does not so revolve as to bring grist to their mill, then the times must be out of joint. But who are you, dear Friend, that you should suppose that for you, the sun rises and sets? That for you seasons change and that God is to have respect to you and to nobody else? "Should it be according to your mind?" Then, if so, why not according to *my* mind, also? And why not according to the mind of another Brother? And why not according to the mind of yet another? But no, it is according to *your* mind that you would have it! Ah, does not this show what overweening importance we attach to ourselves? We are mere ants, creeping insects upon the bay-leaf of existence—here today and gone tomorrow—yet we suppose that all things are to be ordered for our special benefit and we quarrel with God if we suffer even a little inconvenience!

This notion also arises from *self-conceit.* We really seem to fancy that we could arrange things much better than they now are—we would not dare to plainly say so, much less would we be willing to put it in writing, but we talk and feel as if it were really so. If only we had had the ordering of things, we are quite sure that they would not have happened as they have done! But then, depend upon it, they would have happened wrongly if they had been other than they have been! "Should it be according to your mind?" No! Unless you are self-conceited enough to put your folly in comparison with the wisdom of God, you know that it should not be according to your mind!

Then there is *the spirit of murmuring* that so easily comes upon us. We have known some who really became slaves to that evil spirit. They complained of everything, nothing was right in their eyes. It was not possible, it seemed, even for God, Himself, to please them. "Should it be according to your mind?" How would it be possible to please one who is so changeable, so whimsical, so fanciful as you are? Poor simpleton, surely you cannot think that such a thing should be.

But, oftentimes, this quarrel arises from *lack of faith in God.* If we did but believe in Him, we would see that all things are ordered well. If we did but trust in God as a loving child trusts in its father, we would feel safe enough at all times and we would not want to have anything different from what it is. Have you ever heard of the woman who was in a great storm at sea and terribly frightened? She saw her husband, who was the captain of the ship, perfectly composed even while the vessel was tossed about by the mighty billows—but he could not calm her troubled heart. So he drew a sword from its scabbard and held it close to her breast. As he did so, he said to her, "Do you not tremble, my wife?" "No," she replied, "I am not in the least afraid." "But this sword is close to you." "I am not afraid of that," she said, "because it is in my husband's hand. "Well," he said, "is it not even so with this storm? Is it not in the hands of God? And if it is in His hands, why should we be alarmed?" So, if we have true faith in God, we shall accept whatever God sends us, and we shall not want to have things arranged according to *our* mind, but we shall quite agree with what His mind ordains.

So would it be, too, if you had *more love to God*, for love always agrees with that which its object delights in. So, dear Friends, when we come to

love God with a perfect heart, we are glad for God to have His way with us. If He wills that we should be sick, we would not wish to be otherwise. If He wills that we should be poor, we are willing to be poor—and if He wills that we should pass through a sea of trial, we would not wish to have a drop less than His blessed will appoints.

III. But now, thirdly, WHAT A MERCY IT IS THAT THINGS ARE NOT ACCORDING TO OUR MIND! If they were, I wonder what sort of world we would live in?

If things were according to our mind, *God's Glory would be obscured.* He knows what will best glorify Him and He has been pleased to so arrange His Providential dealings with men that all shall glorify Him to the highest possible degree. And, Beloved, if we were to alter anything of this—if we *could* altar anything, it is evident that the Glory of God would not be so well promoted. So, "should it be according to your mind" that God would lose a measure of the Glory that is due unto His name? God forbid!

If it were according to our mind, *others would often have to suffer.* At any rate, if things were arranged according to the mind of some people, they would grind the poor in the dust and utterly crush them. If things were settled according to the mind of man, we would often be in a terrible plight. Did not David say to God, "Let us fall now into the hands of the Lord, for His mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hands of man"? When God is most grieved with His people, He never deals with them in so harsh a manner as the ungodly would deal with them if they had them in *their* power. Let us trust in the Lord, my Brothers and Sisters, and thank Him that He does not allow things to be according to the mind of man, for it would be terrible, indeed, for us, then!

Here is another reflection. If things were according to our mind, *we would have an awful responsibility resting upon us* because we would feel that if anything went amiss, we would be the cause of it. If we had the choosing of our circumstances and the details of all that happened to us, we would straightway feel that we would be called to account for everything by our fellow men and by our own conscience. But now that it is according to the mind of God, you have no responsibility concerning it. If it is according to His will, it must be that which is right and that which is best! So let us bless His name that all things are left at His disposal.

If things were according to our mind, I am afraid *our temptations would soon be greatly increased,* for many who are poor would speedily become rich—and they do not know what the temptation of riches might be, nor the Grace they would need to resist it. And some, who are now sick and are praising God upon their sickbeds—if they were well, might find much of their spirituality departing and they might be thrown into a thousand troubles which they now escape in the quiet of their own room. Some of you are in a condition of life where you may not have many comforts, but, on the other hand, you are not subject to those trials which come to us who are prominent in public life. You can be sure you are in your right place if God put you there. "Should it be according to your mind?" If so, you would have more temptations and less Grace—more of

the world, but less of your Lord. So thank Him that it is not according to your mind.

If it were according to our mind, *we would seldom know our own mind.* If a man could manage everything as he liked, he would not long like his own management. Unrenewed men, especially, are never satisfied. The way for a man to be happy is not to have his own will, but to sink his will in the will of God. Look at Solomon when he had his own way. As one time he gave all his thoughts to grand buildings—and when he had built his palaces he got quite tired, so he took to making gardens, aqueducts and fountains of water. When he had made them, he did not get much satisfaction out of them, so he got instruments of music and singing men and singing women, but he was soon tired of them. Then he took to study, but he said, "Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh." He had whatever he chose to have, yet it was all vanity and vexation of spirit to him! And he never had what filled his soul till he came to rest alone in his God, which, we trust, he did in his old age.

I do not know a more horrible endowment that a man could have than for God to say to him, "Everything shall be as you like to have it." He would probably be the most miserable and most dissatisfied person under Heaven! "Should it be according to your mind?" Ah, then sin would go uncorrected in you, for you would never have a mind to use the rod! Then your dross would remain, for you would never have a mind to be put into the furnace! Should all things go with you according to your own will, then your flesh would get the mastery over you and be pampered and indulged—you would be settled on your less, not emptied from vessel to vessel—and you would bring upon yourself unutterable woe! O Beloved, for this reason, also, it is a thousand mercies that things are not arranged according to the mind of even the best saint out of Heaven except when his mind is brought into full subjection to the will of God!

"Should it be according to your mind?" Then *there would be universal strife.* If this were the case, think what a terrible condition the Church of God and the world, too, would soon be brought into, because, as I have already hinted, if it were according to your mind, why should it not be according to my mind, or according to the mind of every other person? Then what chaos, what confusion there would be! How would the world be managed if you, I, and 50 others, each one with a different mind from all the rest, must have it according to our minds? It would mean that the King of Heaven must resign His Throne and give place to universal anarchy! It could not be—it would be impossible that such an arrangement should continue for an hour! We would have to go, in tears, before the Lord and cry to Him, "O Lord, come back and reign over us, for we cannot get on without You! Everything is going to destruction for need of an Almighty Will to manage it." Should it be according to your mind? "No, Lord never let it be so except when you have made my mind to be filled with Your mind and then it shall be well." "I always have my way," said a holy man. "How is that?" asked one who heard him. And the good man replied, "Because God's way is my way." "I always have my will,"

said another, and he gave a similar explanation, "because it is my will that God should have His will." When God's will gets to be your will, then it may be according to your mind—but not till then—thank God, not till then!

IV. So now, in the last place, dear Friends, I am going to say to you, let us try, by the help of God's Holy Spirit, to CHECK THAT SPIRIT WHICH LEADS MEN TO THINK THAT ALL THINGS SHOULD BE ACCORDING TO THEIR MIND.

First, *because it is impracticable.* As I have already shown you, it is quite impossible that all things should be according to the mind of men so long as their mind is in its natural carnal state.

Again, *it is unreasonable* that it should be so. In a well-ordered house, whose will ought to be supreme? Should it not be the father's? Do you expect everything in your home to be ordered according to the will of your little boy? No, you know that you take a comprehensive view of all who are in the house and all their concerns—and you are better able to judge than he is, what is right. It would be very unreasonable for your child to say, "Everything is to be managed according to my will." If he were to talk like that, you would soon teach him better, I guarantee you—and it is unreasonable to imagine that the Lord should make your will to be the rule of His dispensations. Do not cultivate a spirit which you cannot justify by any sensible and reasonable arguments.

In the next place, *it is un-Christlike.* "Should it be according to your mind?" Why, if ever there was a Son of the great Father, according to whose mind things should be, it was our blessed Lord Jesus Christ! Yet what did He say? "Not as I will, but as You will." And as Jesus said, "Not as I will," is there one among us who shall dare to say, "Let it be as I will?" "Will you not join your Elder Brother in that sweet resignation of all desire to be the ruler in order that the great Father, who fills all things, may have His way? If you wish to have all things according to your mind, you are not like Christ—for in all things He did the Father's will and suffered the Father's will, too, and rejoiced in it. Let us pray the Holy Spirit to help us to do the same!

Once more, if we desire to have our own mind, *it is atheistic,* for a god without a controlling mind is no god. And a god whose will was not carried out would be no god. If you were to have your way in all things, you would be taking the place of God—do you not tremble at the very thought of it? His Throne ill becomes you. Would you—

"Snatch from His hand the balance and the rod,
Rejudge His judgments, be the God of God"?

If you are truly converted, you shudder at the bare mention of such a thing as that! Yet, dear Sister, was not that the spirit in which you came into this House? Did you not feel, "The Lord has dealt very harshly with me. I can scarcely be reconciled to Him"? Oh, drop that rebellious spirit! You are but a poor, helpless creature, and He is God Over All! Let His supreme will sweetly rule your heart at this hour—and labor to get rid of that waywardness and that revolting from the Most High!

I knew one who was in mourning many, many years for a child. And a good Quaker said to her, "Friend, have you not forgiven God yet?" There are some to whom we might put the same question. And we have heard of some who professed to be Christians, who, when they met with a very terrible reverse, said they could never understand it— really meaning that they could never acquiesce in the Divine Will about that loss. It must not be so with us. Whenever a child falls out with his father, the best thing he can do is to fall in again, for a sullen child who is angry with his father, will have to come round if he has a wise father. The father will say to him, "My dear Boy, there is one of us who must change before we can be perfectly agreed. And I cannot, for I know I am in the right. It is you who must change and come round to my way of thinking." And if you have fallen out with God by willfulness and stubbornness, He cannot come round to you, but you will have to come back to Him. So yield to Him at once! Bow down before Him, your own Father in Heaven, who infinitely loves you! Do you mean to say that you will keep up the quarrel with Him? You began the dispute and you know that you are in the wrong and He is right, so say, "It is the Lord. Let Him do what seems good to Him." Or if you cannot say as much as that, at least do what Aaron did in his great bereavement, "Aaron held his peace," or what David did when he said, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth because You did it." Oh, for that blessed silence which springs from acquiescence to the Divine Will!

I should like you to go further than that, however, and even to praise and bless the Lord for poverty, pain and bereavement. In Heaven, among the sweetest notes of your song will be those you sing over your trials here below. There was one who lost his eyesight, but he always praised God for that, for he said that he never saw till he was blind. I have heard of another who had lost a leg, and he said that he never stood on the Rock of Ages till he had that leg amputated. We, who are branches of the true vine, will have more of Christ's sharp pruning-knife than of anything else, but let us praise and bless God for it and henceforth labor, by the Spirit's Power, to chase out of our soul the idea that things should be according to our mind. Get away to your room and confess your willfulness and pride, dear Brother, if you have fallen into that sad state. Ask the Lord to make your soul even as a weaned child—

"Pleased with all the Lord provides
Weaned from all the world besides."

I know that I have been speaking to some who do not love the Lord. I wonder what it is that keeps them where they now are—out of Christ? You want something to be changed, you say. Well, ask the Lord to change *you*, for that is the alteration that is needed. The plan of salvation does not quite suit you. Well, there will never be another. Does not Jesus Christ please you? God will never lay another foundation for a sinner to build his hopes upon, so you had better be pleased with God's way and build upon Christ Jesus, the sure Foundation Stone. We tell people, sometimes, that they had better not fall out with their living and I can tell you, Soul, that you had better not fall out with your salvation! God's

way of saving you is the best conceivable way—and it is also the *only* way.

He says that whoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life. May the Eternal Spirit bring you to believe in the Lord Jesus now—and if you do so believe you shall be saved at once! But do not think that the plan of salvation will be altered to please you. It will not be made according to your mind. There is the Gospel—take it or leave it, but change it you cannot! May the Lord grant that you may accept it and rejoice in it for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
GALATIANS 6:6-18.

Verses 6, 7. *Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teaches in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap.* Paul puts that in connection with the support of those who are teachers of the Truth. And I have sometimes thought that in certain Churches where God's ministers have starved, it was not very surprising that the people should starve, too. They thought so little about the pastor that they left him in need, so it was not strange that, as they sowed little, they reaped little. One of these misers said that his religion did not cost him more than a shilling a year—and somebody replied that he thought it was a shilling wasted on a bad thing, for his poor religion was not worth even that small amount!

8. *For he that sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption.* He shall reap what flesh turns to in due time—"he shall of the flesh reap corruption." What is the end of flesh? The fairest flesh that ever was molded from the most beauteous form ends in corruption! And if we live for the flesh, and sow to it, we shall reap "corruption."

8. *But he that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.* He shall reap what the Spirit really is and what the Spirit really generates—"life everlasting." Of course if a man sows tares, he reaps tares. If he sows wheat, he reaps wheat. If we sow to the flesh, we reap corruption. If we sow to the Spirit, we shall "reap life everlasting."

9. *And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.* It is a pity to faint just when the time is coming to reap, so, sow on, Brothers and Sisters, sow on!

10. *As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.* Extend your love, your charity to all mankind. But let the center of that circle be in the home where God has placed you—in the home of His people—"especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

11. *You see how large a letter I have written unto you with my own hand.* I suppose that he meant, "See what big letters I have made. My eyes are weak, and so, when I do write a letter," says Paul, "in the dimness of this dungeon, with my poor weak eyes and my hands chained, I have to write text-hand and give it to you in large letters. Well," he says, "then carry it out in big letters. You see with what large letters I have

written to you, now emphasize it all, take it as emphatic and carry it out with great diligence. As I have written this with my own hand and not used a secretary, I beseech you to pay the more attention to it, you Galatians who seem to be so bewitched that to deliver you from false doctrine and an evil spirit, I would even write a letter with my own blood if it were necessary."

12, 13. *As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the Cross of Christ. For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the Law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.* "See," they say, "these Gentiles. We have converted them and we have got them circumcised. Is not that a wonderful thing?" No, not at all, for he says—

14. *But God foretold that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.* "I have ceased to care," says Paul, "about glorying in men and making other people glory in my converts. The world is dead to me, and I to it."

15-17. *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.* I have the marks of the whips upon my body. I am the branded slave of Jesus Christ. There is no getting the marks out of me. I cannot run away. I cannot deny that He is my Master and my Owner! "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."

18. *Brethren, the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.* And that is our benediction to you. The Lord fulfill it to each one of 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.

PATIENTS FOR THE GREAT PHYSICIAN
NO. 2835

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON HOSPITAL SUNDAY.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 15, 1863.

"And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick." Luke 5:31.

IF you had never heard that passage before, you would be almost certain to know where to look for it. It must be in the Gospel according to Luke, for Luke was the beloved physician and, therefore, while taking notes of our Savior's discourses, he would be able to record anything that would be likely to strike upon a physician's ear and to be stamped upon his memory. Matthew and Mark also record this saying of our Lord, but Luke would have special reasons for mentioning it.

What a noble answer this was to the insinuations of Christ's enemies! He was sitting down with publicans and sinners—they had been invited to a feast by Levi, that is, Matthew. The scribes and Pharisees shrugged their shoulders and said they could very readily guess what kind of character Jesus of Nazareth was, for a man is known by the company he keeps. What an overwhelming reply Christ gave them! "Where should I be," the Physician of Souls seems to say, "but with those who most need My services? I need not come into *your* company, for you consider yourselves to be whole. But these publicans and sinners are, according to your way of speaking, to be regarded as sick—where should I be but with those who need to be healed?" Christ, in associating with sinners, did not at all condone their sin. When He proved Himself to be the Friend of publicans and sinners, it was not that He would lessen the infinite distance between Divine Perfection and human guilt, but only that, coming down to man's fallen estate, He might lift him up. Touching his leprosy, He might heal him—and coming into the hospital of sick souls, He might there work His great miracles of mercy!

But, turning from the immediate occasion when these words were uttered and coming to the words, themselves, it appears, from our text, that Jesus Christ is the Great Physician and, just as we see our doctors hurrying through the streets, going from one house to another on their errands of mercy, so let us go with Christ, in the chariot of His Love, and let us visit some of the sick souls He has come to heal.

I. This will be our first business—TO VISIT THE SICK MAN AND ASK HIM A FEW QUESTIONS.

First, we will ask the man who is sick, but whom Christ comes to heal, *what kind of disease it is from which he is suffering.* If he is rightly instructed, if he understands the Truth of God, he will tell us that it is the worst disease there is. Other diseases may possibly be cured by men, but this one can never be cured except by Divine interposition. Some diseases, like fire, expire when they have burned out their fuel, but this one is of such a character that unless it is cured by Sovereign Grace, it will destroy both body and soul in Hell. This is the worst of diseases because it does not merely affect us in one point, but it affects the entire system—from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot. It is so foul a disease that even the all-merciful God is so disgusted with it that He found it imperatively necessary that Hell should be made that He might shut sin up there, as in a morgue, when it came to the worst state. We might better bear to have the plague and the black pest let loose upon us than unbridled sin! It is the foulest disease in the sight of God and it is the most dreadful in its consequences to man.

Our patient, if he is further asked as to the nature of his disease, will tell you that it is internal, but that it works itself out externally—

"The leprosy lies deep within."

The sin which Christ came to heal is not something on the skin, or a mere matter of custom, or habit. No, my Brothers and Sisters, the venom of sin is in the very fountain of our being! It has poisoned our heart. It is in the very marrow of our bones and is as natural to us as anything that belongs to us. You might even tear the man in pieces, but you could not tear his sin from him. The Mohammed legend tells us that Mohammed was so pure because an angel had taken out his heart and wrung two black drops of evil out of it. Those who believe that lie, little understand the great Truth that what is needed is to get out of a man every drop of evil, yes, that he must be *made a new man* before it is possible to destroy the disease that is in him! Two drops of evil, my Brothers and Sisters? It is far worse than that, for it is the whole man who is evil—all his heart, all his nature—the venom is everywhere! There is not, in unrenewed human nature, a place where you could put the point of a pin where it is not defiled with sin! It is in our entire system—we have been lying in it until we are steeped through and through with it. Sin, in human nature, is like those colors that are ingrained—the more you wash the material, the more clearly they are discovered! You can never wash them out—only the precious blood of Jesus can wash out man's sin.

We bend down over our patient and ask him another question—*"How did you get this disease?"* He answers, "I got it as diseases are generally gotten. I had it in three ways. First, by inheritance." Doubtless, many persons inherit certain diseases from their birth and we have all inherited sin from our birth. David expressly says and he, certainly, was no worse than others, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity." That old-fashioned Doctrine—that sin is bred in us—against which some people kick so ferociously, is true for all their kicking! And what is bred in the bones will come out in the flesh sooner or later. We were born of a traitor and traitors were we born.

Nor have we merely received sin by inheritance. Sin is contagious and we have caught it from our fellow men. Many sins, which, perhaps, we might not otherwise have fallen into, we have acquired through our association with other sinners. Hence the value of early Christian training. Hence the blessedness of being found in the company of the godly. Surely you know, O Man, that this world's very air is full of fumes and laden with the germs of the plague, so you have acquired innumerable diseases of soul beside that which you have inherited from your fathers!

In addition to that, as some diseases result from intemperance and other forms of evil living, doubtless the disease which was naturally in each one of us has been fed by our transgression. We have grown worse than we originally were through that upon which our sin has fed. We have gone from bad to worse, from one iniquity to another, till folly has ripened into sin and sin has culminated in crime. Such is the state of unrenewed man—diseased even from his birth, catching more soul maladies from others, or acquiring them by his own evil deeds, our patient is, indeed, sick—sick unto death!

Perhaps someone asks, *"Where is this disease of which you speak?"* I have already answered that question, but I will answer it again more fully. The disease of sin in you, my Hearer, for *you* are the patient of whom I speak—is to be found everywhere! The eyes of your understanding are darkened so that you cannot see the things of God as God would have you see them. Your affections are perverted so that you love that which you should hate, and hate that which you should love. Your conscience, which should be the candle of the Lord shining within you, burns very dimly. Conscience is no more perfect than is any other power in man. I know that some people speak of conscience as though it were the vice regent of God, but it is no such thing! It is defiled and depraved like all the rest of our powers. As for the will, my Lord Will-be-Will, as Bunyan calls it, the Mayor of Mansoul—it is a slave which boasts of freedom, but is never more in bondage than when it boasts of being free! Sinner, your very *memory* is prone to retain evil rather than good! It will keep the chaff, but let the wheat run through.

The refuse which floats down the stream finds a place of resting with you—but if goodly cedars come down from Lebanon, you lay not hold of them! The devil's lies, lascivious songs, foul words, thoughtless jeers—all these stick like burrs, but God's gracious Word, an earnest Gospel discourse, a solemn hymn—these, alas, glide from you like oil down a block of marble—and you go your way and forget all about them. There is no power that you possess that has not the slime of the serpent upon it! O Satan, you have dashed down the palace of manhood! Stately are its columns, even while they lie amidst the rubbish where the grass grows and the owl hoots—but you have cast down every pillar, you have broken the shafts and laid the capitals in the mire. Ah, you foul fiend, you have made that to be a den of darkness which was once a place of light where holy angels and even God, Himself, could walk. How are you fallen, O Man, once a son of the morning, but now a child of darkness until God shall give you light!

The disease of sin is everywhere in the realm of manhood and it is all the more certainly proved to be everywhere because so many people cannot see it! This is why you cannot see sin in yourselves—it has made all the various faculties of your soul to mortify so that you cannot feel the pains which this mortal disease would otherwise have caused you. Thus your heart has lost any tenderness that it may have had, naturally, and your conscience is seared as with a hot iron so that it cannot warn you of the mischief within, but prophesies smooth things—while all is in a state of ruin, destruction and dismay—and will be so forever unless God, by His Grace, shall work a miraculous change.

Perhaps someone asks, "If the man is so diseased, *what are the effects of his sickness?"* The usual effect of all sickness is that the man's strength declines and he begins to waste away. You do not ask a sick man to run a race. And we must not ask an unrenewed sinner to run the race of godliness. We do not expect the man who has long tossed upon the bed of pain, to march in the soldiers' ranks and to fight battles. Nor can an unsaved sinner be valiant for God and His Truth. What a dreadful inability sin brings with it! That simple command of the Gospel, "Believe," the sinner cannot obey of himself. He can no more repent and believe without the Holy Spirit's aid, than he could create a world! And, unless Divine Grace gives him the power to obey the command which bids him to believe, he never will be able to believe. You have lost all strength, Sinner. You have brought yourself down to be as one dead and as they that sleep in the grave. Your inability is awful and this is the effect of your sin.

Moreover, this sickness not only brings weakness, but it also impairs the beauty of the frame. We see many persons walking along our streets, poor, pale, emaciated creatures. And others who bear upon their features the marks which they must carry to the grave—of some dire disease which once made them its victims. Ah, Sinner, if you could but see yourself as God sees you, you would see that you have transformed that which was the image of God for loveliness into the image of Satan for horror! O Soul, if God should ever hold up His mirror to you and let you see yourself as you are by nature and by practice, too, you would be greatly alarmed, for there is no more dreadful sight out of Hell than that of a naked, unregenerate human heart! So, then, sin brings a marring of all beauty. And, besides this, it brings destruction of all comfort. Sick men cannot get peace and ease—they toss from side to side, but find no rest in any position.

Many of you must confess that sin gives you no comfort. I know you fill your glasses and sing and shout that the ungodly are jolly good fellows, but they have nothing substantial to sustain their joys. I know that when you wake up at midnight, you are not at ease. I know that when you are on a lonely road, the falling of a leaf makes you start and the more you brag, the more cowardly does it prove you to be! The very man who blasphemes God the most is generally the one who is most afraid of God. Men do but use great swelling words of vanity and boasting that they may hide the fears that lurk within them, but which they are

ashamed to admit. I believe there are no such superstitious people anywhere as those who pretend that they do not believe in a God. You may toil to find pleasure in sin, but you shall never discover it. The dregs of sin are always bitter—the cup may sparkle on the brim—but when you have drained it, there shall come satiety, woe and redness of the eyes. Rake all the dunghills of earth, but you will never find the jewel of peace with God! Go and work in all the world's mines till you have utterly spent yourselves, but you shall find that you have wasted your strength for that which is not bread and your labor for that which satisfies not. Yes, sin is a sickness that robs us of comfort.

And, worst of all, it is a sickness that will end in death—a death that is something more than death—it is the second death, the death that never dies. What a contrast there is between life and death! Yet there is not half such a contrast between life and death as between the mere act of dying and the second death, the casting into the Lake of Fire! Oh, the wrath to come! The wrath to come! The wrath to come! It were enough to make you start from your seats if you did but know what those four words mean! To die unrenewed, unpardoned—to face a righteously angry God, to be made the target for all His arrows, to be torn in pieces in His hot displeasure, Sinner—can you bear even to think of this? Yet this is what your sickness will lead to unless the Great Physician, of whom I am presently to speak, shall come and heal you.

Having been to see the patient and having said so much concerning his disease, I wonder whether you are saying in your hearts, "If this is true, there is great need of a Physician"? For, if so, you have learned what is the very essence of the text. The only right a man has to Christ is his need of Him. If you have been brought into the condition I have been trying to describe, your need is extreme and, since you need the Great Physician, I am glad to tell you that He is here, ready to hear you. Lay hold of Him! Look to Him now! Christ Jesus is set before you in the Gospel—look to Him and live!

II. Now we are going to stop at the door of ONE WHO REFUSES TO BE CALLED A PATIENT or to come into the list of sick folk at all.

The sick have need of a physician, but those who are whole manifestly have no such need. Are there any "whole" people? Oh, no! All have need of the Great Physician and, therefore, we preach Christ to all. All are spiritually sick and, therefore, we entreat all to come unto Him who alone can heal them. But we have to deal with men as they look upon themselves—and there are some people who think that they are not sinners and who, therefore, do not need a Savior. Let me give you a description of some of them.

There is a good woman, probably she is here—who says, "I have brought up a large family. I am sure I was always kind to my children. My husband always said I was the best of wives. As for my neighbors, I have got up in the middle of the night to nurse them. If any of them ever had the fever, they always said, 'Send for Mrs. So-and-So, she'll come to us.' I always managed my household affairs so that I owed no man anything. Everybody respects me and I do not like being told by you, Sir,

that I am as bad as you say. In fact, I do not believe that I am—many people say that I am about the best-hearted person in the parish—and I think I am."

Well now, dear Friend, I see that you are evidently one of these whole people, or one of those who think themselves whole. You do not need a Savior, so you shall not have one! But, as you will have no Savior to take you to Heaven, where will you go? Why, you and all your good works will go down to Hell unless you repent of this proud way of talking, for you are rebelling against God all the while that you are speaking thus! You have been very good to your children? Well, that is right, so let your children repay you—God does not owe you anything for *that*. You have also been very kind to your neighbors? That is good—would that more were like you in that respect! But let your neighbors thank you—God owes you nothing for *that*. What did you ever do for God? Why, you have never done anything for Him since He made you! You preferred your children to Him and you thought it better to live to serve your neighbors than to live to serve your God! Oh, dear! What does all your fine righteousness prove to be as soon as we examine it? It is filthy rags! So throw it away, for, as long as you cling to it, you practically say that you have no need of a Savior and, having no need of a Savior, Christ does not come to you!

I also know a good many people of the other sex, everyone of whom says, "I never will believe that my nature is so bad as you say it is. I do not doubt that with some convicts, or other thoroughly bad-hearted fellows, it is as you say, but I do not believe that what you have said is true of all of us. Just look at me, Sir! I have large premises in the City. I like to conduct my business in an honorable manner—nobody can say that I am overreaching. I have an old clerk, Sir, who has worked for me for 30 years—ask him whether I am not as kind a master as can be. My people at home like me very much. I subscribe to the Bible Society. I give a couple of guineas a year to a Ragged School. I have been in the habit of going to church or chapel ever since I was a lad—I do not know that anybody can say much against me. I may have had a little too much wine after dinner once or twice, but that is nothing to be ashamed of—everybody does that sometimes. So, Sir, I can say that your representation of me is not true."

Very well, Friend, I will take you at your own valuation. It seems, then, that you have no need of a physician, so Christ's coming into the world could not have had any relation to you. Suppose you could get to Heaven on your theory—do you know what they would have to do for you? Why, they would have to build a new Heaven on purpose for you because all the people who have ever entered there say, "We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." But there is no need to wash what is already clean—and your robes are, it seems, so uncommonly clean that they need no washing! If you could get into Heaven as you are, you would be able to sing to your own praise and glory forever! But, to tell you the truth, you will never get there as you are, for the only footing on which a man can go to Heaven is that of a humble acceptance

of God's Grace. Now, you are not humble! What you have just said proves to me that you are as proud as Lucifer and, certainly, you have not a right estimate of sin, or you would not have said just now. "I have only done what everybody else does."

Does it make a thing less sinful because everybody does it? It appears to me, dear Friend, that you do not know much about yourself and that if you would spend half as much time in taking stock of your own character as you do in the stock-taking up at those large premises in the city of which you are so proud, you would soon discover that you are spiritually bankrupt, that you cannot pay a single penny in the pound, much less 20 shillings—that you have forgotten God up to this very day, that you have trampled on the blood of Christ by insisting upon it that you do not need it—that you have insulted Divine Wisdom by saying that it has provided what you do not require! You must admit that you have insulted Divine Justice and Truth, for both of these denounce you and condemn you—and yet you say you do not deserve condemnation! O Man, the poorest soul that is trembling at the feet of Christ is in a more hopeful state than you are, with all your morality and all your boasted righteousness! Your only right to Christ lies in your need of Christ! But, according to your description of yourself, you evidently do not feel that you need Him. Very well, then, you have no right to Him and if you remain as you are, you will certainly perish in your sin!

Possibly someone else says, "Ah, Sir, I do not trust in my good works, for I have something better to trust to. When I was quite a little one, I was taken to church and the parson put some water on my face—I do not know whether there is anything about that in the Bible, by the way, but that made me 'a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven'—at least, so the Catechism says. And, a long while after that, I went to the church again and a bishop put his hands on my head—I do not know what it all meant, and I had never felt anything very particular—but then they told me to come to the Communion and I did, and nobody ever refused me. I have heard that there is a great deal of meaning in coming to the Sacrament and I intend, when I get ill, to look into these matters a little more. But, for the present, I am quite satisfied with what our clergyman tells me. They do say that he is bit of a Puseyite, but we need not bother our heads about that. If we attend to the ordinance of the church, I daresay it will be all right with us."

Well Friend, let me tell you plainly, in the name of the Most High, that your refuge is a refuge of lies and your confidence is a deception! If I speak to others of you and you tell me that you were immersed according to the Apostolic fashion, and that you come and commune at the Lord's Table, and that you are trusting in this for salvation, I would say the same to you—that your hope is equally a lie!—

"Not all the outward forms on earth,
Nor rites that God has given,
Nor will of man, nor blood, nor birth,
Can raise a soul to Heaven!"

If you rest on these things and think that you are whole as the result of having done so, then you practically say that you have no need of the

Great Physician and, consequently, you have no claim upon Him for His aid. O Brothers and Sisters, our plea with Christ must be our wounds! That is His plea with His Father—His wounds! And that must be our plea with Him—our sins, our needs, our unrighteousness—not our goodness, nor our resolves to be better! We must bring before the Lord our sins!

But I am quite conscious, though I try to describe their cases as clearly as I can, that some who think themselves whole, will still escape. One will say, "The preacher could not mean *me*." Perhaps your character has been accurately sketched, yet you say, "The preacher could not mean *me*! I am such an honest and upright man! Do you mean to tell me, Sir, that I am to be saved in the same way as a chimney-sweep or a poor fallen woman?" Yes, that is exactly what I mean! There is no other way to Heaven for you than there is for such people as you have mentioned. You must come just as the vilest of the vile come—just as empty-handed as they come, you, also, must come to Christ—and if you do, He will receive you.

III. Our time has flown so rapidly that I can only speak briefly of THE PHYSICIAN.

If anyone asks, "What is His diploma?" It is here—"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted." God the Father sent Him to heal sin-sick souls. Where did He study? He studied in the great hospital of human disease! For 33 years, "He went about doing good."

What practice has He had? He has had the most extensive practice that a physician could have. Millions of happy souls above have been cured by Him and millions here on earth have also been healed by Him—and all of them will gladly speak His praises!

If you want to know what His medicine is, I may tell you that He has two medicines. This is one—"He sent His word and healed them"—His word of promise, His word of invitation, His word of command. But He also has another medicine. That is, His own blood. Unlike other physicians who give bitter potions to their patients, the great Physician drank all the medicine Himself!

But you will ask, "What is His fee? He gives healing "without money and without price." You may ask, "Where is His dispensary?" To every creature under Heaven who trusts Him, Christ presents a free and complete cure. And you will ask, "What are His hours? Any hour, and every hour, by night or by day. But you will say, "Where can I find Him," Just wherever you are now sitting or standing, you can find Him if you will but breathe this prayer, "God be merciful to Me a sinner." If you trust Him with your soul, then the honor of this great Physician is engaged to make a sure and certain cure of you. Blessed Physician, would that we had time and ability to speak of You and of the wonders You have worked! You can heal the vilest, the most diseased, the most helpless and hopeless of sinners!

I want to conclude by earnestly inviting you to come to this Great Physician at once. I know that many of you will say that you are unworthy.

That is true, but no one was ever saved because he was worthy. Even though you are unworthy, have you not a need of a Savior? And being conscious of such a need is all the fitness and worthiness He requires! If you need Christ, you are fit to come to Christ. If you need to have sin forgiven, you are a fit subject for Christ to deal with. You need not talk about your unworthiness, for Christ bids you come unto Him. Possibly you say that your case is such a very complicated one that you do not understand it yourself—but He understands it. You cannot tie a knot of sin which Christ cannot untie! Christ can cure your disease whatever it is, even if it has become chronic with you. Christ can cure habitual sinners. He can cure the sin that was born with you and He can do it this very hour! He can make the drunkard sober in a moment. He can turn the very chief of transgressors from the error of his ways and set his feet in the right path—and that in a moment!

The sin of twenty thousand years—if it could be possible for anyone to have sinned so long—He can take away in a moment when we believe on Him! "Well, but," says one, "I am such an old sinner." I have read that a young lad of the age of 15 heard Mr. Flavel preach and, soon after, he moved to America and settled in a quiet village there. He lived 85 years after that, an unconverted man and, one day, sitting in the field, thinking, he remembered Mr. Flavel's sermon and the earnest way in which he spoke. Old men often remember the things of their youth better than those of yesterday. What Mr. Flavel had preached 85 years before was blessed to that sinner over a hundred years old—and he sought and found mercy! And he lived some years after that to tell what Divine Love and faithfulness could do! You are not a hundred yet, but if you had wasted a whole century in sin, God's Grace could enable you to begin another century walking in the paths of righteousness to your life's end!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 5:1-32.

Verses 1, 2. *And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon Him to hear the Word of God, He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, and saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.* Before folding them up, as if they intended to do no more with them just then, as they had been working all night in vain.

3. *And He entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would put out a little from the land.* It is very difficult to speak effectively when the people come too close to the speaker and, sometimes, a little inconvenience like that may interfere with the flow of the speaker's thoughts and words. Even the Savior seems to have felt that He needed a little breathing space between Himself and His audience.

3. *And He sat down and taught the people out of the ship.* That was what some people would have called an unconsecrated place, but Chr-

ist's Presence consecrated it, as it does every place where He condescends to meet with us—

"Where're we seek Him, He is found,
And every place is hallowed ground."

4. *Now when He had stopped speaking, He said unto Simon, launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.* Whenever He borrows a pulpit, or anything else, He pays good interest for the loan! Christ will not be in even a boatman's debt. For every cup of cold water given to His disciples in His name the Master will take care to pay.

5. *And Simon answering said unto Him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.* Out of personal respect and obedience to Christ, having, perhaps, but a slender hope of any good coming of it, yet, nevertheless, he will let down the net.

6, 7. *And when they had done this, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net broke. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them.* For they had launched out so far into the sea to scarcely to be within hearing, so they beckoned to their partners in the other ship—and they rowed out to help them.

7. *And they came and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.* We can have too much of a good thing, yes, too much, even, of the best things, for our poor frail vessel cannot hold all that God would be willing to put into it.

8. *When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.* Not knowing what he said, though he knew what he meant—feeling as if he, so sinful, had come too close to the Lord who was so gracious, so he must not dare to stay near Him. Have you never felt the same as that? If not, I think you have neither known your Lord, nor yourselves, for the knowledge of Christ, combined with the knowledge of ourselves, is sure to produce this holy shrinking in which we have no need for anyone to say to us, "Take off your shoes" for we are almost ready to take off our very body, for we can scarcely bear the Glory of the Presence of the Lord!

9, 10. *For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: and so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth you shall catch men.* He seemed to imply that he should catch them after the same rate, too, and so he did, for the first throw of the net brought in 3,000 and very soon the number caught was increased to five thousand. That was good fishing by those first Gospel fishermen! Oh, that we could throw the net as they did!

11, 12. *And when they had brought the ships to land, they forsook all and followed Him. and it came to pass, when He was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy.* That is a characteristic touch of Luke, who, as a physician, with a glance of his eyes, took in the condition of the man, not as merely a leper, but as one "full of leprosy."

12, 13. *Who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought Him, saying, Lord if You will, You can make me clean. And He put forth His hand, and touched him.* The perfectly Pure One touched the leprous man without Himself becoming contaminated. In any other house, the man who touched a leper would have been defiled, but when Christ comes into contact with impurity, He is not defiled—He removes it! This is what the Gospel is meant to do to the world. We are to go and seek the good of the most fallen and abandoned of men and those who do so ought to have so much of the spirit of Jesus Christ in them, and so much vitality in their piety, that they will not be tempted by the sin upon which they look! But, on the contrary, will overcome that sin and impart spiritual health instead of receiving infection. May we be in such a state of health as Jesus was! Then shall we be able to touch the leper and not be defiled. Jesus touched Him—

13. *Saying, I will: be you clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him.*—Ask Him to touch you, also, poor leprous Soul—you who are full of sin, you who are deeply conscious that the deadly disease of sin is incurably upon you! Ask Him but to touch you, for the touch of His finger shall make you clean in a moment! Christ's cures are often instantaneous. He who could speak a world into being with a word, can also speak a man into perfect spiritual sanity with a word.

14, 15. *And He charged him to tell no man, but go and show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. But so much the more went there a fame abroad of Him.* Some fires burn the more fiercely for being dampened—and such was the fame of Christ—it was not to be kept under. The more He bade men be quiet, "so much the more went there a fame abroad of Him."

15. *And great multitudes came together to hear and to be healed by Him of their infirmities.* Two words that I long to see linked together in this house—"to hear, and to be healed by Him." You come to hear. Can you not also come "to be healed by Him of your infirmities"?

16. *And He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed.* The tense of the verb implies that He often did this. It was His habit to withdraw Himself for private prayer even in His busiest times and when He could occupy every minute with great advantage to the people. Thus He gathered new strength from above for each day's work—and when there was most to be done, then He took most time to pray. It is an evil economy that tries to take time for other things that should be spent in prayer, for the shortening of prayer will be the weakening of our power.

17. *And it came to pass on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the Law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judaea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.* Not the Pharisees and doctors of the Law—they do not often get healed by Christ—but "the power of the Lord was present to heal the multitude." The only people for whom there seems to be *no* power to heal are these Pharisees and doctors, as will appear by the following narrative.

18. *And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy.* He had had a stroke of paralysis.

18, 19. *And they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before Him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop.* By the external staircase—

19. *And let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus.* Probably into the courtyard of the house where Jesus was preaching.

20. *And when He saw their faith, He said unto him, Man, your sins are forgiven you.* Laying the axe at the root—not healing the paralysis, at first, but forgiving the sin which depressed the man's spirit and so was, in a measure, the cause of the paralysis. By removing the sin, He raised the man's spirits and with his renewed spirits, there same back strength. Note that it was when He saw their faith that He said unto the man, "Your sins are forgiven you."

21. *And the scribes and the Pharisees.* Here they are, these quibbling gentlemen, these Pharisees and doctors of the Law.

21-23. *Began to reason, saying, Who it this which speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone? But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answering said unto them, What do you reason in your hearts? Which is easier to say, Your sins are forgiven you; or to say, Rise up and walk?* He that could do the one could do the other! He who bids the paralyzed man walk is Divine—He, therefore, can forgive sin!

24-26. *But that you may know that the Son of Man has power upon earth to forgive sins, He said unto the sick of the palsy, I say unto you, Arise, and take up your couch, and go into your house. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, we have seen strange things today.* May we often see such "strange things" spiritually!

27-32. *And after these things He went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and He said unto him, Follow Me. And he left all, rose up, and followed Him. And Levi made Him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them. But the scribes and Pharisees murmured against His disciples, saying, Why do you eat and drink with publicans and sinners? And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.* The murmuring of those Pharisees and doctors of the Law had one good result, for it led the Savior to declare the purpose of His mission to the earth—"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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PRAYERFUL IMPORTUNITY
NO. 2836

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 21, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF AMERSHAM BAPTIST CHAPEL, IN NOVEMBER, 1857.

"And shall not God avenge His own elect, who cry day and night unto Him, though He bears long with them?" Luke 18:7.

YOU remember this is the conclusion of the parable of the importunate widow. Her husband was dead. He had left her, perhaps, a little property, but some adversary, very probably a lawyer, seized hold of it and took from her all that she had. What was she to do? She went straightway to the judge, the appointed minister of justice in the city. The first time she went, she met with a cold repulse. She went a second time—her poverty drove her, her necessity compelled her to face the man again. Now the judge "neither feared God, nor regarded man," but at last, seeing the vehemence of the woman, feeling that he should be exceedingly troubled by her constant importunity, he granted her request and he did avenge her of her adversary. Jesus used this to show the power of importunity—"Hear what the unjust judge said"—"And if the unjust judge did this, shall not God avenge His own elect, who cry day and night unto Him?"

Now, in trying to discuss this text this evening, I shall first show what I believe to be *the primary application of it.* And, secondly, I shall try to enlarge upon *the general principle involved in it*—that importunity is very prevalent with God.

I. To begin, then, WHAT WAS THE ABSOLUTE AND CLEAREST MEANING THAT OUR SAVIOR WOULD CONVEY TO HIS DISCIPLES BY THE PARABLE?

Well, now, I think the whole sense of the parable, as far as we can make any special application of it, hinges upon the meaning of that word, "avenge." What is it that Christ's Church is always praying for? The answer is they are praying *spiritually* for that which the poor widow prayed for *actually*—they are praying to be avenged of their adversary. Now what did this mean in the poor woman's case? For, in some degree, it means just the same in the Church's case. I do not believe that that poor widow, when she went to the judge, went for mere vengeance's sake. I cannot conceive that our Savior would have exhibited the perseverance of malice as an example to His people. I do not think that when she applied day after day to the court of the judge, to be avenged, she applied to

have her adversary punished for the mere sake of his being punished. It strikes me there was no revenge whatever in the poor woman's spirit and that what she went for was simply this—her husband was dead, he had left her a little property, it was all she had to bring his babes up and support herself—someone had seized this property and what she needed was that the property might be restored to her.

Her request was that that which had been unlawfully taken from the weak by the mighty, might at once be taken from the clutches of the strong and restored unto the rightful owner. I think any intelligent person reading the passage would at once conceive that that was what she was seeking. Now the Church of Christ is seeking the very same thing. Those that can cry day and night in Heaven before the Throne of God do not cry out of a spirit of revenge. The saints, when they pray to God on earth and girdle the globe with supplication, do not pray against the wicked out of a spirit of hatred. God forbid that any of us should ever fall on our knees and ask God to avenge us of our adversary in the common acceptation of that phrase! I am sure there is no Christian actuated by the Spirit of Christ who would ever ask for vengeance, even on the head of the bloodiest persecutor. For if he should do so, I think the lips of Jesus might rebuke him, for we know what Jesus said when He was dying—He did not wish to be avenged, for He said—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Christ's Church is seeking after just what the poor widow was seeking and we are to understand our text, "Shall not God avenge His own elect?" in that modified sense which the parable would convey to us. The fact is, Christ's Church is a widow. It is true her Husband is alive but she is in a widowed state because He has departed from her. Our Lord Jesus Christ who is the Bridegroom, was once with His people and the Church could not mourn or fast when the Bridegroom was with her. But He said, "The day shall come when the Bridegroom shall be taken away, and then she shall fast." These are the days—"Our Jesus has gone up on high"—He is not with us in Person, now—He has left His Church in the wilderness. It is true He has left the Comforter with her, but His own absolute, personal Presence is not vouchsafed to her. He is not yet come a second time without a Sin-Offering unto salvation. Well, then, taking advantage of the absence of Christ, the Church's Husband, the kings, the princes, the rulers and spiritual wickedness in high places have sought to rob the Church of her rights and her privileges! And what the Church is always crying for is that God would restore her, her rights—that He would give to her the portion which her Husband left her in His last legacy and which, in due time, when God shall have answered her prayers, He shall restore unto her. And what is that legacy?

My Brothers and Sisters, there are many things that Christ has left to His Church of which the world has robbed us. The Church was once a united Church. When Christ was in this world, His prayer was that they all might be one, even as He and His Father were One. Alas, the world has robbed us of our unity and now behold the Church cries day and night, "Restore, O Lord, the scattered of Israel, and bring us into one

fold, and let us have one Shepherd!" The spirit of the world has crept into our midst and split us into many denominations. God's children are not now called Christians, but they are called Baptists and Independents, Churchmen, Dissenters and such-like names of distinction. Their oneness, although it really exists in the heart, is lost, at least in the outward appearance of it and, to some degree, it is entirely lost. But the Church is crying for it every day—the true hearts in the midst of God's Zion and the glorified spirits above are crying day without night, "O Lord, make Your Church one!"

Again, the Church was sent into this world to bring the world to a knowledge of the Truth of God and, one day the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. We may say that all the world is Christ's, though heathenism has a part of it, Mohammed has another and the Pope another. The world is divided into different sections, under different false systems of religion, but all the world belongs by right to Christ. We can cast our eyes around the world from the river even to the ends of the earth and we can say, "The kings of the isles shall bring tribute; the princes of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts; kings shall yet be the nursing fathers of the Church, and queens the nursing mothers." But the world has robbed us of this—the different false religions have spoiled the Church's inheritance, the wild boar of the woods wastes her and devours her borders. Zion's banner should wave everywhere in every kingdom, but instead thereof the priests, the kings, the idol gods have taken the kingdoms unto themselves.

Now this is the great thing, I believe, that the Church is praying for. You know the Church is one day to wear a crown. Christ's Church is Christ's royal bride and she is to have a crown. But she can never have it until her prayer has been heard, until her Lord comes to revenge her wrongs. For, lo, the Church of God is trampled on and despised! The precious sons of Zion, comparable unto fine gold—how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the workings of the potter! God's chosen people are counted as the off-scouring of all things, instead of being as, indeed they are, considered as the blood royal of the universe—the princes among men! Now, because of these lost rights, Christ's Church cries day and night unto God, crying out, "O Lord, avenge us of our adversary, and restore unto Your widowed Church her rights!"

Put the Jew wherever you may, and he will always declare that the promised land belongs to his nation. There is a pride about the Jew, wherever he may be—he believes himself to still belong to that chosen family whose were the Covenants and the oracles. That is true of the Christian—he may be ever so poor, ever so despised, but knowing himself to belong to the chosen body, he claims that all things are his own. You may clothe him in fustian and you may feed him on bread and water, but he will still say, "All things are mine." You may thrust him into a dungeon and let no light come to him except through iron bars, but he will still declare, "Mine are the valleys and the hills! Mine by sacred right—my Father made them all." There is a royalty in a Christian which persecution cannot burn out, which shame cannot crush, which poverty

cannot root up! There it is and there it must be forever—conscious of his high rights and distinctive privileges, the Christian, the Believer, will never cease to cry unto Christ that he may yet have his rights and possess what his God gave him.

Now, dear Friends, very often we are low-spirited and down-hearted. Sometimes the Christian minister goes back from his pulpit and says, "Ah, the Gospel seems to be making very little progress I do not see how the kingdoms of this earth are to belong to Christ." The Sunday school teacher goes home from his class and says, "This is weary work. If things go on as they do now, we shall always have to say, 'Who has believed our report,' and how can the Church prosper if things are so?" And there are times with each of us—when a kind of sickness seizes our spirits—we look at everything with a sad eye and we say, "Ah, the millennium is many years off." Indeed, unbelief says it is quite impossible! "How shall the heathen bow before Him? How shall they that dwell in the wilderness lick the dust?" Now, you who have thought thus and you who are thinking so now, hear the Savior's argument for your consolation, the argument couched in the text—The Church of God is crying unto Him day and night! There where the burning lamps of Heaven perpetually light the skies—high in the seventh heaven, above the stars, where angels cast their crowns before the Most High, the saints forever cry to God, "O Lord, avenge Your own elect!" for prayer is made in Heaven. The saints under the altar cry aloud, "O Lord, how long?" There is never a moment when the saints cease to pray. They have—

"Vials full of odor sweet,
And harps of sweeter sound."

And we remember that the saints on earth are always in prayer. You meet together in the evening for prayer. You scatter to your houses and then your family fires begin to burn. And when your family fires are put out and your private devotions have ceased, the sun is just rising in the other land across the western sea and there they are beginning to pray again! And when the sun has set, then it rises somewhere round the world in the far east, there by the Ganges river, there by the Himalaya steeps—and the saints of God begin again. And when the sun winds on its course and again shines somewhere else, then the saints of the Lord offer incense and a pure offering, so that there is never an hour when this world ceases to offer its incense—not one moment, even in the darkest shades of midnight—when prayer does not ascend from this lower world! And it would be ill for the world if there were a moment when prayer should be suspended, for remember what a poet says, "Perhaps the day when this world shall be consumed will be a day unbrightened by a prayer." Perhaps it may be so, but certainly such a day as that has not yet rolled over the world, for day without night the world is girdled with prayer and one sacred belt of supplication winds the whole globe!

Now, said Christ, if God's elect in Heaven and on earth are day without night without ceasing, crying to God to give the Church her empire, her reign, her splendors, her victories—rest assured the Church shall have what it asks for! Shall not God avenge His own elect that cry day

and night unto Him? Yes, Beloved Brothers and Sisters, we may not live to see it, though sometimes I think there are some alive in this world who will live to see that bright day. And yet, if we live not to see it, the day shall come when Christ, who is the Truth, shall have all power given unto Him under Heaven even as He really has even now—He shall then have it given to Him in the form and symbol and fashion of it also. The day is coming when Christ shall come in the clouds of Heaven to reign upon this earth in the midst of His people. Then, when He shall come, the kingdoms of this world shall be converted to Him—all people shall flock to His colors! Every knee shall bow before Him and every tongue confess that the Lord is God!

I have sometimes thought that I may yet live to see that day, and perhaps some of you. We cannot tell when Christ shall come. We are very apt to forget that He comes as a thief in the night, in such an hour as we think not. It is a pleasing thought, sometimes, to remember that there may be some standing here that will not die, for we know the Scripture says, "Behold, I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump." When Christ shall come, we shall be alive and remain, perhaps, some of us, for He may come tomorrow, He may come tonight! Before the word I am speaking reaches your ears, the trumpet of the Resurrection and Jubilee may startle us all and we may behold Christ come in the clouds of Heaven! But whether He comes or not in our lifetime, there will be some alive when He shall come and they, if they are His people, shall not die—they shall be changed—"the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we always be with the Lord."

O work on, minister! Toil on, teacher! Weep on, mourner! Pray on, intercessor! Hope on, Believer, the hallowed day is coming! Some of the streaks of the gray light already mark the horizon. Some of the sweet tidings of the Master's coming have already been announced to God's favorite people! Some that have dwelt high on the mountaintop of communion have declared that the time is approaching. The chariot wheels of Christ are drawing near! But be it near, or be it far off, it must come. It shall come! The Church shall triumph—the world shall be subdued beneath her feet. God shall avenge His own elect who cry day and night unto Him. Now, I take *that* as the absolute meaning of the passage, the nearest and most appropriate way of explaining it.

II. And now I am going to try to work out THE PRINCIPLE OF THE TEXT. It is this—*Importunity will prevail.* Now you must not smile while I give you two pictures—the pictures that Christ gave His disciples, worked out a little, so as to be more plain to you. Jesus Christ says if you need anything of God, if you do not get it the first time, try again. And if you do not get it then, continue in prayer, for continuing long in prayer, you will prevail with God. And He gives you two pictures that we have had this evening.

The first is the good man who had no bread in his house when his friend came. You may picture the scene. He says, "I am very glad to see you, but I have not a morsel of food in the house. If I had the richest dainties in the world, you could have them all but I have not any." "Well, but," says his friend, "I have come a good many miles this day. I cannot go to rest without something to eat. I shall faint." "Well, but," he says, "I have nothing for you." "My dear Friend," says the other, "cannot you obtain a morsel? I am famished by the way—I expected to have got to my resting place at noontide, and now it is midnight. I have been travelling these twelve hours and have had nothing at all to eat." "Well," says his friend, "I have something for your horse to eat, but I cannot give you anything." But at length he says, "There is a friend of mine who lives down the street. I will go and get something from him. You shall not starve. I will not come away till I get something."

Away he goes and finds his friend asleep. He gives a loud knock. The man is upstairs in bed and he says, "My wife and my children are with me in bed." He does not want to hear that knock and so he just sleeps on. Then there comes another tremendous knock. Says the man, "I cannot think who that can be." The question is asked by those who are upstairs, but he does not feel at all inclined to get out and look. It is a cold night and why should he get up? Then there comes another rap. "Well," he says, "there is somebody at the door." He still turns in his bed and will not get up. He doesn't see why he should rise at such an untimely hour as that. Besides, it may be only some drunken fellow going home late. Then there comes another tremendous knock. He goes to the window, puts his head out and asks what is the matter. "Oh," says the man, "I need some loaves of bread. A friend of mine has come to see me and I have nothing for him." "Why do you come to me for at such an hour as this? I cannot come down; my wife and my children are with me in bed; I cannot give you bread at this hour of the night." "But," says the other, "I must have it and I hope you will give it to me. What a friend you have been to me in times past!" "Friend or no friend," he says, "I shall not give you anything at this time of night."

He will not rise and give to him just because he is his friend. Then what does the poor man do? He says, "I will not go back." He thinks he sees that poor hungry man and he cannot bear the thought of going back and saying that he has nothing for him. That was the only house where he could get bread and so he knocks again. "Oh, dear me, says the man—I thought I had got rid of that fellow. I told him I couldn't get up at this hour and I won't!" But then there comes another rap—a tremendous one and a child says "Father, we can't go to sleep! Hadn't you better go and give that man his bread?" But the father says, "No, I shall not! Why does he trouble me in this way?" Then there comes another rap and he goes to the window in great anger and asks him, "What do you want, coming here knocking in this way? I tell you once and for all, I shall not give you anything!"

"Well," says the man, "you must give me bread. I cannot go till you do! If you do not give me any, I mean to stay here and knock all night."

"Well," says Jesus, "I tell you, though he will not arise and give it to him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will arise and give him what he needs." So he comes downstairs, gets the loaves, opens the door and says to the man, "Here, take as many as you need, and be off with you, and never come to disturb me any more at night." So off he goes—and importunity gets what even friendship could not obtain!

Well, then the Savior gives another picture. Importunity can get what even justice ought to get, but cannot. There is the poor widow—she is robbed of all she has. She had a little plot of ground and a little cottage with just enough to keep her children through the winter. And there was a little field, or two, that she could let out for sufficient rent to keep her all the year—but now it is all pounced upon. She does not know what she is to do. Somebody will come in to claim it who has no right to it. She is turned out of house and home—and she and her poor children are on the streets! She goes off to the judge's house to see him—a rather wild errand, that, for when she gets there, there stand the porters at the door, and the men with long spears and they say, "Woman, what do you want?" "I want to see the judge." "You cannot see the judge. He has got plenty to do without seeing you." "But I must see him! There is a man who has been taking…" "I do not want to know anything at all about it! You cannot see him." "But I must see him," says the woman and, somehow or other, though the porters repulse her all day long, she manages to get into court! And just when some witness steps down, up comes the woman and begins, "My Lord." "What case is this, Sergeant?" asks the judge. "Oh, it has nothing to do with the court business today, my Lord!" "Get down with you," says the judge to the woman. "O my Lord," she replies, "there is a man that has come and taken away…" "Now, you have no right here, I tell you, you must go!"

And she steps down, sad at heart. But the next morning she comes again. As soon as ever the court house is open, there is the woman at the door! Before anybody can be found to enter, there she is! She had established herself there as soon as the people came to get the place ready. Well, before they can begin the business of the day, the woman begins crying out, "O my lord, my husband is dead." "Did you not come here yesterday?" asks the judge. "Yes, my Lord." "Well, I thought I told you this was not the proper time and place to apply. I cannot attend to you." "O my Lord, if you would but just hear my case a little!" "Bring up the next case," says the judge, and there is a case brought up, and the judge proceeds. There happens, however, to be an interlude in the business, such as the poor widow has been looking for a long time. And his Honor is just going out of court for a little refreshment. And as he is leaving, the woman steps up and says, "My Lord." "Now take that woman away! She is always coming here and disturbing me."

The poor woman is taken away, but she returns, and all day long the poor soul is there. She comes the next day, and when the judge arrives, there is the apparition of this poor woman to startle him again. What is to be done all day long? He knows that at every possible opportunity she can get, she will be down upon him to ask him to avenge her of her ad-

versary. At length he says, "Well, what is your case?" And as soon as it is stated, he thinks to himself, "I know that man very well, that has taken away her property. He is a friend of mine. I shall not interfere in the case. I neither fear God, nor regard man, but as a friend of mine has got her property, I shall not interfere." And then, addressing the woman, "I absolutely forbid you ever to come to this place again."

But she comes again, and again, and again, until one day she steps into the witness box, and says, "My lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit." "Now I do not want any more of that! You are always giving me your long sermons in court." "My lord," continues the woman, "I will have a hearing today. I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit. I have been here many times before and you have sent me away when I ought to have had justice at your hands. And now this day, unless I am dragged out of court by force, I will stop until I get justice!" Well, the judge thinks to himself a moment or two and says, "If I were just to decide this woman's case, I would get rid of her. Well, come, my good Woman, let us hear about it." So she tells the whole history of the case. The judge sends the officer of the court to enquire into it and, at last he says, "Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her of her adversary." He accordingly sets all her accounts square and she goes home to her cottage with a joyous heart—and her children are fed and all is happy, for the judge has set her free from all her dilemmas!

Now, Friends, there you have a case of importunity even going before the claims of justice, as in the other case it went before the claims of friendship.

Now what are these two pictures to teach the sinner? They are to teach the sinner that if the importunate woman could prevail with an unjust judge, you will prevail with a loving Savior! They are to teach you that if by constant knocking, the friend who at first would not rise, at last did rise and give bread, by your repeated prayers you shall at last find the salvation that you need! I am certain that somewhere within the compass of my voice, there is one who has been for weeks and months seeking the Savior, but he or she has never yet found Him. Satan has perhaps whispered, "God will never have mercy on *you.* You may as well give up prayer—prayer is a useless employment if it has no answer! Never attend the House of God again—there is no mercy for you. Never again come to the Throne of Grace, for God's ears are deaf to you—He will not hear *your* supplication."

Now, poor Heart, listen not to the temptation of the devil, but listen to this that I have to say to you! Go again seven times and if that suffices not, 70 times seven! God has not promised to answer you the first time! He will answer you, however, at the end, so continue your prayers. When, with deep anxiety of spirit I sought the Savior, I prayed many months before I could get an answer. And I heard my mother say, one day, that there never was a man in the world, she believed, so wicked as to say that he had sought God truly and earnestly in prayer, and God had not answered him. "Many black oaths," she said, "have been sworn,

but I never heard of any man who was allowed to utter a sentence so derogatory to the love and mercy of God as that, 'I have sought God and He would not save me.'" At once the thought struck me, "I will say that, for I know I have sought God and I feel He has not heard me." I resolved that I would say it and that she should hear me, for I felt my spirit vexed within me. I had sought God and, I thought, with all my heart, and He had never vouchsafed to hear me. But then it occurred to me, "Would it not be better to try again before saying it?" That time I sought as I had not sought before and that time I found and rejoiced in hope of the Glory of God, because my supplication had been answered in my own heart, to my own soul's comfort!

Now, if you are in the same position and are laboring under the same temptation, try again. If your knees have been bent 70 times in vain, remember you have 70 times the fewer to pray in vain, so try again! You are so much nearer the appointed number which you must reach before God will hear you! Do not give up your efforts. In fact, I know you neither will nor can give up if God, the Holy Spirit, has taught you praying, for that is one of the things that Satan cannot do—he cannot effectually stop a praying tongue! He cannot forever quench the desire of the soul, though he may for a time do it by despondency and despair, yet he cannot do it in the end. I want, before I have done, to take the hand of that young man, or that young woman who is tonight seeking the Savior, but, as yet, without having found Him to his heart's joy. And I want to say a kind word to him. Dear Brother, Sister, God *will* hear you! Be of good courage, but, in the meantime, to keep your spirits up, I will tell you a few things.

Consider what a great Being God is, and what a little creature you are, and then you need not wonder that you have to wait. Why poor people, when they go to see a rich man, will stay in his hall for hours! And if they are going to see a great lord, they will not mind waiting in the antechamber where there is no fire till their feet are cramped with cold, so long as they have a hope that they shall get an audience at last. The pertinacity of the beggar in the streets is sometimes astonishing—you cannot get rid of him! You walk a little faster and he walks a little faster, too! He keeps talking to you about his wife who is sick, and tells you that he is a poor man, that you will never miss what you give him, that God will bless you and all that. Well, if a beggar will wait upon his fellow worm, if we would be content to wait upon the great of the earth for so long a season, oh, we need not murmur against God if He bids us wait in His halls, for we are poor miserable sinners who are good for nothing and He is the eternal God! There is such a distance between Him and us that we need not murmur if He keeps us waiting.

Besides, let us recollect what a great blessing it is we are asking for. The beggar will stay at your door half an hour with the hope of getting, perhaps, a crust of bread. And men will go and wait in the halls of princes just to get a word. But ah, my Friends, that which we are seeking is more than that! We are seeking for the salvation of our souls! We are seeking for the blood of Christ, for the pardon of sin, for a seat in Para-

dise, for deliverance from the flames of Hell! And for such a gift as this it were worthwhile waiting a thousand years if we might be sure of getting it at last!

But again, poor Soul, be willing to wait because, let me tell you this, you are sure to get what you seek. "Oh," cries one, "I would not mind what I did if I thought I could be saved at last." Well, you will. There was never a soul that perished praying, never one who sought the Savior who was at last cast away! Oh, if the Lord should keep you waiting till your head is silvered over with gray, His mercy would not come too late! He would be sure at last to give an ear to your supplication and bestow upon you the blessing. Therefore be patient. Though the promise tarries, wait for it, for it will be sure to come. But while you are waiting, do not do as some people have done. I once had a hearer who used to tell me that he was waiting and I could never get him out of that idea, say what I would, until at last I had to use a good illustration in order to prove to him that he was *not* waiting.

"Now," I said, "suppose I came to your house one day to tea and you said to me, 'My dear Sir, how late you are! We have been waiting for you.' And suppose there was no fire in the grate, no kettle singing on the hob, and no tea made? I would say, 'I do not believe you.'" Waiting implies being ready! If a man is waiting for another, he is ready for him. If you are waiting for the coach, why, you have your hat on and great coat and your gloves, and your bag is packed and you are ready to start. If you are waiting for the train, you are standing on the platform and looking for its arrival. And when a man is waiting for Christ, he is ready for Christ. But when they say they are waiting and they fold their arms in unconcern, it is a gross lie! They are waiting for God to destroy them, and nothing else!

When men do really wait for the Lord, this is the way they wait—they go where they hope to meet Him. If they hear that Jesus is in the House of God, they go there. If they hear that He is to be found in the reading of the Word, they read it day and night. If they hear that some minister has been especially blessed in the salvation of souls, they will go many miles to hear him in order that they may see Jesus. They will go where Jesus goes and when they get near Jesus, they will cry after Him. They will do as the blind man did when he heard that Jesus of Nazareth passed by! Let us describe that scene, for a moment. A poor man sat by the wayside one day. He could see nothing, but he heard a great noise and a lot of people coming his way, so he said to some of the crowd, "What is that?" And they replied, "It is Jesus of Nazareth that passes by." That, he thinks, is a fine opportunity, and he cries out as loud as ever he can, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Jesus Christ is preaching to the crowd as He walks along, working miracles, and He takes no notice of the cry. Then there is another shout, "You, Son of David, have mercy on me!" The disciples come and tell him to be quiet, that he is disturbing Christ in His preaching and that he must not make so much noise—but so much the more, a great deal, he cries, "You, Son of David, have mercy on me!" And that shout prevailed over the voice of Christ and the tramping of the feet of the multitude!

Then Christ stood still and looked at the blind man, opened his eyes and gave him sight! Now you must do the same—you must cry to Christ, you must agonize in prayer and wrestle on your knees before Him when you think that you are near to Him. Above all, study His promises and read His Word. And if this suffices not, hear, then, the last advice and the best—go to your chamber, tonight, you that have sought the Savior long and, as you think, sought Him in vain—go to your chamber, shut your door, fall on your knees, open His Holy Word, turn to that passage which describes the death of Jesus and when you have meekly and reverently read through the story of the Crucifixion, shut the Book, sit down and picture in your mind's eye the hill of Calvary—see the Cross in the midst of those two other crosses of the thieves. Picture to yourselves the Lord Jesus with the crown of thorns on His head, with His hands all dropping blood, with His side distilling a purple torrent. Don't think of anything else!

The first thing that will happen, God the Holy Spirit helping you, will be that you will begin to weep. Tears will run down your cheeks at the sight of the dear bleeding Man and, after a while, faith will begin to kindle and the thought will arise, "Many souls have been saved by trusting in Him that died upon the Cross—and why not I?" And it may be that you shall come down from that chamber of yours with a light heart and gladsome countenance, singing as you come down the stairs—

"Oh, how sweet to view the flowing
Of His sin-atoning blood!
With Divine assurance knowing
He has made my peace with God!"

There is no other way of getting peace like that. O you that have sought often, adopt this last resource! You can but perish coming to Jesus! You will perish if you do not come! But at His feet never a sinner died and never a sinner shall! "Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." You sin-bitten, conscience-stricken sons of men, hear the Gospel—"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." This is the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, that Christ died for sinners. Believe the Gospel and your soul shall live! You shall be saved and rejoice in everlasting Glory!

Christ died for real sinners. You ask a man, "Do you take God's name in vain?" "No." "Do you honor other gods before the Lord Jehovah?" "No." "Do you ever break the Sabbath?" "No." "Do you always honor your father and mother?" "Yes, all these things have I kept from my youth up." Well then, Jesus Christ did not die for you at all—you are too good to go to Heaven! You are not the sort of person the Gospel is preached to! Jesus Christ says, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." He came to save him whose aching heart and bleeding spirit and tearful eyes betray the man who feels himself a sinner!

Now, may I write the word SINNER in great capital letters and ask, "Who is the man that this word depicts?" Suppose I were to do it? Are there not some of you who would get up and say from your hearts, "O Sir, that is my name! You may put that on me, I the am chief of sinners."

Well then, Jesus died for you! "But," says one, "if I had a few good works, I should *then* think He died for me." Then you would have no reason to think so! Your reason for believing that Christ died for you must be grounded *on your sins*. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*"—that must be your only groundwork. "It is hard," says one, "to draw white from black." Yes, but though it is hard, that is what faith must do. You must infer the good from the seeming evil. You know Martin Luther's logic. He says, in his book on Galatians, that Satan once came to him and said, "Martin, you are a great sinner. You will be damned." "No," said he, "Satan, the first is true—I am a great sinner. The second is not true, for, because I am a great sinner, (and I thank you for telling me of it), and because I feel it, I shall be saved, for Christ came to save sinners! And so I cut your head off with your own sword." The greatest saints on earth often have come to this. "Oh," said the heir of Heaven, "I am afraid I am no child of God." And the shortcut to comfort is this, "Well, if I am not a child of God, I am a sinner and—

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

And straightway he comes to Christ, and cries—

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Your Cross I cling!"

Poor Sinners, that is believing on Christ, believing that He died for you when there is no evidence that He did except your own sense of *sin*. Then, casting your black soul into the fountain, bringing your naked soul to the heavenly wardrobe—then do you prove the power of faith and then are you thus manifested to be the children of God in verity and truth.

May the Lord add His blessing! If there are any careless souls here, may He awaken them, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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"THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION"
NO. 2837

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 28, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 8, 1887.

"And has given to us the ministry of reconciliation."
2 Corinthians 5:18.

THERE has been a long-standing quarrel between God and man. It commenced in that day when our first parents hearkened to the serpent's voice and believed the devil rather than their Maker. Yet God is not willing for that quarrel to continue. According to the goodness of His nature, He delights in love. He is the God of Peace and He has, on His part, prepared everything that is necessary for a perfect reconciliation. His glorious wisdom has devised a plan whereby, without violating His Justice as the Judge of all the earth and without tarnishing His perfect holiness, He can meet man upon the ground of mercy and man can again become the Friend of God. That blessed work was done long ago and now all that remains is that man should be reconciled to God, that he should be willing to end the dispute and that his heart should turn towards his Maker again in love, peace and perfect reconciliation. He bids us, His ministers and, indeed, all His servants—each according to his opportunity, experience, knowledge, ability and Grace—to go abroad among the sons of men and exercise "the ministry of reconciliation," to labor to bring men into harmony with God, that they may be willing to accept what God has done toward the making of an everlasting peace and ending, once and for all, this grievous quarrel.

You notice, dear Friends, that Paul says that God "has given to us the ministry of reconciliation," that is, to us men. He might have sent angels to you with the Gospel, but, for a thousand reasons, it was preferable that He should send to men by men. You also observe how the Apostle reassures us by this message, for, if there were a war between two countries, as, for instance, suppose our country should unhappily be at war with France, it would be a token that we desired peace if the ambassador whom we sent to France was a Frenchman who had become domiciled among us. It would be a sure sign that the French sought to be at peace with us if they said to an Englishman living in Paris, "Go to London and try to make peace between the two nations." It would be a token at once that the desire for peace was sincere and you may be sure that God earnestly desires that there should be peace between you and Himself be-

cause He sends men to you with "the word of reconciliation." This shows His condescension, too, in that He veils His glorious majesty.

A seraph would be far more worthy than I am to stand here to plead with you and, willingly enough would I resign my place to him. I do not know that an archangel could desire a happier or better work than to stand here and speak on behalf of the God of the whole earth and labor to bring back God's rebellious children to Him—but while his splendor might reveal much of the greatness of God to you, yet you might be terrified and alarmed by the angelic preacher!

But now, the human being who addresses you, being just like yourselves, shows how God lays aside His Glory and holds back the thunder of His power, that He may come and reason with you, face to face, as a man reasons with his friend. He "has committed unto us the word of reconciliation" because we can, in this matter, speak from experience. When we talk about being at peace with God and speak of the joy which this reconciliation brings, we can say, "We know it is so, for we have felt it." We can enter, with full sympathy, into the case of our friends who are still unreconciled to God. We know the evil of sin and the fear it creates in the conscience, for we have felt it ourselves. We can, therefore, be tender and compassionate to others who are in a similar condition. And we also know something of the sweetness of peace with God through Jesus Christ, for we are living in the enjoyment of it. We know, too, what are the struggles of a poor soul seeking to get that peace, for we struggled into peace through the rich mercy of God! I hope, therefore, that you will see the Wisdom and the Grace of God in choosing one like yourself to plead with you on His behalf and that God will be pleased to bless that instrumentality and make it effectual in your reconciliation unto Himself.

Notice particularly that the ministers of God are not sent to reconcile God *to you*. That great work is already done. As the righteous Judge, He was angry with all sin, but now, seeing that an acceptable Sacrifice has been presented, He is able to meet you with forgiveness in His heart. We are not even sent to find out a way of reconciling you *to God*, for He "has committed unto us the word of reconciliation" as well as "the ministry of reconciliation," so that all we have to do is, as it were, to translate into today's language that which God Himself has written in this Book. We have to speak out in simple, earnest, living words, the message which has been dictated to us—not to make up a message, but to act as the mouthpiece of God! Oh, that He might make me that to many a heart here now! Now let us go to this solemn work and may God the Holy Spirit help us in it!

First, then, we wish to *state the objective of true Gospel ministry.* Next, we will *declare the word of reconciliation.* And, then, we will *beseech you to agree with it.* God grant that these points may strike home!

I. First, then, let us enquire—WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF TRUE GOSPEL MINISTRY? It is that men should be reconciled to God.

My unconverted Hearer, you are at enmity against God. I know that you do not always believe that. You say, "I have not yielded my heart to Him, but still, I am not at enmity against Him." Listen. You do that which

displeases Him and you do it without any grief over it, or, whatever compunction you may feel for a time, you do the same thing again and again—and you continue to do it! What does this prove? When a subject constantly rebels against his sovereign, does it not prove that he is disloyal at heart? "By their fruits you shall know them," is our Lord's own test. Look, you unconverted ones, see what your fruits are! Do not your wicked works prove that you are at enmity against God? Is it not certain that you do not like to hear much about Him? Am I speaking untruly when I say that you count the Bible very dull reading—that some of you say that Sabbaths spent as Christians ought to spend them are very dreary days? You want something more cheerful. God's House is too weary a place for you and to think about Him is too much of a task. I put it to your conscience whether it is not so with you. Do you not regard religion as being a very gloomy affair? If you wanted what you call, pleasure, would you think of seeking it in drawing near to God? No, you would be happier if there were no God at all, would you not? And if all the arrangements of Divine Justice, by which God governs the world, should be abolished, would you not be pleased? If you could sin without being checked in it, or threatened with punishment for it, would you not be glad?

All this proves that you do not love God! The real English of it is that you would destroy God, if you could, in order to have liberty to act according to your own devices. You do not find pleasure in Him. You must admit that your pleasure is found elsewhere. When we truly love a person we find pleasure in being in his company, we are glad to receive letters from him—in fact, anything that the hand of the loved one has touched becomes interesting or even sacred to us. Seeing that it is not so with you, but that you have said to God, "Depart from me! I desire not the knowledge of Your ways"—does not this prove that your heart is at enmity against God? Ah, young people, you may scarcely think that this accusation is a just one, but the more you come to search and look, the more you will find that it is true. If it is not true, I am indeed glad that I need not ask you to be reconciled to God, for you are already reconciled! But then, we shall need to see the proofs that it is so and, among the rest, we shall want to see whether you love God's Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and trust in Him, for, "He that loves Him that begot, loves Him, also, who is begotten of Him." If you love the Father, you will love the Son and put your soul's trust in Him. But it is not so with unrenewed men—they are at enmity against God.

Our objective, in all our preaching, is that you should really be reconciled to God—not that you should pretend to be so. "Oh, yes," you say, "we will attend the regular services. If you wish, we will join the church. We will be baptized, or we will be confirmed—and we will take the sacrament." That is not sufficient. God wants the love of your heart. He wants you to be at peace with Him. Suppose you were to attend to all these external things and still did not love and trust Him—you would be insulting Him—not honoring Him! I tell you, all your church or chapel attendance, your saying of your prayers and your reading of the Bible are of no value

in His sight unless your heart is right with Him. That is the point we are aiming at. In vain is all your attendance upon outward worship! In vain is your profession of being reconciled to God unless you really are! You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, or else the work of the minister is not even begun, much less completed.

We can never be satisfied with your merely listening to us. It is a great thing to have a large and attentive congregation, but it only makes us mourn if we even imagine that you give your ear to us and not to our Master—if you say, "He speaks pleasantly," or, "He speaks well," and yet obey not the message we have tried to convey to you! Oh, forget us! Think nothing of us! Reproach us if you will! There is good reason for it, sometimes, but turn unto the Lord our God! "Be you reconciled unto Him"—that is the burden of all our preaching and, therefore, we cannot be put off with your saying that you will be reconciled to God one of these days. We do not preach with a view to getting you to promise to be reconciled *someday*—we beseech you to be reconciled *now*. "Behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation." Those are not my words—they are the words of Inspired Scripture itself. *Now,* then—we have nothing to do with tomorrow! It is now, even now, that we beseech you, in Christ's place, to be reconciled to God! And we want that reconciliation to be worked at once by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Thus I have stated the objective of true Gospel ministry.

II. Now, secondly, I want to make known to you, as plainly as I can, "THE WORD OF RECONCILIATION." What is that word?

First, I have to tell you that *"all things are of God."* That is the first sentence of the verse from which our text is taken. If, therefore, you are willing to be at peace with God, there is nothing whatever needed from *you*. God has prepared all things that are needed for this present and perpetual reconciliation! To make the friendship between God and man firm and lasting, all that is needed has been already supplied! There is to be nothing of your will, nothing of your merits, nothing of your doing, nothing of your suffering, but, "all things are of God." I think I hear one say, "That suits me, then, for I have nothing and I can do nothing." You need not be anything, Soul. It will be better if you can be nothing and still better if you can be *less than nothing*, "for all things are of God." That is where "the ministry of reconciliation" begins. Surely, such a message as that ought to help bring men into peace with God!

And, next, I again remind you that *the reconciling work on God's part is already done.* He "has given to us the ministry of reconciliation," but He "reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ." When Jesus hung upon the Cross—when Jesus died—when Jesus rose again, everything was done that was necessary in order that God might be able to forgive the guilty and receive them to His bosom! Nothing can be added to Christ's completed work, of which He said, "It is finished." It is as efficacious, today, as it ever was. The work of salvation was done forever and, on God's part, there is nothing now to be removed in order that all who trust His Son may be at perfect peace with Him.

The Lord, through the Apostle's words, *graciously deigns to explain how this came about.* Paul says that He "was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Do you see what that means? You are full of sin, but God will not set that sin down to your account if you trust in His Son's Sacrifice! You have lived a life of sin, but He will not impute it to you! Perhaps you ask, "How can that be?" I will tell you, directly, but, first, I ask you to believe that it is so. "Not imputing their trespasses unto them." You are in debt. You owe a great sum that you can never pay, but the person to whom you owe it turns to his account book and he says, "I have nothing down against you—are you not delighted that it is so?" "But I am in your debt." "I have nothing down against you," he says again. He knows all about the debt, yet he tells you it is not in his ledger. "But it must be down somewhere," you say, "that man has set my debt down to the account of somebody else." That is exactly the case with your sin! Read the last verse of the chapter and you will get the explanation—"For He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Jesus willingly undertook to stand in the sinner's place—and if you accept the reconciliation He has made, your debts are put down *beneath His name* and through them all is drawn the red mark of His atoning Sacrifice, canceling them, every one, so that God can say, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins."

You see, then, that God meets you on these terms—that whatever your guilt may be, He lays it at the door of Christ and makes *Him to be sin for you* and, then, He puts you into Christ's place and makes *you to be* "the righteousness of God in Him." And so He saves you! "That is an extraordinary plan," you say. It is. It is extraordinary. It wakes the echoes of Heaven every time the angels think of it, but it is God's plan. Will you have it? What do you say? Will you quibble at it, or will you accept it? Do not let its wonderful character keep you back from it. On the contrary, say, "If God is satisfied with it, I may well be satisfied, too! If God is content with the work of Christ, I am sure I well may be! It is to Him that the debt was due and if He says it is discharged, I believe Him!" If He declares, as He does, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus"—if He teaches His people to say, as He does, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God"—we are glad enough to accept the Truth He reveals!

And I, for one, am glad enough to proclaim it to you! I have known the time when I could almost have leaped out of the pew when I first learned this simple way of salvation—it did something more than electrify me when I came to understand that this was the way in which God was just and yet the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus—and that all that I had to do was simply to accept it, to look to Christ and take Him to be my Substitute! That was what I did and so I obtained peace in believing. Many years have passed since then, but I have never sought for any other confidence, nor do I want any other! Jesus is All in All to my heart at this moment and, therefore, I urge all here present to accept Him. Let

every guilty, burdened, heavy-laden sinner come and take Christ, who is the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God, saying, "If God meets me thus and is willing to blot out all the past and let me begin over again. If He is willing to cast my sins into the depths of the sea and never call me to account for them, and never lay them to my charge—blessed be His holy name, it does not take me two minutes to consider whether I shall accept this reconciliation or not! I will have it and rejoice to have it! May He grant it to me now!"

III. My third point is this. We are not to be satisfied merely to tell you the Gospel. WE ARE TO BESEECH YOU TO ACCEPT IT, "as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's place, be you reconciled to God."

Consider, I pray you, *how unseemly it is for you to be at enmity against your God.* You are a creature whom He has made and you could not exist a single moment longer if it were not for the constant emanation of His power which sustains you in being. You owe everything to Him! You are absolutely in His hands—He can create and He can destroy. A moth beneath your finger would not be one half as easy to crush as you are beneath the finger of God if He becomes angry with you! Is it wise, is it right for the creature to be at war with the Omnipotent Creator?

Remember, too, *what a good God He is!* He makes the sun to rise on the evil as well as on the good. The rain falls upon the lands of the blasphemer as well as upon the fields of the devout. God gives us fruitful seasons—yes, He gives us everything and He is not provoked against us even though we have continued to rebel against Him. For which of these things do you sin against Him? As I have studied God's Character and known something of Him by fellowship, I have bowed before His matchless goodness. Oh, it is indeed evil to do anything against One who is pure Love, who is "holy, holy, holy," altogether without fault! It cannot be right—I put it to your conscience—it cannot be right for you to be at enmity against the pure and holy God! Think of this matter, I pray you, and end your enmity.

If you are not at peace with God, *you ought to rejoice at any plan by which you may be at peace.* I say, *any* plan. I would take the Bible, if I had never opened it before, and say, "Whatever I find between the covers of this Book of God, I will gratefully accept. I do not mind what plan He proposes, so long as this sad state of things shall come to an end. Can God forgive me? Can He receive me into amity with Himself? Can I be His accepted child? Whatever He proposes, I will agree to accept it even before I know what it is. "But how much more ought you to accept it when the plan is what I have explained to you, namely, one in which there is nothing but mercy on God's part, though there is nothing but sin on yours—one in which God, in the Person of His Son, takes all the suffering, and you have all the blessing—one in which Jesus takes all the shame and you take all the joy!

And, mark you, *this is to be had for the asking.* You have but truly to seek it and you shall have it! Forsake your sin. Forsake your evil thoughts. Confess your transgressions to the Lord and come and trust in Him

whom God has set forth to be the Propitiation for human sin! That is all that is required—why do you not accept it? Surely it is because sin has maddened you and so fascinated you as to make you slaves to its accursed self, so that you do not turn unto Him even though the way of salvation is so simple, so easy, so sure, so everlasting. I would that I could put a force into the very tones of my voice that would send home this reasoning to your heart! As God's creature, you ought to be at peace with Him! Any way in which reconciliation could reach you, you ought to be glad to accept—but such a way as this, in which God's justice is honored and yet His mercy is revealed—ought to strike you as being full of Divine Wisdom and you should at once accept it. Oh, that you would do so!

Let me further plead with you to be reconciled to God *because the consequences of not being reconciled to Him will be very terrible.* What king is there who, if he were about to go to war and found himself able to raise only a thousand troops, would not stop a while if he found that his adversary were coming to meet him with a million men? "Oh," says he, "this is too preposterous! My little army could not stand in the field for an hour against my adversary's vast host. The very first discharge of his dread artillery would sweep both myself and all my little company away." But the contrast is still greater in your case because you are not, with respect to God, even as strong as a thousand would be against a million! He could devour you as easily and as swiftly as the fire devours the stubble. Let the wax fight with the flame, or the twig contend with the fire before you shall be so foolish as to attempt to contend with God! Throughout your life He proposes terms of peace to you—but there will come a day when He will have no dealings with you through ambassadors—He will deal with you by executioners!

I think that it was Alexander who, when he besieged a town, would hang out a white flag and at night a lamp of white color—and as long as either of them hung out, it was a token that if the besieged surrendered, they should have the best possible terms. But when he hung out the red flag, or the red lamp, the people knew that every man in that city would be put to the sword. Alexander would offer no other terms, then! He had hung out the white signal long enough and now he had changed his tune. So, all through this life, the white flag is held out to you—but the time will come when, instead, there will be the red flag of vengeance—and woe be unto the ungodly in that day! Modern deceivers may tell you what they like, but God's Word declares, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." And side by side with it, as if to confirm it, is the other declaration that the righteous shall go into life eternal or everlasting—indicating, by the same Word which is used concerning the righteous, that they shall reign forever and ever, but the doom of the wicked shall be just as lasting. "The smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever." If one is to be shortened, the other must be and I cannot, even with all the pity in my heart, shorten the torments of Hell at the expense of the bliss of Heaven! Nor will God do so. Oh, provoke not the wrath of the Most High! But be at peace with Him this very hour!

Think, too, of *the consequences which will follow when you have peace with God,* for the man who is at peace with God, and knows it, is the happiest of men! He is at peace with all things! He is at peace with life, death, time and eternity. The very beasts of the field are in league with him and the stars in their courses fight for him. All things work for his good now that he has become a child of God by faith in Jesus Christ. Oh, the joy that some of us have experienced through entering into peace with God! We could not describe it to you. Sometimes, it has been so exhilarating that we have felt that we could not communicate any adequate sense of it to our fellow men, for we have heard words which it would not be lawful for a man to utter, save in the ears of those who have felt the same supreme delights! That blessed Book of Solomon's Song is misunderstood by many Believers because they never knew the joy of conjugal love with Christ and the sweetness of His heart when He lays it bare to His Beloved people. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him" and I can assure you, Beloved, that if you do but become reconciled to God, it will be the best day that you ever spent.

Let me continue pleading with you for a little longer. Do you not know, dear Friends, that *the first person to seek peace in any quarrel should be the offending party?* It is not often that it is so, but it ought to be so. The person who has offended another ought to be the first to seek terms of peace. Now *you* are that person. Come, then, accept the message of love which God sends to you. That I may come very close to you, let me ask, "Have you anything to say against God?" In all earthly quarrels, there are two sides, but it is not so in this case. Is there anything which the Lord has done that you think to be difficult? For instance, is there anything in the terms of peace that He puts before you that you think to be too stern? "Oh," you say, "His requirements are too strict!" What are those requirements? That you should leave your sin? That is not too much to ask of you. Does not every doctor who wants to heal a sick man who has taken poison, first of all prevent him from taking any more? Sin is poison to you. Would you let your child who has made himself ill by eating some unsuitable thing, keep on eating it? No, you would take it away from him!

That is all that God wishes to do to you—to deny to you that which, if you were wise, you would deny to yourself. This is not a hard thing, surely. "Oh, but what He asks of me is so mysterious! I do not comprehend it." What is it that you do not comprehend? That you should believe on Jesus Christ? That is as simple as the act of breathing. That you should trust yourself to Christ? "Where is He?" you ask. He is in Heaven, but He is just as able to save you as if He stood here in bodily Presence. Do you not often trust people whom you never see? Some of you have business transactions with people in India—or you trust your money to a banker in Australia, or in America. You never saw the banker and you do not need to see him. You believe that there is such a person and you trust your money to him. Trust your soul to Christ in the same fashion. Though you never saw Him, rely upon Him, for you have read about Him and you believe the story of His birth, life, death and Resurrection.

"Ah," says one, "but if I were to become religious, I would lose so many pleasures." I see. But, in order to be reconciled to *God*, I would be willing, if necessary, to lose a thousand pleasures! Do you not feel that if there were some amusement that you loved, that grieved your mother, you would give it up? Husband, if there were something that you did that made the tears stand in your wife's eyes, even though you liked to do it, would you not give it up for her sake? For those we love, we can readily deny ourselves and count it no denial. But, after all, you know that it is not so. God asks us to give up no pleasure that is real pleasure—and if there is any pleasure at all in it, it is sin. He takes care to give us ten times as much pleasure in His own holy ways. If it were right, I could speak of some here who have known all about the pleasures of the world. They know the pleasures of horseracing. They know the pleasures of the most frivolous company that can be. But I know what their testimony would be, if I asked them. They would say that an hour of peace with God not only recompenses them for the loss of those pleasures, but that they are glad to get rid of all such rubbish, the things of which they are now ashamed!

I do not know how merry a young fellow you may be, but if you are happier than I am, young Man, you must be an uncommonly happy person! I can pick out some, who are much older than I am, and who have more rheumatism in their bones than I have and who also have a good deal of poverty to endure. I could bring you many an old woman who is sitting here, and I could ask her, "Would you change places with that young man who is given up to the guilty pleasures of sin? Come, old Mary, what do you say? This young man says that he would lose pleasure if he were to become a Christian—what do you say? Would you change places with him?" I think I hear her say—

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

So, young Man, you see that we are as happy as you are! We may not make so much noise over it, sometimes, but "still waters run deep" and the quiet joy of the Christian is joy that is worth having.

"Oh, but," says another, "this is my difficulty. I am afraid God would not receive me even if I were to come to Him." Just give me your hand, Brother—let me have a grip of it. Now, if I were to assure you that I would receive you into my house, would you believe me? I believe you would. Well, you may doubt me if you like, but you must not doubt my God, or doubt the bleeding Lamb! And He has said, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." He could not put it stronger than that! For no reason and in no way will He cast out any soul that comes to Him, so He will not cast *you* out. But I hear another say, "I have tried and failed." What have you tried? Have you accepted Christ as the Propitiation for your sin? Have you trusted yourself with Christ? Do you say, "Yes"? Then you are a saved man! God declares that you are. "But I have prayed," you say. Yes, but that is not the way of salvation. God forbid that I should say a word against prayer! I would say a thousand words *for* it—it is a

blessed exercise—but the dead cannot pray, nor can you till you are made alive! The first thing that you have to do is to trust Jesus Christ—and that is the only thing which the Gospel demands of you as the grand condition of reconciliation with God! "This is the work of God, that you believe on Jesus Christ whom He has sent."

"Yes, but I have tried to lead a different life." I know that you have. But suppose I were a physician and I said to you, "Here is the medicine that will cure you," and you say, "I will not take it, Sir." "Why not?" "Because I have tried some other medicine in vain." Would that be logical? The doctor might say, "You may have tried 50 sorts of medicine, but that has nothing to do with what I am giving you—you have to try this." It must not be *your* way of being saved, but *God's* way. Your way is to try and live better. But then you do not live better, for you break down again and again. God's way of saving you is that you trust Jesus Christ and then He will make you live better! Old things shall pass away and all things shall become new when Jesus Christ has you in His hands. Have done with yourself and let Jesus Christ do the whole work and He will save you. That is God's way of salvation.

I do not know whether I have mentioned the peculiar quibble or quarrel that any heart has with God, but I hope I have done so. I would willingly lay down my very life if I could bring all in this Tabernacle to the Lord Jesus Christ. We preachers, and you teachers in the Sunday school, and you who try to talk privately with individuals—we ought all to be very earnest with them, for this is very solemn work. They are apt to die at any moment and to die, too, without hope. Let us plead earnestly with them for God's sake. It does seem so sad that a good God should have so many millions of His creatures as His enemies—that He who keeps the very breath in their nostrils, should get no return from them but ingratitude. "The ox knows his owner and the ass his master's crib," says God, "but Israel does not know, My people does not consider." O God, for Your dear sake we would bring men into reconciliation with You if we could!

We must also be in earnest for Christ's sake, for Christ died for them—He died to save sinners. He had no subordinate aim. This was the one passion of His soul. "He saved others." "Himself He could not save." Oh, by the wounds of Jesus, the scars of which are still visible above, be reconciled to God! Trample not upon His precious blood!

We would be earnest with you, also, for your own sakes. In a short time you will be on a sick bed and you will be on the brink of the grave. We pray you, before the death-sweat stands in great beads upon your brow, seek peace with God. Ere yet they that gather about your bed whisper to one another, "He is going," oh, be at peace with God through Jesus Christ who is our Peace and who reconciles us to the Most High!

And I would be in earnest, last of all—and have my Brothers and Sisters in earnest, too—for our own sakes. "That sounds like selfishness," says someone. If so, it is a hallowed selfishness. As surely as I am a living man, I have to give an account of this night's work before the Judgment Seat of God and every Christian worker and, especially, the Chris-

tian minister, will have to answer for it whether he declared the Truth of God and declared it with an earnest spirit. I think, sometimes, that it will be the greatest mercy that God ever gave to mortal man if I am able to say, at the last, what George Fox, the Quaker, said just as he died, "I am clear. I am clear. I am clear." Brother-minister, if you and I, at the last, are clear of the blood of all men, we will lift up an everlasting song of gratitude to our Lord and Master who made us faithful to our charge! We dare not think of standing before Christ's bar if we have not been in earnest with you. It is as much as our souls are worth to trifle with you—to gather you together on a Sabbath evening, to try and tickle you with fine words, or pretty anecdotes, or mere excitement. This will never do.

Souls, you will either be lost or saved! You will be in Hell among the damned or in Heaven among the blessed—and that very shortly! And if the watchman warns you not, your blood will be required at the watchman's hand. That we may be able to give in our account, with joy, "be you reconciled to God." That we may be able to say, "Here we are, Lord, and the children You have given us through our ministry," "be you reconciled to God." Dear young people and you aged folk who soon must go, and you in middle life, "be you reconciled to God." "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's place, be you reconciled to God." God reconcile you to Himself, for His dear Son's sake!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 CORINTHIANS 5:9-21.

Verses 9-11. *Therefore we labor, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him. For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to what he has done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your conscience.* The outside world did not understand the preachers of the Gospel—they thought them dreamy enthusiasts, earnest about nothing at all. But Paul says that God understood him and he hoped, too, that the consciences of those to whom he was writing had also understood him. The truly faithful minister of Jesus Christ may know that there are two approvals that he will be sure to get—the approval of his Master and the approval of men's consciences. Their prejudice may condemn him, his mode of oratory may not suit their fancy, but their conscience must give quite a different verdict—it must approve the faithful preaching of the Gospel.

12, 13. *For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that you may have an answer for those who glory in appearance, and not in heart. For whether we are beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we are sober, it is for your cause.* Happy Paul who, as a preacher of the Gospel, could write, "If you say that we are beside ourselves, that we are really mad upon religious matters—well, it is to God that we are so! It is not every madman who can say that. "Or if you tell us that we are too serious and sober, it is your case,

your cause that makes us so." Well may we be sober and solemn when we think of the danger in which men's souls are.

14, 15. *For the love of Christ constrains us, because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again.* The true-hearted Christian judges himself to have died when Christ died and, therefore, he feels that he must not live for any objective but the Glory of Christ.

16. *Therefore, from now on, know we regard no man after the flesh: yes, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more.* He is gone back to Glory, so our objective is not to win a kingdom for Him anywhere upon earth. Our aim now is *spiritual*—the proclamation of His Truth, the winning of a Kingdom for Him in the hearts of men.

17-19. *Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away: behold, all things have become new. And all things are of God, who has reconciled unto Himself by Jesus Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not implying their trespasses unto them; and has committed unto us the word of reconciliation.* The *work* of reconciliation He committed to His Son—the *word* of reconciliation He has committed to us. It is our high privilege to tell the tidings of the wondrous work by which God is reconciled, so that, without any violation of His Justice, He can have mercy upon those who have offended Him.

20. *Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be you reconciled to God.* As if Christ Himself stood here and pleaded with you, He bids His ministers plead on His behalf. In the name of God, He bids us beseech you to be reconciled to God. Ambassadors do not generally beseech men—they stand on their dignity, they make demands for the honor of their sovereign—but Christ's ambassadors know of no dignity which should keep them from pleading with men.

21. *For He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.*

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

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GOD'S GLORY IN HIDING SIN
NO. 2838

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 5, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 15, 1877.

"It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but the honor of kings is to search out a matter."
Proverbs 25:2.

THE translation of our text, if it had been more literal, would have run thus, "It is the glory of God to *cover* a matter, but the honor of kings is to search out a matter." For the sake of variety in language, our translators sometimes gave two different interpretations to the same word and though that makes the verbiage more smooth, it is generally a great mistake and apt to mislead us. The word, "conceal," is just the same word that we get in the passage, "Blessed is he... whose sin is covered." So the text runs thus—I will give it to you again that I may further impress it upon you—"It is the glory of God to cover a matter, but the honor of kings is to search out a matter."

First of all, I will give you the common interpretation which is given to these words and the topic which is suggested to most minds thereby, namely, that it is God's glory to conceal much of the great Truth which concerns Himself and His dealings with the sons of men. "Clouds and darkness are round about Him." It is His glory that He is not seen, His glory that He is concealed, while, as for kings, it is their honor "to search out a matter." This is the general interpretation which almost every expositor gives of this passage, but I am not able wholly to agree with it. However, I will speak upon it for little while.

It is certain that such an explanation as this would have to be taken in a limited sense, for it cannot absolutely and without qualification be the glory of God to conceal a thing, for, if so, He might have concealed everything from us. It is evidently for His glory that some things should be revealed or else, why has He revealed them? He might have dwelt forever in that wondrous solitude in which we suppose He did dwell before He commenced the work of Creation. We know not what He was doing in that past eternity of which it is difficult, if not impossible, for us to conceive—when there was no creation, when not a single star had begun to shine, nor an angel had fled through space on rapid wings. If it were God's glory to be absolutely concealed, it seems to me that He would have remained alone in the thick darkness that surrounded Him, for He would not have wanted to have a single creature to know His love, to realize His power, or to contemplate His wisdom. It is at once obvious

that if this is the true and correct interpretation, "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing," it must be taken in a very limited sense. If it had been His glory to conceal *everything*, He would have continued to conceal it, but, as far as I can see, His manifested glory is His glory. The glory of God is not so much to conceal as to *reveal* Himself to those whom He prepares to receive the Revelation!

There are many things which it would not be for God's glory to conceal. You could not say of everything, "It is the glory of God to conceal this." Take, for instance, His righteous Law—would it have been for His glory to have left our race utterly ignorant of it? I cannot conceive of such a thing! And then His matchless Redemption He has revealed to us in many wonderful ways. Would He have taken all the pains that He has done to reveal Himself in Christ Jesus if it had been for His glory to conceal Himself in that respect? Would He bid us go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature if it could be for His glory to conceal that? No, it is high treason against the majesty of Heaven for any man to obscure the blessed Revelation of God in Christ Jesus. I am afraid that all of us, preachers of the Word, do that, in some measure, by reason of our infirmity—but God forbid that we should ever willfully keep back a single ray of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ!

There are many great and glorious Truths which do not need that God should conceal them. If we do not perceive them, probably it is because it is not necessary that they should be concealed, for their own inherent glory is their concealment. If I were to take, for instance, the mysterious Doctrine of the Eternal Filiation of the Lord Jesus Christ, or the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son—these wondrous Truths need not be concealed from us because they are, in themselves, such deep mysteries that, however clearly they may be revealed to us, it is not possible for us to understand them! Even the grand Doctrine of the Trinity which is so plainly set forth in the Scriptures—the Trinity in the Unity of the Godhead—need not be concealed as, indeed, it has not been, yet we cannot comprehend it! God need not seek out any method of concealment for, if He were to unveil His face among us, the Glory would be too bright to be beheld! Go and stand, O mortal man, and gaze upon the sun at mid-day! Can you do it? Would not your eyes be thereby blinded? Yet, yon sun is only one of the myriads of servants in the courts of God! Then what must the face of the King, Himself, be? It needs not that He should veil it—His own Glory is, surely, veil enough unto itself!

Our minds are finite, contracted, limited. There were certain men, who called themselves "Encyclopedists," because they fancied that they knew everything, yet they knew nothing perfectly and many of them broke down in their attempt to learn even all that might be known by men. But, as for God Himself, who can possibly comprehend Him? The archangel who stands nearest to His august Presence, must veil his face with his wings, for even he is not able to gaze upon the Glory of that excessive light! It does not seem to me to be so great a Truth that it is the glory of God to conceal as that His very Glory conceals itself, not by being con-

cealed, but by being so exceedingly unveiled! The Glory, itself, blinds, for the finite mind of man is not able to gaze upon it!

Yet the Truth of God which our English Version seeks to convey to us may be accepted without hesitation if we regard it thus—if God has concealed anything, it is God's glory to conceal it and it is right that it should be hidden. If God has not told us any Truth, it is for His glory not to tell it to us. Perhaps we have as much reason to bless the Lord for what is not in the Bible as for what is there—and what He has not revealed may be as much for our benefit and, certainly, is as much for His glory, as what He has revealed. For instance, if He does not tell us all about Himself and the mystery of His Person, do we need to know it? Can we not believe in Him and love Him all the better because we do not understand Him? Surely a God whom we could understand would be no God! We delight in being out of our depth—in finding waters to swim in—where understanding, with its little plumb line, finds no bottom, but where love, with a restful spirit, finds perfect peace. Doubtless, there is a glory in the Lord not revealing Himself, so far as the past or present is concerned.

As to the future, it is, no doubt, for the glory of God that He has not revealed to us all concerning the history of this world. It may be all in the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelation. Some friends think it is, and it may be, but this I venture to say—there is no man who understands it and I do not think any men will understand it until the Word shall explain itself! And then, possibly, when history becomes the commentary upon the prophecy, we shall wonder that we did not see it. Yet we cannot do so at present. It is to the glory of God and to your own profit that you do not know what will happen to you tomorrow. You know not what afflictions may await you, nor when you shall die—it is well for you that you do not know. If it had been for God's glory that you should read your history from its first page to its last and be able to foretell every event in your own life, or in the history of the nations of the earth, God would have revealed it to you! Be content not to know what God does not tell you and say, in your spirit, "Let it be so, for, in some things, it is the glory of God to conceal a thing."

Still, I think that this is *not* the teaching of the text. I conceive that it has quite another meaning which I will try to give you. You know that in a proverb like this, with a, "but," in the middle, there is what we call an antithesis, or an expression of opposites. The text does not run thus, "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honor of kings is to publish a thing." That is not what is said here—it is quite a different sentence which is not an antithesis at all. Then, again, the antithesis is not complete—"It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honor of kings is to search out a matter," for it is not so much the business of kings to search out matters that refer to wisdom as it is the business of wise men to do so. If there are doctrines that are not known to us because God conceals them, it is the business of wise men to search them out—not so much the business of *kings* to do so. Neither can we read the passage thus, "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but the honor of kings to

make things plain," because the third verse of the chapter does not agree with this rendering. Solomon did not think that it was to the honor of kings to make things plain. He was a believer in diplomacy, for he says, "The Heaven for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings is unsearchable." He could not, therefore, have intended to convey that meaning.

Now let me give you what I think is the true meaning of the passage. What is the business of kings? Why are they set up above their fellow men? What is their honor? Why, it is the honor of kings to search out matters that concern the administration of justice, to bring prisoners before their bar, laying bare their crimes and convicting them if they are guilty. It is the glory of God to cover a matter, that matter being sin—but it is the honor of kings to search that matter out and bring the guilty one to justice. You know that we think less and less of our police if they are not able to identify criminals. It has sometimes happened that justice misses its mark. Perhaps there is an attempt made to get a certain important witness out of the way, or to bribe another, or to suppress some testimony that might be brought against the accused persons. It is never to the honor of kings when that is done. When, for instance, a murder has been committed, and the criminal cannot be traced, it is not to the credit of the governing powers that it should be so. And though it must be so, sometimes, for no human government can be perfect in its detective forces, yet it is not to the honor of "the powers that be." It is to the honor of kings that they search matters out till they bring home the guilt to the proper individual. Nor is it to the honor of kings if they give their verdict and sentence at first sight according to prejudice. It is their honor to search out a matter—to hear both sides of the case. The magistrate who sits in the king's name is bound to enquire thoroughly into the matter brought before him and, at last, to adjudicate as justice demands. This is sometimes very difficult, but it is to the honor of kings and their representatives when they attempt it.

Now, to God, such a thing as this is impossible. Nothing is concealed from Him—the whole universe is but one great prison for those who offend Him and He can find them at any time that He pleases—and He can execute His just sentence upon them without a moment's delay! He needs no witnesses. He need not summon this person or that, who has seen a certain deed done, for the transgression has been committed in His own sight! His glory is that He covers the matter—and as it is the glory of God to cover the matter, it is also the honor of kings to search the matter out, that matter, in each case, being the breach of law. I am persuaded that this is the meaning of the text. Even if it were not, it is a grand Truth of Scripture, well worthy of our meditation.

So, we shall dwell upon it thus. First, *it is the glory of God to cover sin.* Secondly, *this is a great encouragement to penitent sinners.* And, thirdly, *it ought to be a great stimulus to saints.*

I. First, IT IS THE GLORY OF GOD TO COVER SIN.

This is the expression which is commonly used in Scripture to describe *the putting away of sin and forgiving it.* God covers the very thing

which the magistrate searches out—guilt, the breach of His Law, the aggravations, the multiplied repetitions of sin, the base motives, the many excuses and deceits with which sin is sought to be extenuated—all this God covers. Hear this and be astonished, O you Sinners—God can cover all your sins! No matter how black they are, or how many, or how deep their dye, He can cover them all!—

"This is His grand prerogative,
And none can in this honor share."

But He can do it, glory be to His blessed name!

He can cover the sin which is known and confessed. He never covers the sin which is *not* confessed. When a man will not acknowledge himself to be guilty, he stands convicted of his rebellious refusal to take his proper position before the Lord. But if you stand, O Sinner, and confess your guilt—if you say, O Rebel, "There is no doubt about the matter, I acknowledge that I am guilty," it is the glory of God that He can cover that sin which no other can cover and which your own conscience will not permit you to conceal! He can cover the transgression of that man whose mouth is stopped by the consciousness of his guilt. O glorious act of Divine Grace that sin and transgression can be covered—covered, though it is confessed and acknowledged, and covered *because* it is confessed and acknowledged!

The glory of this Truth lies in the fact that *God can do this justly through the work of Jesus.* To cover up sin, why, standing, as it does, alone and without any qualification, it might seem to be a dreadful thing for God to do! But He can do it righteously. Without the slightest violation of His Law, without endangering the stability of His Kingdom, He can forgive and cover up all manner of sin and blasphemy so that it shall never be seen again! Do you ask me how this can be done? The answer lies in the great substitutionary Sacrifice of Jesus Christ! God steps down from His eternal Throne when man must be punished for his sin and He says, "I will bear the punishment! Lay it all on Me." And that He might bear it, Jesus took upon Himself the form of a Man and dwelt among men and, at last, upon the accursed tree He bore the guilt of man! It was a wondrous recompense which He made to His own Law by being Himself punished in the place of the offender! Now, beneath the whole heavens there can be none who can justly object to the covering of sin by the atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ. That amazing, that remarkable, that unique transaction of the Just suffering for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, has enabled God to cover our sin and to do it justly.

Further, He can do this *without exacting any sort of compensation from the offender.* Marvelous is this Truth—too marvelous for some to believe! The Roman Catholic Church teaches us that we must do penance if our sin is to be forgiven. There must be so many lashes for the bare back, or so long abstention from food—and purgatorial pains to be inflicted after death and I know not what besides! Yes, but this is the glory of *God*—that He can cover all this sin *now*, upon the spot, without any price being paid by the sinner, or any suffering being endured by him! He has but to come and confess his sin and accept the Divine covering, namely,

the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ—and the whole of it shall be covered once and for all!

It is the glory of God that *He can do all this without any injury to the person who is forgiven.* It sometimes happens that if a man has offended you, and you forgive him again and again, he may thereby become hardened in his sin. But the Lord's sweet way of covering sin is one which always melts and changes the heart. Sin is never so heartily hated as when it is covered by the blood of Christ! No man ever thoroughly loathes sin till he has seen it put away in Christ. And when he has seen Jesus put it away by His own griefs and death, then he really hates the sin that made the Redeemer mourn and nailed Him to the tree. It is the Glory of God that He can cover sin in such a fashion as this, so as not to injure the offender whom He forgives!

And He can do it *without causing any injury to the rest of mankind.* There is no man who is any the worse because his fellow man is saved. The example of saved souls is never injurious. There are some, I know, who can twist the truth till they find in it an excuse for sin, but the Truth that God is able to forgive the grossest sin—no, more—that He *has* forgiven it in the case of many and has pressed them to His bosom as His own dear children—has done no injury, but much helpful service to the morals of mankind. Go where you will, and read the story of the prodigal son—on board ship among rough sailors, or away there in the barracks among wild soldiers, or go into the worst slums of London and read to fallen women that wondrous story of God's pardoning love and see if it will do them any injury! You know that it will not. On the contrary, it conveys to them a message of hope which helps to lift them up from that black despair which is one of the strongest chains by which the devil can hold lost souls in captivity! I am not at all afraid of the effect of preaching that it is the glory of God to blot out sin, for He put His Son between Himself and the sinner, as we sometimes sing—

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

The greatest blessing of all is, dear Friends, that, *when God covers sin, He does it so effectually that it never appears again.* He declares that He casts it into the depths of the sea. He says that as far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove it from us. He even goes the length of saying, "The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none." So far as anything can be annihilated, that is what will happen to the sin of the Lord's people. You know that the work of the Messiah was "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness"—and that is the work of which He said, "It is finished." Then it is finished! There is an end of it! That is the glorious way in which the Lord covers sin and it is His peculiar glory that He is continually doing this. Kings may search out matters and they ought to do so, or government will not be safe—but it is to the honor of God to *forgive* sin.

II. Now, secondly, to make a practical use of this Doctrine, THIS SHOULD BE VERY GREAT ENCOURAGEMENT TO THOSE WHO ARE SEEKING MERCY AT GOD'S HANDS.

Beloved Friend, do you wish to have your sin forgiven? Then do not attempt to cover it yourself, for it is the glory of God to cover that matter, so do not try to rob Him of His glory. If you could have covered your sin, there would have been no need for a Redeemer! Do not attempt to excuse or extenuate your guilt, but make a clean breast of it. You are a sinner. Therefore say that you are a sinner. In all your approaches to God, seeking mercy at His hands, come in your true colors. Do not even plead your own repentance, or your tears, or your feelings. Plead as David did, "For Your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity: *for it is great."* Call your sin great, as it really is. Never try to make it out to be little. You know that if you were wounded on a battlefield and a surgeon came where you were, you would not say to him, "Oh, I have very little the matter with me!" Oh no! I guarantee you that you would cry as loudly as you could, "Doctor, bind up my gaping wounds lest I die!" You know that in such a case you would make the most of it, and you would act wisely in doing so. And it is never wise for a sinner to make himself out to be a little sinner. It is the glory of God to cover sin, so do not you attempt to do it! I say again, lay it all bare before Him and ask Him to cover it with the atoning Sacrifice of His dear Son.

Now, poor Sinner, I pray the Holy Spirit to enable you to give God glory, at this moment, by believing that He can cover sin. When the conscience is thoroughly awakened, it seems impossible that sin should ever be covered. The convicted sinner says, "My sin, my sin, I always see it! Can it ever be hidden from the sight of God?" Can you not believe that God in Christ can cover your sin? Glorify God, O son, glorify God, O daughter, by believing that He can do so! Do not limit His mercy by thinking that He cannot pardon you, for He has forgiven so many that, assuredly, there is proof enough that He can pass by iniquity, transgression and sin and remember not the guilt of those who trust His Son! If you believe that, give glory to God now by believing that He is willing to pass by your sin. Every man is willing to do that which honors himself and it is inconceivable that God should be reluctant to do that which glorifies Himself. So, as it is for His glory to cover it, He must be willing to cover it! Therefore, may the Holy Spirit help you to believe, now, that He can and will cover your sin!

There is Christ on the Cross—look to Him with the eyes of faith and take Him to be your own Savior. Christ on the Cross is nothing to you until you trust in Him, but it glorifies Christ when a poor guilty sinner cries to Him, "Purge me with hyssop." You know what the use of the hyssop was. They took a bunch of it and dipped it in the blood of the sacrifice, and those who were sprinkled with it were made ceremonially clean. David prayed, "Purge *me* with hyssop, and *I* shall be clean: wash *me,* and *I* shall be whiter than snow." And that is the prayer for you to present. You believe that if God were to wash another man in the blood of Jesus, He would become whiter than snow, but can you not believe it for yourself? May the blessed Spirit take away your unbelief, dear Heart! Can you not believe that He can wash you and make you whiter than snow? He will do it in a moment if you but trust Him, rely upon Him and receive

His dear Son to be your salvation! This is the true covering of sin. Oh, how the Hebrews loved that word, "covering." Noah's ark was pitched inside and outside with pitch—that was its covering. So everything under the Mosaic Law had its covering and God has a way of covering sin and covering the sinner, too, inside and outside till all his sin is gone! And he that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ may know at once that his transgression is forgiven, his sin is covered.

"But," someone asks, "am I to do nothing?" Nothing but believe in Him that justifies the ungodly! If you do that, you will begin to do something more directly, afterwards, for you will love God for having pardoned you and you will say, "I am not my own now, for I am bought with a price and, therefore, I will live to His Glory." But, in order to get your sin forgiven, you have nothing to do except—

"Cast your deadly doing down,
Down at Jesus' feet—
Stand in Him, in Him alone—
Gloriously complete!"

"For he that believes on Him is not condemned." "He that believes in Him is justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the Law of Moses." Oh, what an encouragement this ought to be to all sinners who are seeking the Savior!

III. Now, lastly, THIS GRAND DOCTRINE OUGHT TO BE A GREAT STIMULUS TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

First, *it should excite you to glorify God in having covered your sin.* Do not go and talk to everybody about what you used to be before conversion, as I have known some to do. They will almost revel in what they were! I have more than a little hesitation about what is sometimes said by converted burglars and men of that sort. I am glad they are converted, but I wish they would not talk so much about that which is covered. Let it be covered. Still, never be backward to glorify God for having covered your sin. Speak of it with delicacy and modesty, but, if the Grace of God has saved you, tell all men of it and do not let people imagine that God has done only a small thing for you. When He saved you, it was the grandest thing He could do for you. Do you not think so? Well, then, tell the story of it—

"Tell it unto sinners, tell,
I am—I am—out of Hell."

"And what is more, I never shall go there, but shall see God's face with acceptance in Heaven!" Tell this to sinners while you live—and when you get to Heaven, make the streets of Heaven ring with the tidings of the Almighty Grace that covered all your sin!

The next thing for you Christian people to do, now you know that God can cover sin, is to *aim at the covering of the sins of your friends and neighbors by leading them to the Savior.* To see sin should always be a tearful sight to you. As soon as ever you see it, breathe the prayer, "Lord, cover it." Do you live where you can hardly lie in your bed at night without hearing sounds of ribaldry and blasphemy? Then the moment you hear them, say, "Lord, cover that sin." Do you see, in the streets, foul transgression that makes you blush? Never see it without saying, "Lord,

cover that sin." If we were in a right state of heart, this would be our habit—every sin that we noticed in ourselves or in others—in our children, or our servants, or our neighbors, or that we read of in the newspapers, would make us pray, "Lord, cover that sin." So always be telling others about the covering of sin by Christ's precious blood! Show them what a perfect covering it is. You know that the Lord spoke through Isaiah of "a covering which is narrower than that a man can wrap himself in it." But the atoning Sacrifice of Christ is a covering which will cover all sin and cover the sinner from head to foot! Therefore tell others about it with all your might.

And, once more, you who have proved the power of this covering, *imitate the Lord in forgetting the sins of those who repent.* If ever they offend you, let that Atonement which satisfied God for sin, also satisfy you, and say, "Though this man has offended me, I ask no atonement at his hands, because Christ's Atonement is to my soul the satisfaction for every sin against me as well as against God." Never harbor any resentment for a single moment, Beloved. "Even as Christ forgave you, so also do you." Do you think that Christ's blood and righteousness are not sufficient to cover those unkind words of your brother, or that ungenerous action of your son, or that slanderous speech of your neighbor? Go and put all offenses against yourself where God has put all offenses against Himself! It is a dreadful thing to hear a man talking about God having forgiven him ten thousand talents and then to see him take his brother by the throat, saying, "Pay me what you owe!" Our Lord Jesus Christ said, "If you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespass." This spirit of forgiveness would keep us always in a state of love—and this is exactly what the Lord Jesus aims at. "It is the glory of God to cover a matter."

Then, you cover matters, too. I know some people who always like to be poking into any filth there is. They keep a long stick and stir it up, and they seem to be quite pleased with the sweet perfume. Let it alone, Brother—let it alone! "Oh, but you do not know how they have offended me!" No, and I do not want to know. But I am quite sure that they have not offended you as much as you have offended God—and yet He has forgiven you! Then why do you not forgive them? The less said, you know, in such matters, the sooner are they mended. Solomon wisely says, "Where no wood is, there the fire goes out." Blessed are they who always act as firemen, throwing cold water upon every spark of dissension or ill-will that they see! It is the Glory of God to cover it up, so you, also, cover it up with the spirit of love and the mantle of gentleness! And, above all, with the reflection that the precious blood of Christ, that made peace between you and God, has also made peace between you and all mankind.

And now, for love of Christ, if they strike you on one cheek, you should turn the other, also. If they will have your cloak, for love of Jesus let them have your coat, also, sooner than live in the spirit of perpetual contention and strife. May God enable you to act thus, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
EXODUS 25:10-22; PSALM 32.

Exodus 25:10, 11. *And they shall make an Ark of shittim wood: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. And you shall overlay it with pure gold, within and without shall you overlay it, and shall make upon it a crown of gold round about.* The Ark of the Covenant was the most sacred object in the tabernacle in the wilderness. It stood at the extreme end of the Holy of Holiest. It was the place over which the bright shining light called the Shekinah, which was the token of the Presence of God, shone forth. The Ark was, doubtless, typical of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was a sacred chest made to contain the Law of God. Blessed are they who know the Law in Christ. Out of Christ, the Law condemns. In Christ, it becomes a blessed guide to us. This Ark was made of wood, perhaps to typify the human nature of our blessed Lord—but it was of wood which did not rot—acacia—which resists the worm and, truly, in Him there was no corruption in life by way of sin, and no corruption sullied Him in death when He slept for a while in the grave! Wood is a thing that grows out of the earth, even as Jesus sprang up like a root out of a dry ground. But the Ark must be made of the best kind of wood—no presence of rot and untainted. Yet the Ark, though made of wood, did not appear to be so, for it was completely overlaid with pure gold, so, everywhere, the Deity, or, if you will, the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ could be seen. The Ark was of shittim wood, yet it was an Ark of gold—and He, who was truly Man, was just as truly God, blessed be His holy name! Round about the top of this Ark there was a crown of gold. How glorious is Christ, in His mediation, as covering the Law and preserving it within Himself! He is King, glorious in holiness and honored in the midst of His people.

12-14. *And you shall cast four rings of gold for it, and put them on the four corners thereof; and two rings shall be on the one side of it, and two rings on the other side of it, and you shall make staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold. And you shall put the staves into the rings by the sides of the Ark, that the Ark may be borne with them.* The rings were, of course, for the staves to pass through, and the staves were for the priests to carry the Ark as it moved from place to place. It went with the children of Israel in all their journeys—and our Lord Jesus is always with us. He goes with us wherever we go and tarries with us wherever we abide. Though His glorified Person is in Heaven, yet His Presence is not restricted to any one place, as He said to His disciples, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

15. *The staves shall be in the rings of the Ark: they shall not be taken from it.* So that it was always ready to be moved.

16. *And you shall put into the Ark, the Testimony which I shall give you.* That is to say, the two tablets of stone were to be put into the Ark of the Covenant.

17. *And you shall make a Mercy Seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof.* It exactly fitted upon the top of the Ark, and so completely covered whatever was put within. It was of pure gold. This, perhaps, was the most important part of this very important article of the tabernacle furniture. It was the Mercy Seat, the cover that hid the Law of God, the place where God promised to meet with His people.

18-20. *And you shall make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shall you make them, on the two ends of the Mercy Seat. And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: even of the Mercy Seat shall you make the cherubims on the two ends thereof, and the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the Mercy Seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the Mercy Seat shall the faces of the cherubims be.* They were part and parcel of the Mercy Seat. They were made of the same precious metal and all formed one piece. They may represent the angels who stand desiring to look into the mysteries of God, and they may also represent the Church, which is all of a piece with Christ, forever one with Him.

21, 22. *And you shall put the Mercy Seat above upon the Ark, and in the Ark you shall put the Testimony that I shall give you. And there I will meet with you, and I will commune with you from above the Mercy Seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the Ark of the Testimony, of all things which I will give you in commandment unto the children of Israel.* It was the meeting place of God and men, where the Law was covered with a solid plate of gold, so is Jesus the meeting place between God and sinners, where the Law is covered with His perfect righteousness.

Psalm 32:1. *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.* That is a wonderful word—almost the same in Hebrew as in English—covered, hidden, concealed, put away, removed, dismissed forever.

2. *Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.* For, when sin is gone, men become honest before God. The fear of punishment makes them endeavor to evade the Truth concerning sin, but, when they see sin pardoned, then are they honest before the Lord.

3. *When I kept silent, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.* I have heard that certain diseases, when they are suppressed, are all the more terrible and deadly. And, certainly, suppressed sin, or suppressed sorrow for sin which has no vent by way of confession before God, is a dreadful thing. It seems to eat into the very bones—"My bones waxed old," like a strong acid eating into the very pillars of our manhood!

4. *For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me.* The mere touch of God's finger would be enough to crush us, but when He comes to deal with us in conviction and lays His heavy hand upon us, it is, indeed, terrible! We are then like Gideon's fleece when he squeezed all the moisture out of it.

4, 5. *My moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will*

confess my transgressors unto the LORD; and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah. Being confessed, it was forgiven! Being acknowledged, it was blotted out!

5. *For this shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found.* If You, O Lord, hear a sinner cry unto You, then surely You will hear your saints when they cry unto You yet more and more! If seekers become finders, then others will become seekers, too.

6, 7. *Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto him. You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.* What a blessed experience that is—to be surrounded with songs, to hear music on the right and music on the left, singing behind me for mercy received, singing before me for hopes yet to be fulfilled—singing above me, the angels welcoming me when my time comes to go Home to my Father's House! "You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance." Now the Lord speaks to His servant—

8. *I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go: I will guide you with My eyes.* "Therefore, keep your eye on Me; notice every movement of My eyes and be ready and obedient, at the slightest sign, to do My will."

9. *Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you.* Be not hard in the mouth. Be not stubborn, willful, obstinate, rebellions.

10. *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked.* They pursue pleasure as if it belonged to them alone. They talk about "a short life and a merry one." Poor things, how sadly mistaken they are! "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked." They have a terrible inheritance and a dreadful entail of suffering!

10, 11. *But he that trusts in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about. Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, you righteous: and shout for joy.* Be demonstrative about it, make other people hear of it. Do not be ashamed to let your holy joy be known. Be not so very proper and orderly as to mumble out your praises as some do—"Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, you righteous: and shout for joy,"

11. *All you that are upright in heart.*

—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.

"PRISONERS OF HOPE"
NO. 2839

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 12, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 5, 1877.

"As for you also, by the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoner out of the pit wherein is no water. Turn you to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope: even today do I declare that I will render double unto you."
Zechariah 9:11, 12

THIS passage unquestionably has to do with our Lord Jesus Christ and His salvation. We are not at all in doubt about this matter, for the connection is exceedingly clear. If you begin to read at the 9th verse, you will see that we have, from that place on to our text, much prophetic information concerning our Lord and His Kingdom. We read, first, something about His own manner of triumph and His way of conducting Himself in His Kingdom—"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, your King comes unto you: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." We know that the Prophet speaks not thus of any man save of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the King who put aside the pomp and pageantry in which Eastern monarchs delighted and, instead of riding upon a horse, He mounts a lowly ass. If He must ride in procession through the streets of Jerusalem, it shall be in that meek and humble guise. The King of the Kingdom of Grace is not high and lofty, haughty or proud, but condescends to men of low estate.

The Pharisees and scribes murmured, "This Man receives sinners, and eats with them," and it was quite true. He is a King, and of a right royal nature, but His Kingdom is not that of pomp and show, of force and oppression. He is just and righteous, but He is also lowly, gentle and kind. The little children flocked around Him while He was here below and, now, the meek and lowly ones of mankind delight to serve Him. How glad I am that I can say to any of you who have not yet yielded yourselves up to Him that you need not fear to become the subjects of Jesus, the Son of God, for He is so gentle a King that it shall always be for your profit and pleasure, and never to your real loss or sorrow, to bow down before His gracious scepter! We have not to set before you a Pharaoh or a Nebuchadnezzar. Jesus of Nazareth is a King of quite another kind. Therefore, "kiss the Son, lest He be angry." Bow before Him and let Him be your only Lord and King. You see, then, that this 9th verse refers to our Lord Je-

sus and tells us something concerning His personal and official Character.

The next verse goes on to describe the weapons by which He wins His victories. Or, rather, it tells us what they are not. Not by carnal weapons will Christ ever force His way among the sons of men, for He says, "I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle-bow shall be cut off." Mohammed may conquer by the sword, but Christ conquers by the sword which comes out of His mouth, that is, the Word of the Lord! His empire is one of love, not of force and oppression. He subdues men, but He does it by His own gentleness and kindness, never by breaking them in pieces and destroying them upon a gory battlefield. Let others cement an empire with blood if they will, but Jesus does not do so. "He makes wars to cease unto the end of the earth. He breaks the bow, and cuts the spear in sunder. He burns the chariot in the fire."

The same verse reveals to us more concerning the nature of Christ's Kingdom—"He shall speak peace unto the heathen: and His dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth." There have been universal monarchies in the past, but there shall never be another till Christ shall come again. Four times has God foiled those who have attempted to assume the sovereignty of the world, but, in due time, there shall come One who shall reign over all mankind. He is not of earthly mold, though He is, indeed, the Son of Man. He is descended from no line of modern princes and bears no imperial name among the sons of men, yet He is the Prince of the house of David and His name is the Son of God. He shall break all other kingdoms and empires in pieces, snapping the swords of the mightiest warriors, gathering scepters beneath His arm in sheaves, and casting all earthly crowns beneath His feet, for He alone is King of kings and Lord of lords!—

"Kings shall fall down before Him
And gold and incense bring.
All nations shall adore Him,
His praise all people sing—
For He shall have dominion
Over river, sea, and shore,
Far as the eagle's pinion
Or dove's light wing can soar."

Thus I have shown you that this passage, in its proper connection, relates to the Lord Jesus Christ and His salvation, so now we will consider its special teaching.

In our text, we have three things. The first is, *a Divine deliverance.* "As for you also, by the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." Secondly, we have *a Divine invitation.* "Turn you to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope." And, thirdly, *a Divine promise.* "Even today do I declare that I will render double unto you."

I. So, first, we are to think of A DIVINE DELIVERANCE.

This must be a matter of personal experience and, therefore, I should like that everyone whom I am now addressing would say to himself or

herself, "Do I know anything about this Divine Deliverance in my own heart and life? If I do not, I have grave cause to fear as to my condition in the sight of God. But if I do, let me be full of praise to God for this great mercy—that I have a share in this Divine Deliverance—'As for these also, by the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.'"

Do all of you, dear Friends, know anything about the pit wherein is no water? Were you ever conscious of being in it? Regarding it as a state of spiritual distress, do you understand what it means to be in such *a comfortless condition?* It was a common custom, in the past, to put prisoners into deep pits which had been dug in the earth. The sides were usually steep and perpendicular—and the prisoner who was dropped down into such a pit must remain there without any hope of escape. According to our text, there was no water there and, apparently, no food of any kind. The objective of the captors was to leave the prisoner there to be forgotten as a dead man out of mind. Have you ever, in your experience, realized anything like that?

There was a time, with some of us, when we suddenly woke up to find that all our fancied goodness had vanished, that all our hopes had perished and that we, ourselves, were in the comfortless condition of men in a pit without even a single drop of water to mitigate our burning thirst! Well do I remember that period in my own history, when I looked upon my past life which I had thought was proper enough, and saw it to be all stained and spoiled by sin! I could get no comfort from the recollection of my past attention to religious exercises. I had been very diligent, indeed, in attending the means of Grace and also in private devotion, but these cups of water had all became empty. I could not find one single drop in them that could cheer me, for I discovered that as my heart was not right with God, all my prayers had been quite unavailing! And that when I had gone up to the House of God, since my heart was not in the services, God had not accepted me, but had said to me, "Who has required this at your hand, to tread My courts?" I tried what good resolutions would do, but I gained no comfort from them, for I failed to keep them! I tried what attempts at improving myself in various ways would lead to, but, alas, the more I strived to make myself better, the more I discovered some fresh evil within my heart which I had not previously seen, so that I could say with the poet—

"The more I strived against its power,
I sinned and stumbled but the more."

If I sought after water in my comfortless condition, I only found myself to be more intensely eaten up with thirst! Do you know what all this means? You need to know it, for this is the condition into which God usually brings His children before He reveals Himself to them!

The condition of being shut up in a pit wherein is no water is not only comfortless, but *it is also hopeless.* How can such a prisoner escape? He looks up out of the pit and sees, far above him, a little circle of light, but he knows that it is impossible for him to climb up there. Perhaps he attempts it, but, if so, he falls back and injures himself—and there must he

lie, out of sight and out of hearing, at the bottom of that deep pit—with none to help him and quite unable to help himself. Such is the condition into which an awakened conscience brings a man. He sees himself to be lost through his sin and he discovers that the Law of God is so intensely severe—though not unduly so—and the Justice of God is so stern, though not too stern—that he cannot possibly hope for any help from them in his efforts to escape out of the pit in which he lies fallen as a helpless, hopeless prisoner!

Nor is that all. A man in such a pit as that is not only comfortless and hopeless, but *he is also in a fatal condition.* Without water, at the bottom of a deep pit, he must die. Sooner or later—and he almost wishes it might be sooner—he must expire. Life itself becomes a burden to him! I have known a soul—I say not that it is so with all to the same degree—but I have known a soul feel within itself as if the pangs of Hell had already begun! It feels itself so utterly condemned, even by its own judgment, and so certain to be condemned by the righteous judgment of God, that it writes itself down as already among the condemned and gives itself up as completely lost! Many of God's children have known this experience to the fullest possible extent—and all of them have been, in some measure, brought into the pit wherein is no water!

But concerning those who have believed in Jesus, our text is true, and God can say, "I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water."

Are you out of the pit, my Brother or Sister? Then it is certain that you came out of it, not by your own energy and strength, but because *the Lord delivered you!* Divine Power and nothing but Divine Power can deliver a poor law-condemned conscience from the bondage under which it groans! Let a man once know his real state by nature, as he is in the sight of God—let him see how the curse of death is written upon all his efforts and hopes, and then let him come out into light and liberty, and he will say, "The Lord has done it all! The Lord has done great things for me, whereof I am glad!"

There is this further comfort that *if He has set us free, we are free indeed.* It is only God who can deliver a conscience in bondage—and when it is delivered by Him, it need not be afraid of being dragged back to prison anymore. If a criminal breaks out of his cell and is found at any time by the officers of the law, he may be arrested and taken back to prison. But if the sovereign of the realm has set him free, he is not afraid of all the policemen in the world! He walks about the streets as a man who has a right to his liberty because of the authority which has granted it to him. Now, Believer, God has brought you up out of all your trouble because of your sin. He has delivered you from all sense of guilt concerning it and as He has done it, you are not afraid that it has been done unjustly and you are, therefore, not afraid that you will be re-committed to prison and be once more held "in durance vile." The Lord has delivered you, so you are delivered forever! Who can curse those whom God has blessed? Who can condemn those whom God has justified? Who can again enchain the soul that God, Himself, has set free?

But *how has He done this great work?* This is one of the principal clauses of our text—"As for you also, by the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." The people of God are set free from their bondage by the blood of the Covenant! The blood of Jesus Christ has sealed, ratified and fulfilled the Covenant of Grace to all who believe in Him. It was on this wise—we had sinned and we were, therefore, put into the pit of condemnation. In order to our release, Jesus came forward and put Himself into our place—became our Substitute and promised that He would pay blood for blood for all that was due from us to God. Glory be to His holy name, He paid it all! In the bloody sweat of Gethsemane—in His bleeding hands and feet and side—in the agony of His soul even unto death—He paid all that was due on account of His people's sins and now, the debt being discharged, the prisoners are set free! "By the blood of your covenant," said God, who has a right to say it, "I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water."

Beloved Friends, I trust that you will never be weary of listening to the Doctrine of Substitution! If you ever are, it will be all the more necessary that you keep on hearing it until you cease to be weary of it. That Doctrine is the very core and essence of the Gospel. To attempt to cloud it, or to keep it in the background is, I am persuaded, the reason why so many ministries are not blessed to the conversion of souls and give no comfort to those who are in distress of heart on account of sin. Let this stand, once and for all, as our declaration of what the Gospel teaches, that God "has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." "With His stripes we are healed." They laid upon His back many cruel stripes which we deserved to receive and into His heart they thrust the sword which otherwise must have been thrust into our heart. If any man is freed from a guilty conscience and from the dread of Hell by any means apart from the blood of Jesus Christ, I pity him from my very soul. He had better go back to his prison, again, and never come out of it until this key is used to unlock the door—the *substitutionary* Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ! In the last dread hour of death, when conscience looks at sin as it really is and no longer is blinded, nothing can bring it peace but the blood of the Lamb! Nothing can give the soul repose, when it is about to meet its God, except the knowledge that Christ was made a curse for us that we might be blessed in Him.

No prisoners are set free except by the blood of Jesus and, Beloved, as the blood of the Covenant is Godward—the means of our coming out of the pit wherein is no water—so it is the knowledge of Christ as suffering in our place that sets the captive free. Are any of you in great heaviness because of your sin? Are you obliged to confess that your lives have been such that you could always weep over them? Is your sleep often disturbed at night by reason of the conviction that your years have been spent in vanity and transgression? Are you asking for mercy? Are you seeking rest? My dear Friend, there is no Doctrine that will ever give you true rest except the Doctrine of the Cross of Jesus Christ! Listen to it

whenever you can. Seek out those preachers who preach most about the precious blood of Jesus. Read most those books which tell of Jesus as the great Atonement for human guilt. Study diligently the writings of the four Evangelists and, especially, those parts of the narrative which describe the death and Resurrection of our dear Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. Sit down at the foot of the Cross in contemplation and never move away from it till from the Cross the Light of God comes streaming into your darkened spirit, so that you will be able to say, "I see it now! The Son of God suffered that I might not suffer! He was made the Victim that I might go free! Justice was magnified in Him that mercy might be magnified in me!" You will never be delivered in any other way.

I hope I am not addressing any who will remain for a long time in the pit wherein is no water. I did so myself, but I blame myself, now, for having done so. I must also somewhat blame the preachers whom I heard because they did not make plainer to me the Truth of God that all that was needed was already done and that I had only to accept it as having been done for me. Liberty was provided for me—I had but to trust in Jesus and I would at once be free. Dear Heart, if you are lying in Giant Despair's castle, if you have been beaten with his crab tree club till every bone in your body is sore and your heart is ready to break, this is the key which will open every lock in Doubting Castle if you can but use it—"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin"—even we guilty sinners who have so much sin to be cleansed from! Believing in this Truth, trusting in Jesus, we are "accepted in the Beloved." How gloriously God has brought some of us forth! We are not now in the pit wherein is no water. We are forever set at liberty and our heart leaps at the very sound of Jesus' name! Now is our peace like a river and our soul is exceedingly glad because of the loving kindness of the Lord.

II. I shall not be able to dwell long upon the second head of my discourse, which is A DIVINE INVITATION GIVEN.

Those who were prisoners in the pit wherein is no water were prisoners without hope, yet God has set them free. But sometimes they get into prison, again—they ought not to do so, but they do. Even after Giant Despair is slain, the pilgrims' troubles are not all over and, sometimes, saved men and women get into a despondent state. Then comes this gracious invitation, "Turn you to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope." Do you catch the thought that is intended to be conveyed by these words? You have been taken out of the pit and there, close beside you, is the Castle of Refuge. So, the moment you are drawn up out of the pit, run to the castle for shelter. The parallel to this experience is to be found in the 40th Psalm where David says that the Lord had brought him up out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set his feet upon a rock and established his goings. And now that you are delivered from your prison pit, you are to go and dwell in the fortress, the high tower which the Lord has so graciously prepared for you!

The promises of God in Christ Jesus are the stronghold to which all believing men ought to turn in every time of trouble! And *Jesus Christ, Himself, is still more their Stronghold in every hour of need.* Sheltered in

Him, you are, indeed, surrounded with protecting walls and bulwarks, for who is he that can successfully assail the man who is shielded and guarded by the great atoning Sacrifice of Christ? Yet you will often feel as if you were still in danger. When you feel so, turn directly to the Stronghold. Do you doubt whether you are saved? Then run to Christ at once and so destroy the doubt! Do you mourn your slackness in prayer and does the devil tell you that you cannot be a Christian, or you would not feel as you do? Then run to Christ! Has there been, during this day, some slip in language, or has there even been some sin in overt act? Then run to Christ—turn to the Stronghold! Does darkness veil your Lord's face from you? Do you see no bright promise gleaming out of the gloom? Does God, Himself, seem as if He had ceased to be gracious unto you and to have shut up the heart of His compassion towards you? Then run to Jesus—turn you to the Stronghold! Never try to fight your own battle with Satan, but run to Christ at once! Be willing to be called a coward rather than attempt to stand in your own strength! Let this be the proof of your bravery, that you flee to Christ, your Stronghold. "The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks." You do not call the conies cowardly because they run among the rocks to find shelter. They know where their stronghold lies and they resort to it in all times of danger.

So, again I say to you, dear Brothers and Sisters, never try to combat sin and Satan by yourselves, but always flee away to Christ! Inside that Stronghold, the most powerful guns of the enemy will not be able to injure you. But if you leave the shelter of your Master's protecting Atonement and come out into the plain to contend against your adversary in your own strength, you will be in imminent peril of being destroyed! Therefore, in the words of my text, I say to you, "Turn you to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope."

I must not enlarge upon this point, but I do want all my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, and especially all who are coming to the Communion Table, to go afresh to Jesus Christ their Lord and Savior. You were delivered from the pit years ago. You know that you were, though, perhaps, you have a little question about it at times. But at the present moment you are very dull and heavy—possibly the weather has helped to make you feel like that. It is very unsafe to judge our state by our feelings—they are poor, uncertain tests at the best—and they may greatly mislead us if we trust to them. Let us, rather, go all together to the Cross whereon our Lord did hang and let us still go on with Him as we began at the first. Let each one of us cry unto Him, with Dr. Watts—

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Your kind arms I fall!
Be You my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus, and my All."

Come along, my Brother, you have been a child of God for 50 years, but still keep on coming to Jesus, even as Peter writes, "To whom coming"—perpetually coming—"as unto a living stone, disallowed, indeed, of men, but chosen of God, and precious." You know how Dr. Guthrie, when he was dying, wanted those around him to sing to him "one of the

babies' hymns," for he wanted to have the babies' faith, that is, a child-like faith, implicitly trusting in Him. They who have gone the furthest in the Divine Life yet do well to walk in Christ just as they received Him at the first. This is my own desire—I, nothing—Christ everything! I, guilty, Christ my righteousness in whom my sin is all blotted out! I in myself condemned, but in Christ absolved and accepted! Come along, all of you who have met with little but failure! You who are at your best and you who are at your worst—you who are rejoicing and you who are sorrowing—you who are strong, and you who are weak! All together, let us come to the fountain filled with blood and let us again prove that it still cleanses us from all sin!

III. Our last words are to be concerning THE DIVINE PROMISE with which our text ends—"Even today do I declare that I will render double unto you." I want you to plead this promise in prayer. If you do so and God fulfils it in your experience, you will then understand it better than you could with any explanation of mine.

First, if you who have been delivered from the pit wherein is no water, continually turn to Christ, *you shall have twice as much joy as ever you had sorrow.* The grief that we had before we found Christ was a very mountain of sorrow, but how has it been with you since you came to Jesus? Speak for yourselves, Brothers and Sisters! Let your own hearts say how it has been with you. Have you not, after all, had twice as much joy as you have had sorrow? I know that it has been so with me—my heart was full, almost to bursting, when it was full of sorrow—but when I found Christ, it seemed to be not only full of joy, but to be plunged into an ocean of bliss! Oh, the unspeakable delight of the soul that has found peace in Jesus after having been long in bondage to sin and Satan! I think I have told you before that I heard Dr. Alexander Fletcher once say when he was preaching that, on one occasion, passing down the Old Bailey, he saw two boys, or young men, jumping, and leaping, and standing on their heads and going through all sort of antics on the pavement. He said to them, "Whatever are you doing?" But they only clapped their hands and danced more joyously than before. So he said, "Boys, what has happened to you that you are so happy?" Then one of them replied, "If you had been locked up for three months inside that prison, you would jump for joy when you came out." "A very natural expression," said the good old man, and bade them jump away as long as they liked!

Yes, and when a soul has once been delivered from the pit wherein is no water, it has a foretaste of the joy of Heaven! The possession of Christ is, indeed, not only double bliss, for all its sin, but much more than double! I have known saved souls, when newly converted, act so that their neighbors have thought that they were out of their minds and have said, "What ails them?" Their mouths have been filled with laughter and their tongue with singing, and they have said, "The Lord has done great things for us, for which we are glad." And, poor sin-sick Heart, if you can believe in Jesus, He will give you double joy for all the sorrow that you have been feeling for these last weeks, or months, or even years! "Ah,"

you say, "if He would do that, it would be, indeed, joyous for me." And joyous it shall be!

More than that, *God gives His servants the double of all that they expect.* When we come to our Lord, it is as it was when the queen of Sheba came to Solomon. She said that the half had not been told her and if you raise your expectations to the highest point that you can reach, you who come to Christ will find them far exceeded in the blessed realization! He is, indeed, a precious Christ to all who believe in Him—but He is a hundred times more precious than you can ever imagine! You think that it must be a delightful thing to be saved and so it is, but it is ten thousand times more delightful than you suppose! You have read the Scriptures and have prized the blessings of Grace of which you have read there—but you have not prized them at anything like their proper value! There shall be double rendered unto you who are the people of God who have known the most of Divine Love and have for years sat at your Master's feet. As yet you know not the half of what He will reveal to you in His own time and way! Only have patience and keep your souls upon Him while pressing forward in the heavenly race. The land has been full of silver mercy, but it shall yet be full of golden mercy! You have gone through green pastures and by still waters, but there are fatter pastures and deeper streams on ahead! The fullness of joy is not yet revealed to you—press on and you shall discover it and delight in it!

Oh, what double joy shall come to us when we reach the land Beulah and when we come to the brink of the river that has no bridge across it, where the angels are hovering and waiting to welcome the spirits of the redeemed! When you dip your feet in Jordan's chilly flood, you shall begin to hear the sonnets of the immortals! Your spirit shall be already, while yet it lingers there, partaking in the bliss that is yet to be revealed and then, when you have crossed that narrow stream, and the last sigh is over, how great will be the double that God shall render unto you! I cannot tell you much about it, but in that land you shall need no candle, neither light of the sun—the Lamb shall be the light, for the Lord God shall give you light and you shall reign with Him forever and ever!

What a contrast between where we began and where we are to leave off—the pit without water and the bliss without alloy! What is the bridge that spans the great gulf between them and carries us over into the Glory Lands? It is the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ! It the blood of the Everlasting Covenant! So believe in it, trust your souls NOW on Jesus and then rest assured that we will meet on the other side of Jordan, in the land of the hereafter where the Lord shall manifest Himself unto us and fill us with ineffable delight forever and ever! God grant it, for His name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 103.

Verses 1, 2. *Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His*

benefits. Three times the Psalmist says, "Bless, bless, bless." Come, my Heart, wake up, awake every faculty, but especially my memory—"Forget not all His benefits." Here is a list of some of them—as we read each one, let our hearts say, "Bless the Lord for that."

3. *Who forgives all your iniquities.* Hallelujah, bless the Lord for that! He who has felt the weight of his sin will leap for joy at the thought of the forgiveness of all his iniquities.

3. *Who heals all your diseases.* He has restored some of us from the bed of sickness and extreme pain and He is even now healing our spiritual diseases. Sometimes it may be that He gives the bitter medicine, but it is thus that "He heals all your diseases." The process of sanctification is a healing process to the soul, so bless the Lord for it.

4. *Who redeems your life from destruction.* Can you ever praise God enough for your redemption from a doom so great as to be the destruction of every hope and of everything worth having? "Who redeems your life from destruction."

4. *Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies.* There is about your head, even now, a halo of love, invisible to all but the eyes of Grace and gratitude—a bright, shining crown of loving kindness and tender mercies. Have I not often told you that kindness is the gold of the crown, but that *loving* kindness is the velvet to line the crown to make it sit softly on the brow? Mercies—these are the jewels, but the tenderness of the mercies is the ermine that makes the crown such that it cannot truly be said, "Uneasy lies the head that wears this crown." No, but happy, happy, happy are all they who are thus crowned! Bless the Lord if you are among them.

5. *Who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.* There is an inward satisfaction that God gives to His people. They are not satisfied with themselves, but they are satisfied *from* themselves, from that "well of water" which springs up within them "unto life eternal." What a mercy it is to be so satisfied as to get young again, to feel your spiritual youth coming back to you—to be young in heart even if you are old in body. "Your youth is renewed like the eagle's." Let me again pause here and say, "Let us bless the Lord for this." Do not let one of these mercies be passed over as if they made up a dry and uninteresting list like the lots in an auctioneer's catalog, but let us bedew every one of these lines with a tear of heartfelt thankfulness!

6. *The LORD executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.* Bless His name for this. In every age He has broken the oppressor's rod. For a while, His people may be made to smart, but, by-and-by, He hears their cries and He avenges their wrongs.

7. *He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel.* Bless Him for this. He does not hide Himself from His people, so that they do not know "His ways" and "His acts." Revelation is a constant source of thanksgiving to those who understand it through the teaching of the Spirit who inspired it. God might never have spoken to us, or we might not have lived in a world wherein God had deigned to reveal His

will. But that is not the case—"He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel."

8. *The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.* Surely, dear Friends, we can all bless God for this Truth, for, if He had been quick to be angry, where would we have been? If His mercy has been scanty, we should long ago have been destroyed, but He is "slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy."

9. *He will not always chide: neither will He keep His anger forever.* Are you, just now, hearing the stern voice of His chiding? Does His anger, like a black cloud, seem to rest upon you and hide His reconciled face from you? Then, bless the Lord that "He will not always chide: neither will He keep His anger forever" against His own chosen ones!

10. *He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.* Bless the Lord for that. Sweep your hand over the harp strings so as to fetch the sweetest music from them. How true it is of me and of you, "He has not dealt with us after our sins!"

11. *For as the Heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.* Immeasurable mercy, illimitable Grace, blessed be His holy name!

12. *As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.* Here again I cannot tell how much we ought to bless Him. It is not merely pardon of a temporary character that is given to us, but our sin is carried right away into a land of forgetfulness, so that it will never come back again to us. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies."

13. *Like as a father pities his children, so the LORD pities them that fear Him.* Let us praise Him for His tender pity over our weakness, His forbearance with our infirmity and waywardness.

14. *For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.* Some people do not remember that—they try to work us as if we were made of iron. But the Lord is full of pity. He knows that we are nothing but a mass of animated dust which the wind can soon carry away.

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.* In a very little time, unless Christ should first come in His Glory, this is what will happen to all of us. A breath of fever-bearing wind, or some other disease borne on the wings of the wind will sweep over us and the strongest of us will wither in an hour.

17. *But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him.* Oh, bless Him for that! He does not die! He does not change! He does not fail any who trust Him!

17, 18. *And His righteousness unto children's children: to such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them.* Let us bless God for His love to our sons and our daughters. Some of us have great joy in our children. I pray that all of you may have the same joy—that you may see that the Lord, who is your God, is also the God of your descendants, as the God of Abraham was the God of Isaac, and of Jacob, and of Joseph, and of Ephraim and Manasseh, from generation to

generation. Grace does not run in the blood, but it often runs side by side with it. It is often the way with God, when He has blessed the father, to bless the son for the father's sake. So you who are yourselves Believers may pray with great confidence for your sons and daughters. Bless the Lord for this!

19. *The LORD has prepared His throne in the heavens; and His Kingdom rules over all.* For this, also, we bless Him. If there was any part of the world that He did not rule over. If there were any circumstances which He could not control. If there were any events which happened without His permission. If He were not King everywhere, this would be an intolerable world to live in! But now we bless Him because "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.* David calls in the angels to help him to praise the Lord—he wants to do it well, but feels that he is weak and feeble, so he calls in the best of help. We also sing—

"Angels, assist our mighty joys,
Strike all your harps of gold!
But when you raise your highest notes,
His love can ne'er be told."

21. *Bless you the LORD, all you His hosts; you ministers of His, that do His pleasure.* All who wait upon Him, whether angels or men, or the lower creatures, are called upon to glorify His great name—and they do!

22. *Bless the LORD, all His works in all places of His dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.* Do you notice that there is not a single petition in the whole of this Psalm? It is all praise! And herein it is like Heaven, where they cease to pray, but where they praise God without ceasing! We cannot rise to that height here, but let us both praise and pray when we can.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—103 (VERSION 2), 136 (SONG 1), 691.

—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.

LAYING THE HAND ON THE SACRIFICE
NO. 2840

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 19, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 12, 1877.

"And he shall lay his hand upon the head of the sin offering."
Leviticus 4:29.

I MIGHT have taken as my text several other verses in the same chapter, for they all express the same idea as the words I have just read to you. For the sake of emphasis, let me ask you to look at the 4th verse. When a *priest* had committed sin and brought a sin offering unto the Lord, it is written, "He shall bring the bullock unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord; and shall lay his hand upon the bullock's head." The 15th verse tells us that when the *whole congregation* of Israel had sinned through ignorance, the Lord said to Moses, "The elders of the congregation shall lay their hands upon the head of the bullock before the Lord." Then, in the 24th verse, we read that when a *ruler* had sinned through ignorance and brought his sin offering, "He shall lay his hand upon the head of the goat, and kill it in the place where they kill the burnt offering before the Lord." And, in the 33rd verse, you find that if a *common person* had committed a sin through ignorance, or if his sin should come to his knowledge, he was to bring a sin offering and then it was added, "He shall lay his hand upon the head of the sin offering."

Any one of those verses would, therefore, have sufficed for a text. It seems to have been a necessary part of the proceedings that when a sin offering was presented to the Lord, to be offered up before Him, the offerer should first of all lay his hand upon the head of the animal devoted to this sacred purpose.

I hope I am addressing many persons who wish to know more about the way and plan of salvation and who are anxious to partake in the benefits of Christ's atoning Sacrifice. Possibly they are saying, "We know that there is a Savior for sinners, but how can He be ours? We know that an Atonement has been made for sin, but how can that Atonement really put away our sin so that we may be pardoned and accepted by God?" This is a very natural question and a very proper one. It would be well if it were most solemnly and seriously asked by all who, as yet, remain without being partakers of the blessings which are stored up for us in Christ Jesus.

Beloved Friends, it will be all in vain, so far as we are personally concerned, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," unless He shall *save us*. It will be of no avail to us that Jesus shed His precious blood unless that blood washes away *our guilt*. It will increase, rather than diminish our misery if we hear that others are saved as long as we ourselves remain *unsaved*. If we are finally lost, it will not make our lot in Hell anymore tolerable if we discover that there was a Propitiation for sin, although we never had a share in its expiatory effects. Of all questions in the world, it seems to me that this is the most urgent and pressing one—and that we ought not to rest until we get it satisfactorily answered and put into practice—"How can I be a partaker in the eternal life which Jesus Christ came into the world to procure for sinners by His death?"

Some of you have up to now totally neglected this question. If you had noticed, in *The Times,* an advertisement stating that somebody's next of kin was wanted, and you had suspicion that you were the person to whom the notice referred, I guarantee you that you would not have let the grass grow under your feet—you would have been quick enough to secure the fortune which had been left by your relative! But now that Jesus Christ has died and left a wondrous legacy of Grace among the sons of men, you have allowed a good many years to roll over your head without making an eager and earnest search into the question whether there is anything for you! You have seen a great many persons saved all around you, yet you remain unsaved. You have some of your dear ones who are in Heaven, but you are not pursuing the path which will lead you there and, all this while you have not had the excuse, which many have had, of never having heard that there was a great Savior and great salvation to be had without money and without price!

If you could plead such an excuse as that, it would be better for you than it is now, when you are sinning against light and knowledge in neglecting that which would is most of all for your spiritual and eternal good. Be wise, therefore! You have been trifling far too long! Be serious and bend your whole mind to the earnest consideration at this all-important question, "How can I obtain salvation? How can I get it here and now? How can sin be pardoned? How can my sins be pardoned right now? I have long heard of Christ—how can I come into vital communion with Him? I know that—

"'There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins'—

"but how can I be washed therein so that I, personally, may become whiter than snow?"

My text says that the guilty person who brought the sin offering laid his hand upon its head. And this act gives a pictorial and symbolical answer to your questions and tells you how you can come into communion with Christ—and how His great Sacrifice can become available for you. You have to do to Christ, spiritually, what these Hebrews did literally! You have to imitate their action and so carry out those words of Dr. Watts which we often sing—

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

I shall speak of only two things which we may learn from my text. The first is *the intent of this symbol.* And the second is, *the simplicity of the symbol*—this laying of the hand of the offerer upon the head of the victim presented by him to God as a sin offering.

I. First, then, let me try to explain THE INTENT OF THE SYMBOL. What did it mean? These things, of which I shall speak in explaining this symbol, are necessary in order that Christ should become yours. Follow me very carefully and prayerfully, dear Friend, if you do, indeed, desire to be saved, for it may be that the Lord will lead you into Everlasting Life even while I am speaking. I pray that He may do so!

The first meaning of this laying of the hand upon the head of the sacrifice is this—*it was a confession of sin.* The offering was a sin offering—but for *sin* it would not have been needed! The man who came and laid his hand on the head of the sin offering, acknowledged, by that act and deed, that he was a sinner. If there had been anyone who was not a sinner, he would have had no right to be there. A sin offering, for a person who had no sin, would have been a superfluity—why should he bring a sin offering to the Lord? So, dear Friends, if you have no sin, you are not fit subjects for Christ's saving power and Grace. If you are not guilty, you do not need forgiveness. If you have never transgressed the Law of God, you need not come before Him with a sin offering! Only remember that if you *do* think so, you are under one of the most sorrowful delusions that ever entered the brain of a madman! You are deceiving yourself, depend upon it! If you say that you have no sin, the Truth of God is not in you. But he who brought a sin offering before the Lord said, in effect, "This is what I need, for I am a sinner. I need to have my sins taken away for I am guilty in the sight of God. So I put my hand upon this lamb, or goat, or bull which is about to die, thereby confessing that I need a sacrifice in order that the sin which I confess that I have committed, may be put away."

Are you reluctant to confess that you are a sinner? If so, I pray very earnestly that you may speedily get rid of that reluctance. God does not ask you to confess your sins to any man. It would be a shame for you to do so, for you would pollute that man, whoever he might be, if you poured into his ear the sad tale of your filthiness and sin! God does not ask you to do any man the serious wrong of whispering into his ear the foul story of your transgressions. It is not to your fellow creature, but to your *God*, that you are to confess your sin! Go straight to Him and say, as the prodigal said to his father, "I have sinned against Heaven, and in Your sight." What makes you so slow to do that? Do you imagine that He does not know about your sin? Do you think that you can hide anything from Him? That is impossible, for "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Is it your *pride* that keeps you from confessing your sin? How can you hope that God will forgive you if you will not acknowledge that you have sinned against Him?

Think how you act towards your own children. How ready you are to again clasp them to your bosom when they have offended against you! Yet you watch to see in them signs of relenting and repenting. So does the Lord your God watch for tokens of contrition and godly sorrow in you! Why, "take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." Are you not willing to do this? Then, alas, you lack the first requisite for obtaining acceptance through Christ! How can you, who will not admit that you have sinned, lay your hand upon the head of the sin offering?

He who thus confessed his sin confessed also that he deserved to die, just as that victim was about to be slain. There stood the priest, with his sacrificial knife, ready to slay the innocent beast and the basin in which to catch the blood of the bull, or goat, or lamb—whichever it might be that was being offered—and he who laid his hand upon its head, thereby said, "This poor animal is about to die and to pour out its blood. And this reminds me that I deserve punishment from God. If He were to destroy me, He would be perfectly justified in doing so." Soul, will you say that? Are you willing to humble yourself in the dust and to say that? Will you put the rope about your neck and confess that you deserve the extreme penalty that the great Judge can inflict? If so, you have begun well, for he who will confess his guilt and will acknowledge that he deserves the punishment of death for it has begun to put his hand upon the head of the great Sacrifice for sin!

Follow me a step further and I trust that we may rejoice together that you, poor, guilty, self-condemned soul, have found deliverance through the one Sacrifice which God has provided for the putting away of sin. In the second place, the laying of the hand upon the head of the sin offering was *a consent to the plan of substitution.* He who had brought the victim laid his hand upon its head and, though he did not say so, yet his actions, being interpreted, meant, "God has ordained that this animal should take my place and I accept the Divine appointment right heartily. I agree with Him that I should be pardoned through the offering of a sacrifice and that I should be accepted by God by reason of the shedding of the blood of a sacrificial victim." Now, what say you to this plan, O Man? If the Jew was willing to let the death of the bull, or the goat, or the lamb typically stand for his own death, are you willing, with all your heart, to accept God's plan of salvation by the substitution of His only-begotten Son suffering and dying in your place?

Surely you will not quarrel with this method of saving you if God sees it to be the right one! Whenever my conscience has raised any question about the justice of this arrangement, it has always been quite a sufficient answer for me to say that if the thrice-holy Jehovah feels that the Sacrifice of Christ, in the place of sinners, is enough to vindicate His Justice, I may well be satisfied with what satisfies Him. Indeed, to question the righteousness of that method of saving the lost is to assail God upon a matter which lies very near His heart and to attack that wondrous plan of Redemption which is the last and highest display of all His Divine attributes—for the system of Substitution is the apex of the pyra-

mid of God's Revelation, the very highest point of the great mountain chain in which He has manifested His Wisdom, Power, Love, Mercy and even His Justice to the sons of men—"that He might be just, and the Justifier of him who believes in Jesus." O Soul, if the Lord, who is offended, is satisfied with the Expiation offered, you, certainly, need not be so foolish as to raise questions concerning it or to quibble at it!

Besides, if you will but think seriously about this matter, you will see that the Justice of God is abundantly honored by Christ's standing in your place. There is a well-known story of a school master who had one boy in his school whom he could not keep in order by any ordinary discipline. He had threatened to punish him and, indeed, he had done so again and again, but still he remained incorrigible. At last he threatened that if a certain form of disobedience should be repeated, he would be publicly beaten. The time soon came for the fulfillment of the threat, but the master could not bear that the boy should be punished, yet, at the same time, he felt that the honor of the school and the maintenance of his own authority in it required that it should be so. He told the lads that he was willing to spare the erring one, "yet," he said, "discipline will be at an end, my word will be broken, you will never believe in me again and, moreover, the school will be dishonored by this boy being allowed to act as he does without punishment."

Musing for a minute, he took down the ruler, put it into the hand of the disobedient boy and then held out his own hand, bade the boy strike and he received the punishment that was due to the culprit. The effect produced upon the boy was not a matter of surprise to those who know what fervent love will do. He offended no more and the school was maintained in the highest possible condition of discipline. This is a faint picture of what God has done. In the Person of His well-beloved Son, He says, "I will suffer because you are guilty. Somebody must be punished for your sin and if you suffer the just penalty for your evil deeds, it will crush you to the lowest Hell. You cannot endure it, but I, Myself, will bare My shoulders to receive the stripes which are your due. I will take upon Myself your sins. My Law shall have a terrible yet complete vindication—I shall be just and yet I shall be able to fully and freely forgive you and to accept you." Nothing ever displayed all the attributes of God so gloriously and especially His Immutable Justice, as the atoning death of His well-beloved and only-begotten Son! So, Beloved let there be no question about your assenting to the plan of Substitution. God is content with it. You yourself can see how it honors Him, so be satisfied with it! Do not be a skeptic, doubting and questioning.

There is an old proverb which says, "Don't quarrel with your bread and butter," but I may with even greater emphasis say, "Do not quarrel with your own salvation." If I must quibble at anything, surely I will not quibble against my own soul and try to prove that I cannot be saved, putting my wits to work to show the absurdity of God's way of saving me! Oh, never, never let this be the case with you! But rather cheerfully accept what Infinite Wisdom has arranged!

Thus, you see, that the laying of the hand of the offerer on the head of the sacrifice meant the confession of sin and consent to the way of salvation by substitution. It also meant a great deal more than that.

In the third place, it meant *the acceptance of that particular victim in the sinner's place.* By laying his hand upon it, he practically said, "This animal is to stand instead of me." Here is the main point, the essential point of the whole matter. Will you accept Christ as standing in your place—the Divine yet Human Savior, perfect in His Humanity, yet also perfect in His Deity? He has lived. He has suffered. He has died. He has risen again. He has gone back into Glory at His Father's right hand. God has honored Him with full acceptance—will you also accept Him? The root of the matter lies there! Oh, may His blessed Spirit sweetly guide your will so that you shall say, as I do, "Accept Him? Ah, blessed be His holy name that He permits me to accept Him! Surely I will do so. I will trust Him—He shall be mine." If you have done so, then He *is* yours, for that is all He asks of you—to receive Him, to lay your hand upon Him and say, "There! Jesus Christ shall be the Sacrifice for me! I will rest in Him and in Him alone."

I hope that I do not need to multiply words in urging this decision upon you. I trust that the softening influence of the Holy Spirit is already at work among you, leading some of you who have delayed until now, to say, "We will accept Jesus as our Substitute and accept Him now." Why should you delay any longer to stretch forth your hand and lay it upon Jesus, by faith, even as the offerer laid his hand upon the head of the sacrifice?

But this laying on of the hand meant even more than that, though that was the very essence of it all. It also meant *a belief in the transference of the sin.* He who laid is hand upon the sin offering did, as it were, as far as he could, put his sin from himself on that bull, or goat, or lamb which was about to die, because it had become the sinner's substitute. That laying on of his hand was a token of the transference of his guilt to the appointed victim and if you will have Christ to be your Savior, you must believe that He, "His own Self, bore our sins in His own body on the tree." Do you believe this? Then, see what follows from it. Sin cannot be in two places at one time—if it is laid upon Jesus, it is taken off of you! If you do, in your very soul, accept Christ as your Substitute, then it is clear that the Lord has laid upon Him your iniquity and, therefore, your iniquity has passed away from you and your sin is gone forever! Christ has taken all your iniquities and carried them away where they shall never be mentioned against you anymore!

Oh, what a blessed Truth this is! If a man, who has been blind for 50 years could have his eyes opened, and could be taken out to see the stars, or to look up to the sun, how he would clap his hands and cry, "What a wondrous sight it is!" And I know that when I first perceived that Christ stood in my place and that I stood in His place—that I was accepted because He was rejected, that I was Beloved because He endured His Father's wrath on my account—my soul felt as if it had never lived before and had never known anything that was worth knowing till it perceived

that wondrous Truth! The Lord give you, dear Heart, to perceive that it is even so in your case, for then you, also, will be truly glad.

That laying of the hand on the head of the sin offering also meant one thing more—*it was dependence, a leaning on the victim.* According to the Rabbis, the offerer was to lean with great pressure upon the bullock or the goat. If it was so, there is great significance about that act, for it teaches that you should depend like that upon Jesus—lean hard upon Him, lean with all your weight of sin, and all your load of iniquity, upon Him whom God has appointed to stand in the sinner's place. Accept Him as your Substitute, lean upon Him, rest upon Him. Say in your soul, "If I perish," though that can never be, "I will perish leaning upon Christ. He shall be my soul's only Dependence."

The Puritans speak of faith as a recumbency, a leaning. It needs no power to lean—it is a cessation from our own strength and allowing our weakness to depend upon another's power. Let no man say, "I cannot lean." It is not a question of what *you* can do, but a confession of what you *cannot* do and a leaving of the whole matter with Jesus! No woman could say, "I cannot swoon"—it is not a matter of power. Die into the life of Christ! Let Him be All-in-All while you are nothing at all!

"Well," says one, "but I can hardly think that I shall be saved simply by depending upon Christ." Then, let me tell you that this was all that any of the saints of old ever had to depend upon—and this is all that any of the children of God who are now alive, have to depend upon! I bear my own personal testimony that my only hope for everlasting life lies in the death of Him who suffered in my place! I have trusted in Him, I have accepted Him as standing in my place. Gladly have I seen my sin transferred to Him and His righteousness transferred to me! I have no other hope, nor even the shadow of another hope! Prayers, tears, repentance, preaching, almsgiving, yes, and faith itself—all these put together are nothing at all as a ground of dependence for the soul! It is the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, the one great Substitute for sinners, upon which we all must rely. There, Soul, if you have nothing else to depend upon, you have as much as I have! And if you accept Jesus Christ to be your Savior, you have the same hope that I have. I will even dare to be bondsman for you and to perish with you if you can perish trusting in Christ! But that can never be. As this blessed Book is true, and as Christ ever lives, there is not a soul, that shall rely upon Him, whom He will not assuredly bless and pardon here below and take to Himself to dwell in His bosom forever and ever in Heaven!

There you see what is the intent of the laying of the hand upon the head of the sin offering. If you have been helped to follow me thus far—if you have really laid your hand upon Christ—I bless and praise the name of the Lord!

II. Now I have only a few minutes left for speaking, in the second place, upon THE SIMPLICITY OF THIS SYMBOL. What was required was just the laying of the hand of the offerer upon the victim's head—that and nothing more.

Notice that *there was no preparatory ceremony.* There was the animal provided for a sacrifice, just as God has provided our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to be the Lamb of God. And the one thing to be done was for the sinner to lay his hand upon the head of the sacrifice. In like manner, there is no preliminary ceremony needed before coming to Christ. This is the first thing, Sinner, that you have to do, simply lay your hand upon Him and say, "He is mine." "But must I not be prepared in a certain way, so that I may come to Him aright? Must I not *do*, or *feel*, or *be* something?" No, the Cross is at the head of the Way of Life—it is the true wicket gate which leads unto Everlasting Life. Believing in Jesus is the first thing you have to do—you live not until you believe in Him. Come, then, to Jesus! Come now! The first thing for you to do is to accept Him as your Substitute and to rely wholly upon Him.

You also perceive, dear Friends, that the hand that was to be laid upon the head of the sacrifice had nothing in it. The man who came thus to confess his guilt, did not bring a silver shekel or talent of gold in his hand. That was not at all necessary. All he had to do was to lay his hand upon the sin offering and, in like manner, you must say, with Toplady—

"Nothing in my hand I bring—
Simply to Your Cross I cling."

And, as there was to be nothing in the hand of the sinner, so *there was to be nothing on his hand.* If he had a dozen diamond rings on his fingers, he could not lay his hand on the bull's head any the better. He who had no ornament at all could do it just as well! And if you have no virtues, no excellences—if you are poor, if you are illiterate, if you have even lost your character—if your hand is a foul hand, a black hand, yet if you lay it, by faith, upon the head of Jesus Christ, if you take Him to be your Savior, you have made the all-important decision—

"'Tis done, the great transaction's done!"

You are your Lord's, and He is yours, for, "he that believes on the Son has everlasting life." He has it already in present possession, so let him go in peace, rejoicing in the blessing that he has received from the Substitute and Savior!

Observe, too, that *there was nothing to be done with that hand* except to lay it on the head of the sacrifice. There were to be no mystic crossings or moving to and fro, no cunning show of skill—the sinner was just to lay his hand upon the head of the animal that was to die as his substitute. You know that in the Revelation, the woman arrayed in purple and scarlet, that is, the Church of Rome, has upon her forehead the name, "Mystery," and you probably recollect what follows, "Babylon the great, the mother of harlots." But the chaste bride of Christ, the Church which He has redeemed by His blood, is not a partaker of that mystery! And Christ, in the Gospel, gives us nothing but simplicities. As the laying of the hand on the head of the sacrifice was all that was needed for the forgiveness of the sinner under the Law, so all that you need now is to take Christ to be your Substitute and Savior! Therefore, by the eternity of bliss or woe which depends upon your decision, in the name of God, who has sent me to proclaim His Gospel, I demand of you, man or woman, that you

should come to the right decision upon this all-important matter! Let there be no putting off and no offering to do something else—what is required is that you should lay your hand, by faith, on the head of the sin-atoning Lamb of God. Have you done so? If not, you have neither part nor lot in Him—and if you remain in your present condition, you will perish in your sin! But if you will accept Christ as your Substitute, you need no earthly priest or mediator. So, take Him as yours—

"Take Him now, and happy be."

The symbol was one of extreme simplicity, for, finally, *there was nothing to be done to the man's hand.* The priest was not to wash it, or to read the lines upon it by the aid of palmistry, or to tattoo it with some sacred sign. No, the man came, remember, because he was a sinner. And he laid his hand on the sacrifice because he was a sinner. The hand that he laid there was a sinner's hand, and I believe in Jesus Christ with a sinner's faith. I say to Him, at this moment, as I said when first I trusted Him—

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

Do not come to Christ as saints—come as sinners! Come just as you are, sinful, vile, and polluted—and lay the hand of simple yet trembling confidence upon the head of Jesus and say, "He shall be mine." If you come to Him thus, He will not refuse or reject you, for He has said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out."

There are some of you who have been here a long time and you are not yet converted. If you go to Hell, I am clear of your blood. Often have I wept over you when preaching here and I have set Christ before you as the one only and open door of salvation. And I have entreated and besought you to enter, but if you will not enter, I can do no more—the rest must lie with yourselves. You will melt the wax that seals your own death warrant. The responsibility rests wholly upon you—lay it not upon God. If any man is saved, it is of God's Grace and God's Grace, alone. But if any man is lost, it is by his own free will and his free will alone. The will of man is the source of damnation—the will of God is the source of salvation. Both those statements are true! Therefore, if you reject the Gospel of the Grace of God, you bring upon yourselves the just punishment of your sin.

I do not know that I can say anymore upon this theme except just this. There may be someone who is saying, "This plan of salvation is too simple." Surely you will not quarrel with it on that account! I guarantee you that if a man were going to be hanged and he could be delivered simply by accepting a free pardon, he would not say that such a plan was too simple! After all, the best things in the world are very simple. If I want to go from here to Glasgow, it is a simple method that I have to follow. I have to get to the proper railway station, take my ticket and enter the right carriage. Then, if all goes well, I shall get there all right. If I want to go to Heaven, it is just as simple. I go by faith to Christ and trust myself wholly to Him and so I get there. It is really a matter of trust when you enter a railway carriage and you reach your destination by a power

above your own. If I want to communicate with a friend at the very ends of the earth, I have nothing to do but to step into a telegraph office, write down what I want to say, pay the proper charge and the message will go all right. Though I cannot trace the wire which connects the office with my distant friend, I know that he will get my cablegram in due course. There may be some mystery about the matter, yet, practically, it is a very simple thing.

And believing in the Lord Jesus Christ is just as simple as that. If a farmer wants a harvest, all the philosophers in the world cannot tell him how wheat grows, nor can they make it grow—he has only to drop his seed into the earth at the right time and it will grow by night and by day, though he knows not how! Therefore, act in the same simple, common-sense fashion. Leave off enquiring into mysteries which you cannot understand and puzzling over difficulties which your poor brain cannot comprehend—

"Let artful doubts and reasoning be
Nailed with Jesus to the tree"—

and do you, as a little child, fully trust Jesus as your Savior and so you shall be saved! God help you to do this now, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 53.

Verse 1. *Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?* It is sometimes the lot of God's most faithful servants to labor unsuccessfully. As old Thomas Fuller quaintly says, "He makes some to be as the clouds that empty their rain over Arabia, the stony—while others are pouring down their showers over Arabia the happy." Yet we are accepted with God, not according to our success, but according to our faithfulness. Still, no true minister of Christ can be content unless men believe his report. It will be a matter for sighing and groaning if unbelief is the only answer to our earnest declarations concerning Christ.

2. *For He*—That is, Jesus—

2. *Shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He has no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.* Carnal minds are unbelieving minds. They are so because the beauties of Christ are spiritual and in their natural state they have not the power to discern them. Jesus Christ has no loveliness in the eyes of self-righteous, self-sufficient men. What do they need with a Savior? What do they care for His atoning Sacrifice? They cannot truly admire the love and the holiness of Jesus Christ, for they do not know their own ugliness or their own unholiness! Alas, that God's own Son, who is the loveliest of all beings, should be without form or comeliness to unspiritual eyes!

3. *He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.* While the Redeemer was here below, His state of poverty, obscurity, suffering and shame, was of such a char-

acter that few would believe in Him. And even those who afterwards received Him, at the first did not so. He was despised and we, even we, His own people, esteemed Him not! Christ has forgiven us for all this, but shall we ever forgive ourselves? O eyes, shall you ever cease to weep over your former blindness? O heart, shall you ever cease to grieve over your former hardness? He who was Heaven's darling was despised and rejected of men, and we partook in the guilt, for we also despised and rejected Him.

4, 5. *Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.* It is Substitution, you see, all through—Christ suffering instead of us—the Innocent dying for the guilty—the Lord of Glory bearing the sin of rebellious men. Why do men quibble at this precious Truth? It is their only hope of salvation! Why do we still have to say, "Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" But those who are enlightened from above and led to see their own state of ruin, and their absolute need of a Savior, will rejoice to know that the Lord has laid help upon One who is mighty, and that He has anointed His only-begotten Son to stand in our place!

6. *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.* There is a universal sin—"All we like sheep have gone astray." There is also a personal sin, a sin peculiar to each individual—"We have turned, everyone, to his own way." But Christ gathers up the sin—all kinds of sin of all sorts of men—and of His whole Church it is truly said, "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

7. *He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth.* When a word could have released Him, He would not speak it. His was, indeed, golden silence. Oh, the wondrous eloquence of that patient speechlessness when He stood before Herod and Pilate and answered them not a word! He could have spoken with such authority as to have called legions of angels from Heaven for His protection, or a single word of His could have destroyed His enemies, as the leaves of autumn lie withered and dead—but, "He opened not His mouth."

7, 8. *He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearer is dumb, so He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare His generation?* Who shall speak up for Him? It was the custom of the Jews, when a man was condemned to death, to allow a certain interval during which the heralds went through the streets and made proclamation that if any man knew any reason why the criminal should be spared, he should at once appear at the court and declare it. Someone often came forward with one plea or another, in arrest of judgment—but when our Lord was condemned to death, none would speak up for Him.

8, 9. *For He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of My people was He stricken. And He made His grave with the wick-*

ed." Dying between two thieves, as though He had been the greatest criminal of the three—"He made His grave with the wicked,"

9. *And with the rich in His death.* Lying in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea.

9. *Because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth.* If He had used either violence or deceit, He might have escaped, but because He was harmless and true, therefore must He die.

10. *Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief: when You shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed,* The grain of wheat, sown in the ground, abides not alone, but brings forth much fruit. Our blessed Savior presented both soul and body as an offering for sin, but He knew what He was doing, for "He shall see His seed."

10. *He shall prolong His days.* Up from the grave did He arise in newness of life and back to Heaven did He return to life immortal—"He shall prolong His days,"

10, 11. *And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.* Christ did not die in vain. He will never miss the great objective of His death, you may depend upon that! Those drops of blood are far too precious to fall in vain upon the earth.

11. *By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many.* That is, by their knowledge of Him, by their trusting Him many shall be justified and saved.

11. *For He shall bear their iniquities.* How very express this is—that Christ does not merely bear the punishment of His people, but their iniquities, too! There is a literal substitution of Christ in the place of His people and a most distinct imputation of their sin to Him, and of His righteousness to them.

12. *Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He has poured out His soul unto death; and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.* Blessed Intercessor, let Your almighty intercession avail for each one of us, for Your own name'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.

PRAYER—ITS DISCOURAGEMENTS AND ENCOURAGEMENTS
NO. 2841

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 26, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON A THURSDAY EVENING, IN THE SUMMER OF 1861.

"But He answered her not a word."
Matthew 15:23.

WITH Christians it is not a matter of question as to whether God hears prayer or not. There is no fact in mathematics which has been more fully demonstrated than this fact in experience that God hears prayer. About some other things in Christianity, young Believers may have a question, but about the Lord's answering prayer, even they cannot entertain a doubt while, to the old and advanced Believer who has tested the power of the Mercy Seat and proved it thousands of times, it is a matter about which he never allows a question, for he knows that as surely as that he, himself, exists, and that God lives in Heaven, the prayers of puny but believing man have power to move the almighty arm of God!

Probably, in the course of the past week, some of us have met with as many as a dozen special answers to prayer. Skeptics spend their sneers in vain upon us. Facts are blessed, as well as stubborn things. Men may say that it is not possible that the cries and petitions of man can move the heart of God. They may question it, they may raise doubts about it, but doubts upon this matter never enter our minds—they never touch our inner consciousness, for we know that answers to prayer are a fact—and until we can doubt that we are men, until we can doubt that we breathe the air or live on food, until we can doubt that which we see with our eyes and touch with our hands—we cannot doubt that God IS, "and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

Of course, our confidence that God answers prayer is not an argument to another man. He who has not tried it cannot have proved it for himself. But to those who have tried prayer and proved it, we insist upon it that it amounts to a demonstration as clear as logic itself can make it, when, having called upon God, not merely once or twice, but thousands of times throughout their lives, they have invariably met with the same result, namely, a gracious answer from Him who really does and will hear prayer! Yet there is, sometimes, a strange thing which puzzles the earnest Believer. There are times when it seems as if his prayers were not heard, for certainly it is not answered, or, at least, not answered as he expected. There are seasons, even with God's true children—

"When at His feet they groan,

Yet take their needs away."

They present their petition before the Lord, yet their request does not seem to be complied with, then and there. To those who know that this is no strange thing which has happened to them, it is not a matter which staggers their faith, for they can say, with Ralph Erskine, that—

"They're heard when answered soon or late—
Yes, heard when they no answer get.
Are kindly answered when refused,
And treated well when harshly used."

They understand that God's delays are not denials and that His denials to particular requests are only intended to let us know that He will give us something richer and better than we have asked. If He does not pay your prayers in silver, He will pay them in gold! And if your prayers are long in coming back, they shall be like a richly-laden ship which is all the longer on its way because of its costly freight and which shall amply repay for the time spent on the voyage by the richness of the cargo it brings from the far country!

Yet I must again remind you that to some, and especially to young seekers, it is a staggering experience when, having long cried to Jesus, He answers them not a word. When, having prayed to Him, they have seen no smile upon His face and have heard no word of comfort from those lips of His which drop like honeycombs to others, but seem to be as dry wells to them. I am going to discuss this matter, now, as God the Holy Spirit may enable me, and I pray that He may make it comforting to many a distracted spirit. May some be graciously brought up out of the deep darkness of their prison and be caused to rejoice in the liberty with which Christ makes His people free!

I shall speak of the text, first, in reference to *those who have been praying for themselves.* And, secondly, in regard to *those who have been praying for others.*

I. First, then, I am going to describe the case of SOME WHO HAVE BEEN PRAYING FOR THEMSELVES, but to whom, as yet, Christ has answered not a word.

I can describe the case of these people experimentally, for I have felt the same. As some of you know, I passed through five years of agony during which my young spirit was crushed almost to despair. During those five years, if ever a child prayed to God, I did. And if ever a lad groaned out of a longing spirit to Jehovah in Heaven, I did. You may remember that part of John Bunyan's "Grace Abounding" where he speaks of the exercises of his soul and especially of his terror because his prayers seemed to reverberate from a brazen Heaven and not to pierce the skies. Such, too, was my experience. I am sure that I was sincere in my prayers and in my groans that could not be uttered—yet there were no answers to my supplications. I can speak, therefore, I trust, with all the more power because I can speak sympathetically of something which I have known and felt!

Poor Soul, you have been praying for these last few months and your complaint is that you have not had one gracious answer to your petitions, or one precious promise applied with power to your soul! Let me remind you that the poor woman, of whom our text speaks, was in a sim-

ilar condition. Indeed, not only did she not receive a promise, but she received a rebuff from Christ! Instead of a gracious invitation to come unto Him, she had almost a command to go from Him. When He did speak to her, He said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Yours, then, is not a singular case. You must not sit down in despair because no promise has come home to your soul. Still continue to cry unto the Lord. Still be constantly in prayer to Him. He will, He must hear you, by-and-by, and you shall have your heart's desire.

"Yes," you say, "but not only have I not had a promise, but I have not had any comforting sign whatever! The more I pray, the worse I feel—and the more I groan, the more it seems that I may groan. If my prayers are arrows, they are arrows that fall downwards and return into my own heart instead of flying up to God. I must pray, I cannot help it—my soul would burst if it did not express itself in words—yet my prayer does me little or no good. I rise from my knees more distressed than ever and I come out of my closet, not as a man released from prison, but as he that passes from one dungeon to another! The Lord has refused to listen to my supplication—He has forgotten to be gracious—in anger He has shut up the heart of His compassion."

Perhaps you even go further than this and say, "I feel as if my prayer will never be answered. Something within me tells me that I may pray, but that after all, I shall perish—that there may be mercy for all others in the world, but not for me. I may lift the knocker of Mercy's gate, but the sound shall be only like that of a hammer upon my coffin—there shall be no music of hope as I rap at the golden gate! I know that God hears prayer, but not the prayer of the wicked—that is an abomination unto the Lord. Such, I fear, is *my* prayer and, therefore, He will not hear me." Ah, poor Soul! Let me remind you that there is nothing that is so deluding as *feelings*. Christians cannot live by feelings, nor can you. Let me further tell you that these feelings are the work of Satan—they are not right feelings. What right have you to set up your feelings against the Word of Christ? He has expressly said, "For everyone that asks, receives, and he that seeks, finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened." It is not a question whether a man who truly prays shall be saved! He *is* saved, though he may not know it! He has the germs of salvation in his prayers! "Behold, he prays," means, "Behold, he lives! Behold, he is accepted! Behold, Heaven opens its gates for him!" He prays—Jehovah hears, mercy answers—the man is blessed. I pray you, then, let not your feelings fly in the teeth of God's promises, but hope on, for, though your case is very sad, it is not a strange one—there is hope for you.

Having thus described your case, let me now warn you of a danger. There is a danger to which all those are exposed who have prayed for any length of time without consciously receiving an answer from God—and that is either to get despairing thoughts of themselves or else hard thoughts of Christ. That poor Canaanite was a brave woman. She came of an accursed race, but certainly there was a special blessing resting upon her. If you or I had been there when Christ spoke to her so harshly, I wonder whether we would have taken His remarks as well as she did. Do you remember times when Christ has been silent to you? If so, you

can imagine what her feelings must have been when, "He answered her not a word." Some of you who have quick tempers, would have said, if that had been your experience, "Is this the Messiah of whom we have heard so much and who is said to be so ready to relieve the distressed? Here we have been crying to Him in tones that seemed piercing enough to make a heart of adamant melt for us, yet He has not designed to answer us. He seems to be stone deaf, or, if He hears us, He does not condescend to give us any reply! Is this the kind and tender spirit of which we have heard so much?"

And when at last He spoke and said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs," some would have said, "If He would not grant us our request, He need not have used insulting epithets to us. Dogs, indeed! What means He by that term? He means that we do not belong to the favored race of Israel and a fine thing it would be for us if we did! Are they not oppressed under the Roman yoke and cast off like withered branches?" The Canaanite woman might have said, "Why does He call me a *dog*? Am I not a woman and an honest woman, too, and one who does not deserve such a title as that? I wish I had never asked for mercy at His hands. To get such an insult as to have the name of 'dog' thrown at me is too bad and I will not endure it!"

That may be a strong way of putting the matter, but you and I have probably put it in just that way. Have we not thought because Christ has not answered our prayers, that there was a mistake about His graciousness? That He was not the Christ that some said He was? That He did not mean His invitation when He said, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"? That He desired to tantalize poor souls, making them pray and cry to Him while He meant to be deaf to their requests? Have you not had harsh thoughts of Christ like those? If you have, I pray you to put them all away from you and not to fall into this snare of Satan! Jesus is still the good Christ! Though He may seem to be stony-hearted, He is not so in reality—He is always tender, He has a heart of compassion. Slander Him not, then, but be of good courage and still cry to Him!

Possibly, Satan says to you, "Your prayer is not of the right sort and, therefore, you never will be heard." Yes, but that Canaanite woman's prayer to Christ was of the right sort, yet "He answered her not a word." Notice what her prayer was—"Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David." She gave Him the right name. She might have said, "Son of Abraham." That would have signified that He was the One in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed. That was the Covenant which the Lord made with Abraham. But this woman said, "Son of David." The Covenant made with David related not only to blessing and increase, but also to a kingdom—so this woman seemed to say to Christ, "Man of Sorrows though You are, You are of royal blood. Your visage is more marred than that of any man and You wear not a diadem, yet are You King." She did, as it were, pay Him the homage which Pilate unwittingly paid Him when he placed over His head the inscription, "This is Jesus the King of the Jews." "Son of David"—she knew how to address Him.

Then notice how she pleaded with Him. She appealed not to His justice, but to His mercy, to the love of His tender and compassionate heart—"Have mercy on me." This was the plea of the publican, the prayer by which He was justified—"God be merciful to me a sinner." There was nothing wrong in this woman's prayer to Christ, yet, "He answered her not a word." So then, poor Heart, your prayers, also, may be right and proper, and yet not be answered. If they are not answered, faint not, but continue to pray. The Lord will yet reply to your petition! He will open the windows of Heaven and shower down His mercy upon you, and you shall receive it with a gladsome heart.

Now, having reminded you of your danger, let me call to your recollection the grounds of your comfort. What had this woman to comfort her? Well, first, she had Jesus Christ's face. He said to her, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs." Now, my idea of the Savior is that He could not utter that harsh sentence without, somehow or other, letting the woman see, by the very expression of His Countenance, that He was keeping something back—and that there was love yet in store for her. You know that your children can soon detect the meaning of what you say to them, for they can read your face as well as your words. So can poor beggars and so could this poor woman who was begging of Christ so hard for her child. "Yes," she seemed to say, "Your lips may utter harsh words, but Your loving eyes flash not the fire that should go with such severe sentences. I see a tear lifting up Your eyelids even now. I believe the language of Your face—that marred face—marred with sympathy for others' sorrows, marred with the cares and burdens of others which have weighed You down! Your face will not let me believe that Your heart is harsh." So, Sinner, for your comfort, let me beseech you to look into the face of Jesus Christ! Do you believe that He, the Son of Mary, the Man of Sorrows, grief's acquaintance—can reject you? O Christ, when I picture You before my eyes—especially when I see Your face caked with bloody sweat in Gethsemane and listen to Your agonized groans in the Garden—I cannot and I will not believe that You can ever reject a supplicant who cries to You, "Be merciful to me!"

Or, if that shall not be enough to cheer you, remember that this poor woman had something more to comfort her, for she had heard the story of Christ's good deeds. She had been told, even in Tyre, what He had done in Capernaum. And she had heard, though far away, what He had done in Chorazin, so she believed that He who had done such good deeds to others, could not be harsh to her. So, Sinner, let me tell you of the good deeds that Christ has done to others! I could bring you hundreds, or even thousands, who could truly say with the Psalmist, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." Speak with your eyes, my Brothers and Sisters, and bear witness to the fact which I now testify—has not God heard your prayers, though you were sinners even as others, as vile by nature and as hopeless by depravity? Did He not bring us up out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay and set our feet upon a rock, and establish our goings? Sinner, He who did this for us will and must do the same for you if you plead for mercy through the precious blood of His dear Son!

But you have one comfort which this poor woman never had—she could not be told that Christ had died for her! Sinner, you who are seeking Christ, say not that He is harsh and that He will not hear you. Come with me and, by faith, look upon Him on the Cross. Can you behold His crown of thorns with its lancets piercing His blessed brow, and the tears streaming down His cheeks already crimsoned with His bloody sweat? Can you see His hands and feet as pierced by the nails—they become fountains of blood! There He hangs, naked, despised and rejected of men. Yet He endured all this agony that He might save sinners! Then, how can you think so wickedly of Him as to suppose that He, who once died, the Just for the unjust, now that He lives again, has an adamantine heart and not of compassion? No, by His wounds, I beseech you to trust Him! By His bloody sweat, I implore you to continue your supplication to Him! By His torn side, I urge you to wrestle with Him yet again, for He will hear you, His mercy shall come unto you and you shall rejoice in it!

Lend me your ears while I give you a word of counsel as to what you ought to do. It is the Spirit of God who has taught you to pray. *He* has made you feel your need of a Savior! It is He who has compelled you to fall on your knees and to cry for mercy. Now remember that it is your duty, as well as your privilege, to obey the voice of the Holy Spirit. What does that voice say to you? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." That is to say, even though your prayers are not answered, in the teeth of every hard thought and every harsh word, trust Christ with your soul! If you do that, you are saved then and there. The way of salvation is not, "Pray, and be saved," but, "BELIEVE, and be saved." Christ said, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." Remember that your main business is not with answers to prayer, but with your answer to God's call to you—and His call to you, poor conscience-stricken, awakened Sinner, is, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." Come, then, to Christ just as you are and so you shall find that answer to your prayers which has been so long delayed! Still keep on wrestling with God until your prayers are answered. Jericho's walls did not fall down the first day the hosts of Israel went round them, but they compassed the city seven days and, on the seventh day, the walls fell flat to the ground! Elijah, on the top of Carmel, did not bring the rain the first time he prayed, but he said to his servant, "Go again seven times." And there have been many other instances in which God has delayed the blessing, but has given it at the last!

I have thus preached, as God has enabled me, to poor seeking souls. O Spirit of God, apply the Word and bring sinners to Christ that they may find mercy in His wounds!

II. Now, for a few minutes, let us turn to the case of THOSE BELIEVERS WHO HAVE LONG BEEN PRAYING FOR OTHERS WITHOUT APPARENT RESULT.

There is a father here who has been pleading with God for his daughter. And though years of supplication have passed away, she is still unconverted and as hardened as ever. There is a mother here who has laid her children upon her bosom, in prayer, as once she did for nourishment

when they were but babes—and yet, though she cries day and night for them, they are not saved. My dear Brothers and Sisters, I beseech you never to give up praying for your children, or your other relatives because, although God may not answer you for a while, you shall certainly have the desire of your heart. Let me just give you one or two instances in which the power of prayer has been distinctly proven.

There was a young man who, because of his love for sin and his wish to be easy in it, became an infidel. As I have often said, infidelity is far more a matter of the heart than of the head. I am persuaded that men think there is no God because they wish there were none. They find it hard to believe in God and to go on in sin, so they try to get an easy conscience by denying His existence. This young man was not only an infidel, but he was a very earnest one, and he used to distribute certain newspapers brought out by the infidel press. His employer was just as earnest a Christian as the young man was an infidel, and he used to constantly burn those papers whenever he could get hold of them! But the young man just as perseveringly procured others and tried to hand them out among the apprentices and journeymen, that he might advance his own views. He was always a bold blasphemer and a desperate sinner. He cared little what others thought of him and he was, at least, honest in his iniquities.

One day, in a joke, he said to one of his companions, "I'll tell you what I will do. I'll show you that there is nothing in any of the Methodist cant and hypocrisy the very first time there is a Prayer Meeting at such-and-such a Chapel. I'll go and offer myself to the minister to be prayed for by the members and I shall get some fun out of them." He went and, with all the impudence and coolness possible, told the minister that he was a poor troubled soul who wished to find peace, and that he would be very glad if the Brothers and Sisters would pray for him. He did not know what he was doing, for, whether it was that the very deed awoke his slumbering conscience, or whether the Spirit of God was pleased to show the Sovereignty of His Grace at that moment, I cannot tell, but, as soon as one or two humble individuals had prayed for this young man, with tears in their eyes, he was down on his knees *with tears in his own eyes*, praying for himself! No, not only did he then pray, but he never ceased to pray—and he is still praying, for he could not live without prayer! He found it no matter of fun, after all. He intended to tempt God and to vex His people, but in that very act of sin he was arrested and converted! Do you think, then, if prayer only asked for in sport prevailed with God, that He will not hear your earnest cries for your own offspring! O Christians, be fervent in your supplications, for God will surely hear you and your children shall be saved!

Another instance. There lived, in the village of Berwick St. John, in Wiltshire, a godly woman who had an ungodly husband. He not only hated good things, but he hated her for her goodness, for he turned her out of doors, on a Sabbath night, because she had gone to the Meeting House. She, like a prudent woman, never told her neighbors, but walked the fields alone that she might not be noticed by others and that her husband's shame might not be discovered. She was sometimes driven to

the greatest straits and to a sadness which seemed as if it would bring her to a premature grave. She resolved to pray for her husband, one hour a day, for a year. She did so and, at the end of the year, he was as bad as before, if not worse. Then she thought she would try another six months—her faith was weak and she was going to give her husband up, then, if her prayers were not heard. This was wrong, for we must not limit the Holy One of Israel. But it so happened that, ere the six months were over, her husband came home once, in the middle of the day, looking dejected and downcast. Like a true and tender wife, she asked what was the matter with him, but he could not tell her. He went upstairs, he did not want his dinner and he did not return to his work that afternoon, for God was at work with him.

When his wife got him to speak, he said, "O wife, I can't pray!" "Do you want to pray?" she asked. And he replied, "Oh, I must pray! I do not know how it was, but, about twelve o'clock today, such a strange feeling came over me. I feel that I am a lost man, for I cannot pray—will you pray for me?" You may guess what her feelings were when asked by that obdurate wretch to pray for him! She did pray. Then they prayed together and their united prayers were answered! The next Sabbath they were both in God's House and, in a few more Sabbaths, they were side by side at the Lord's Table. The godly woman's prayers were heard at last—and God again proved that He has not said to the seed of Jacob, "Seek you Me in vain."

Yet another instance. There was a captain, whose name I will not give in full just now. I will call him Mitchell, for that will suffice. This captain was a godly man and he once went to sea, leaving his wife at home expecting soon to give birth to their first-born child. While he was at sea, one day, a time of deep solemnity came over him, in the course of which, he penned a prayer. This prayer was for his wife and for his yet unborn child. He put the prayer into the oak chest in which he kept his papers. He never came home again, for he died at sea. His chest was brought home to his wife—she did not open it to look at his papers, but she thought they might be of use to her son when he grew up. That son lived and, at the age of sixteen, he joined a regiment at Boston. In that regiment, he became exceedingly debauched, profane, blasphemous and sinful in every way.

At the age of fifty-four, while he was living in sin with a wicked woman, it struck him that he would like to look through the contents of the old chest which his father had left. He opened it, and, at the bottom, found, tied up with red tape, a paper, on the outside of which was written, "The prayer of Mitchell K_____ for his wife and child." He opened it and read it. It was a most fervent plea with God that the man's wife and child might belong to Christ written 54 years back—and before that child was born! He shut it up and put it where it was before, and said that he would not look into "that cursed old chest" again. But that did not matter, for the prayer had got into his heart and he could not lock his heart up in that chest. He became thoroughly miserable and the wretched woman, with whom he lived, asked him what was the matter with him. He told her what he had read in that paper and she said she hoped he

would not become a hypocrite. All the jokes and frivolities of his companions could not take out the dart which God had sent into his heart and, before long, by true repentance and by living faith, that man was in Christ—a saved soul, married honorably to the woman with whom he had lived in sin—and walking in uprightness, serving his father's God as the result of a prayer which had lain in an old chest for 54 years—but which God's eyes had seen all the while, and which, at last, He had answered when the set time had come!

Be of good courage, all you who are pleading for your children, for God will yet answer your supplications! As one of the old divines says, "Prayer is the rope which hangs down on earth, and there is a bell in Heaven which it rings and which God hears." Pull that rope again tonight, praying father and mother! Make the great bell in Heaven ring again and again, and let its notes be, "Save my children! Save my husband! Save my wife! Save my brother! Let my sister live before You." Your prayers shall be heard and God shall yet grant your requests! The instances I have given you are authenticated and I could give you more which have come under my own notice, but time fails and I have said enough upon that matter.

Let me just preach the Gospel at the close plainly and simply, and then I have done. The Gospel is this—Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, dead and buried. The third day He rose again from the dead and ascended into Heaven. He came into the world to die for sinners. He hung upon the Cross and bled for sinners. All whom He died for will be saved—He died for sinners and sinners will be saved. Your only question is, are you in the true Scriptural sense of the term a confessed and acknowledged sinner? If so, Jesus died for you. On my doorstep the other night, when I reached home after preaching, stood a man. I asked him what he wanted, and he fell on his knees and cried, "I want to know what I must do to be saved." I thought the man was mad to be there at that time of night on such an errand, but he cried out concerning his sin, told me I did not know his guilt, that he had been near committing suicide and that he dared not go home to rest till he was told the way of salvation.

"Well," I said, "I will tell you." But I could not make it plain to his poor darkened understanding until I told him a story which I have often told concerning an event which happened to me some time ago. One evening when sitting to see enquirers, there came an Irishman upstairs. "Well, Pat," I said. "How's your reverence?" said he. "Don't call me 'reverence,' "I said," because I am no reverence at all! But how is it you have not gone to your priest?" Said he, "I have come here to ask you a question and if you can answer it, that will do." "Well, what is the question?" "Why, you said, last Sunday, that God would forgive sin. What I want to know is how that can be, for I have been such a great sinner that if He doesn't punish me, He ought." Well, I thought I had got a sinner to deal with, and one who spoke from his heart what he felt. I said, "God pardons sinners for the sake of Jesus. "But," he replied, "I do not know what you mean." I told him that Jesus Christ died and that for the sake of that, God pardoned sinners. Still he could not comprehend, and he said, "I

want to know how God can be just—He ought to punish sin and yet He does not! How can that be?"

"Well," I said, "suppose you had been committing a murder and the judge were to say you must be hanged." "I would deserve it," said he. "Well, how is Pat to be got off and yet the sentence to be carried out?" "Faith!" he said, "that's what I don't exactly see." "Well," I continued, "suppose I go to the Queen and say, 'Please, your Majesty, I am very fond of this poor Irishman. I admit he ought to be hanged, but I want him to live—will you be so good as to have *me* hanged instead?" "Well, she couldn't say, 'Yes,' Pat. But suppose she did and suppose I went to prison and were hanged instead of you, the murderer—would the Queen be unjust in letting you go afterwards?" "Faith!" he said, "I shouldn't ask that—how could she meddle with me afterwards? Because I should say that gentleman was hung for me, and sure enough I was free. But," he added, "I don't see what that has to do with the matter."

"Why just this," said I, "Jesus Christ loved sinners so much that rather than they should perish He was content to die, Himself, instead of them. And now, since Christ died for sinners, can you not see how God can be just in letting sinners go free?" "Oh, yes," he said, "I see it now! But then, how am I to know that Christ died for *me*, so that I cannot be punished? You say there are some people that Christ died for, so that God could not punish them—then how am I to know whether I belong to them?" "Why, by this—are you a sinner? Because if you are not in the matter of compliment, but if you are really so and feel it, then Christ died in your place and you cannot die because God will never enforce the sentence twice. He will not ask payment, first, at the bleeding Surety's hands and then at ours." I think I see that man putting his hands together, and saying, "There! That's Bible. I know that's true. That must be true—no man could have made that up. That's wonderful! I know it's God's Bible, for it just fits me. I am a poor sinner and God has pardoned me."

And he went on his way rejoicing. Now, doesn't that fit you, too? What would you give tonight if you could believe that Jesus Christ was punished instead of you, so that all your sins shall never be mentioned anymore, but all be forgiven because God punished Christ Jesus instead of you? I repeat, the only way you can tell is by answering this question—Are you a sinner? "Well, we are all sinners," says one. No, no—you are all sinners, but you are not all the sort of sinners that I mean. Some people say they are sinners but they don't mean it. They are like the beggars in London *apparently* full of sores. Many a man we see in the streets with his leg tied up and seeming desperately lame, will take off the bandage when he gets to his lodging house—and will dance before he goes to bed at night! Another man standing against the wall says he is stone blind—but he will see to count his money when he gets home after begging all day! There are plenty of people of that sort. Now, if I invited the lame and the blind, do you think I should receive those who were only shamming? No, I would only have those who were really lame and blind! So Christ died only for those who are real sinners.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
EPHESIANS 2.

Verse 1. *And you has He quickened.* Is it so? Can anyone lay his hand on your shoulder and say right into your ear, "You has He quickened"? If so, why this deadness of spirit? Why this worldliness? Why these wanderings? "You has He quickened."

1, 2. *Who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world.* You were dead to all that was good, but you were alive enough to that which was evil! It seems, from this passage, that dead men walk, yet not in the way of God, but, "according to the course of this world."

2, 3. *According to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of all disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in the past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and we were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.* We were not in the least better, by nature, than the very worst of men! And if we were any better in practice, it was only because we were restrained by Providence and by Grace from going into gross sin as others did. Look unto the hole of the pit from which you were dug and see how humble was your origin. If you are proud of your fine feathers, as the peacock is, remember his black legs! See from where you came and recollect the sin from which you were delivered! Bless God for your deliverance and be humble as you think of the Grace that has caused you to differ from others.

4, 5. *But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ, (by Grace you are saved).* This is a wondrous Truth of God, that God loves the sinner even while he is dead in sin. This love is not caused by any goodness in him, for he is dead—he is wrapped up in the cerements of his sins. There is nothing lovable about him, yet God, "for His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ."

6-8. *And has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His Grace and of 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.* That great Truth was put in the 5th verse, in a parenthesis. Why did Paul write it twice? Because we cannot too often be reminded that we were saved by Grace. It is a Truth which we so soon forget that we have need to have it rung in our ears as by a peal of bells, "By Grace are you saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."

9. *Not of works, lest any man should boast.* God cannot endure boasting and one great objective of the plan of salvation by Grace is to extinguish boasting, to shut it out! It is intolerable to God, He cannot endure it.

10. *For we are His workmanship.* If we have anything good in us, it was all made by Him.

10-12. *Created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them. Therefore remember that you, being in times 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 a true description of our Anglo-Saxon forefathers who were certainly heathen of the heathen, the wildest and most savage of men when Paul wrote this Epistle! And yet, by Sovereign Grace, we have been brought to the very forefront of the nations of the earth and we are no longer without God, nor yet without hope, nor yet without Christ. Neither are we now strangers to the covenants of promise, nor aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.

13-22. *But now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are made near by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who has made both one and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinance; 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 which 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.* Happy are the people who enjoy these high privileges!

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THE SOWER
NO. 2842

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 2, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 6, 1888.

"Behold, a sower went forth to sow."
Matthew 13:3.

THIS was a very important event. I do not say that it was important if you took the individual case, alone—but if you took the multitudes of cases in which it was also true, it was overwhelmingly important in the aggregate—"A sower went forth to sow." Yes, Christ thinks it worthwhile to mention that a single sower went forth to sow, that a Christian man went out to address a meeting on a village green, or to conduct a Bible class, or to speak anywhere for the Lord! But when you think of the hundreds of preachers of the Gospel who go out to sow every Lord's-Day and the myriads of teachers who go to instruct the children in our Sunday schools, it is, surely, in the aggregate, the most important event under Heaven! You may omit, O recording angel, the fact that a warrior went forth to fight—it is far more important that you should record that "a sower went forth to sow." You may even forget that a man of science went into his laboratory and made a discovery, for no discovery can equal in importance the usual processes of farming. Do you hear the song of the harvest home? Do you see the loaded wagons follow one another in a long line to the farmer's barn? If so, remember that there would be no harvest home if the sower went not forth to sow! As the flail is falling upon the wheat, or the threshing machine is making the grain to leap from among the chaff and the miller's wheels are grinding merrily, and the women are kneading the dough, and the bread is set upon the table and parents and children are fed to the full, do not forget that all this could never happen unless "a sower went forth to sow." On this action hinges the very life of man! Bread, which is the staff of his life, would be broken and taken from him—and his life could not continue did not a sower still go forth to sow! This seems to me to prove that the event recorded in our text is of prime importance and deserves to be chronicled there.

And, dear Friends, the *spiritual* sowing stands in the same relation to the spiritual world that the natural sowing occupies in the natural world! It is a most important thing that we should continually go forth to preach the Gospel. It may seem to some people a small matter that I should oc-

cupy this pulpit and I shall not lay any undue importance upon that fact—yet eternity may not exhaust all that shall result from the preaching of the Gospel here—there may be souls, plucked like brands from the burning, saved with an everlasting salvation, lamps lit by the Holy Spirit that shall shine like stars in the firmament of God forever and ever! Who knows, O Teacher, when you labor even among the infants, what the result of your teaching may be? Good corn may grow in very small fields. God may bless your simple words to the babes that listen to them. How know you, O my unlettered Brother, when you stand up in the cottage meeting to talk to a few poor folk about Christ, what may follow from that effort of yours? Life or death, Heaven or Hell, may depend upon the sowing of the Good Seed of the Gospel! It is, it *must* be the most important event that can ever happen, if the Lord goes forth with you when you go forth as the sower went forth to sow!

Listen to the songs of the angels! See the overflowing brightness and excessive glory of your Heavenly Father's face! He rejoices because souls are born to Christ—but how could there be this joy, in the ordinary course, and speaking after the manner of men—without the preaching of the Word? For it still pleases God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe! I shall not, therefore, make any apology for again preaching upon an event which is so important, even though it is recorded in such simple words! "A sower went forth to sow."

I am going to try to answer three questions concerning this answer. First, *who was he?* Secondly, *what did he do?* And, thirdly, *what was his objective?*

I. First, WHO WAS HE?

We do not know anything at all about him except that he was a sower. His individuality seems to be swallowed up in his office. We do not know who his father was, or his mother, or his sister, or his brother. All we know is that he was a sower and I do like to see a man who is so much a minister that he is nothing else but a minister! It does not matter who he is, or what he has, or what else he can do if he does this one thing. He has lost his identity in his service, though he has also gained it over again in another way. He has lost his selfhood and has become, once and for all, a sower and nothing but a sower!

Observe, dear Friends, that *there are many personal matters which are quite unimportant.* It is not mentioned here whether he was a refined sower, or a rustic sower—and it does not matter which he was. So is it with the workers for Christ—God blesses all sorts of men. William Huntington, the coal-heaver, brought many souls to Christ. Some have doubted this, but, in my early Christian days, I knew some of the excellent of the earth who were the spiritual children of the coal-heaver. Chalmers stood at the very opposite pole—a master of cultured gracious speech, a learned, well-trained man—and what multitude Chalmers brought to Christ! So, whether it was Huntington or Chalmers, does not matter. "A sower went forth to sow." One preacher talks like Rowland Hill, in very plain Saxon with a touch of humor. Another, like Robert

Hall, uses a grand style of speech, full of brilliant rhetoric and scarcely ever condescending to men of low degree, yet God blessed both of them! What did it matter whether the speech was of the colloquial or of the oratorical order so long as God blessed it? The man preached the Gospel—exactly how he preached it need not be declared. He was a sower, he went forth to sow—and there came a glorious harvest from his sowing!

Now, my dear Brother, you have begun earnestly to speak for Christ, but you are troubled because you cannot speak like Mr. So-and-So. Do not try to speak like Mr. So-and-So! You say, "I heard a man preach, the other night, and when he had done, I thought I could never preach again." Well, it was very naughty on your part to think that. You ought rather to have said, "I will try to preach all the better, now that I have heard one who preaches so much better than I can." Just feel that you have to sow the Good Seed of the Kingdom and if you have not so big a hand as some sowers have, and cannot sow quite so much at a time, go and sow with your smaller hands, only mind that you sow the same Seed, for so God will accept what you do! You are grieved that you do not know so much as some do and that you have not the same amount of learning that they have. You regret that you have not the poetical faculty of some, or the holy ingenuity of others. Why do you speak about all these things? Our Lord Jesus Christ does not do so—He simply says, "A sower went forth to sow." He does not tell us how he was dressed. He mentions nothing about whether he was a black man, or a white man, or what kind of man he was. He tells us nothing about him except that he was a sower. Will you, my dear Friend, try to be nothing but a soul-winner? Never mind about "idiosyncrasies," or whatever people call them! Go ahead and sow the Good Seed and God bless you in doing so!

Next, notice that as the various personal matters relating to the man are too unimportant to be recorded, *his name and his fame are not written in this Book.* Do you want to have your name put to everything that you do? Mind that God does not let you have your desire and then say to you, "There, you have done that unto yourself, so you can reward yourself for it." As far as ever you can, keep your own name out of all the work you do for the Lord! I used to notice, in Paris, that there was not a bridge, or a public building, without the letter, "N," somewhere on it. Now, go through all the city and find an, "N," if you can. Napoleon hoped his fame would live in imperishable marble, but he had written his name in sand, after all, and if any of us shall, in our ministry, think it the all-important matter to make our own name prominent, we are on the wrong tack altogether! When George Whitefield was asked to start a new sect, he said, "I do not condemn my Brother Wesley for what he has done, but I cannot do the same—let my name perish, but let Christ's name endure forever and ever!" Do not be anxious for your name to go down to posterity, but be more concerned to be only remembered by what you have done, as this man is only remembered by Christ's testimony that he was a sower.

What he did, in his sowing, is some of it recorded, but only that which refers to his special work. Where his seed fell, how it grew or did not grow and what came of it or did not come of it, that is all there—but nothing else about his life, or history is there at all. I pray you, do not be anxious for anything that shall embalm your reputation. Embalming is for the dead—so the living may be content to let their name and fame be blown away by the same wind that blows it to them. What does our reputation matter, after all? It is nothing but the opinion or the breath of men and that is of little or no value to the child of God. Serve God faithfully and then leave your name and fame in His keeping. There is a day coming when the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father!

We have no record of the name and the fame of this man, yet *we do know something about him.* We know that he must have been, first of all, an eater, or he never would have been a sower. The Gospel is Seed for the sower and Bread for the eater. And every man who really goes out to sow for God, must first have been an eater. There is not a man on the face of the earth who treads the furrows of the field and sows the seed, but must first have been an eater of bread—and there is not a true servant of God, beneath the cape of Heaven, but has first fed on the Gospel before he has preached it! If there are any who pretend to sow, but who have never, themselves, eaten, God have mercy upon them! What a desecration of the pulpit it is for a man to attempt to preach what he does not, himself, know! What a desecration it is of even a Sunday school class—for an unconverted young man, or young woman to be a teacher of others! I do not think such a thing ought to be allowed. Wherever it has been permitted, I charge any who have been trying to teach what they do not, themselves, know, to cry to God to teach them that they may not go and pretend to speak in the name of the Lord, to the children, till, first of all, Christ has spoken peace and pardon to their own hearts and He has been formed in them the hope of Glory! May every worker here put to himself the question, "Have I fed upon and enjoyed that good Word which I am professing to teach to others?"

Next, having been an eater, he must also have been a receiver. A sower cannot sow if he has not any seed. It is a mere mockery to go up and down a field and to pretend to scatter seed out of an empty hand! Is there not a great deal of so-called Christian work that is just like that? Those who engage in it have not anything to give and, therefore, they can give nothing. You cannot pump out of a man or a woman what is not there—and you cannot preach or teach, in God's way, what is not first in your own heart! We must receive the Gospel Seed from God before we can sow it! The sower went to his master's granary and received so many bushels of wheat. And then he went out and sowed it. I am afraid that some would-be sowers fail in this matter of being receivers. They are in a great hurry to take a class, or to preach here, or there, or somewhere else, but there is nothing in it all. What can there be in your speech but sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, unless you have received the Liv-

ing Word from the Living God and are sent forth by Him to proclaim it to men?

A true sower, also, is a disseminator of the Word of God. No man is a sower unless he scatters the Truth of God. If he does not preach Truth, he is not a sower in the true meaning of that term. A man may go whistling up and down the furrows and people may mistake him for a sower, but he is not really one—and if there is not, in what we preach, the real, solid Truth of God's Word—however prettily we may put our sweet nothings, we have not been serving the Lord. We must really scatter the Living Seed or else we are not worthy of the title of sower.

We seem to know a little about this sower, now, and we further know that *he was one of noble line.* What our Lord really said was, "THE SOWER went forth to sow," and I think I see Him coming forth out of the ivory palaces from the lone Glory of His own eternal Nature, going down to Bethlehem, becoming a Babe, waiting a while till the Seed was ready and then standing by the Jordan, by the hillside, at Capernaum and Nazareth, and everywhere scattering those great Seeds that have made the wilderness and the solitary place to be glad, and the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose! See how all Christendom has sprung from the sowing of that Man! And our glorious Lord has long been reaping and is still reaping, today, the harvest of the Seed-sowing on the hillsides of Galilee. "The Sower went forth to sow." Are you not glad to be in that noble line? Do you not feel it to be a high honor, even if you are the very least of the sowers, to be one of those who have sowed the Gospel of God?

But who are the sowers who came next? Men "of whom the world was not worthy." Men who suffered for their Lord and Master, His Apostles, and those who received their word and who were faithful even unto death—a goodly army of all sorts of people, old and young, rich and poor, wise and unlettered. And there has always continued a band of sowers going forth to sow, men who could not help doing it, like the tinker of Bedford, to wit. They commanded him not to sow any more of the Seed and they cast him into prison because he would still do it. But, through the window of that prison he kept on sowing great handfuls of Seed which are, even now, falling upon the broad acres of our own and other lands! When they made him be quiet, he said, "If you let me out of prison today, I will preach again tomorrow, by the Grace of God." "Oh, then!" they answered, "go back to your cell, Sir." "Yes," he said, "and I will lie there till the moss grows on my eyelids before I will make you any promise that I will be silent." He must sow—he could not help it! Well, now, today, it is imagined by some that the new theology is to put an end to our sowing of the Good Seed of the Kingdom—but will it? I believe that the sowers will still go to every lane and alley of the city and to every hamlet and village of our country, when God wills it, for the Gospel is as everlasting as the God who gave it and, therefore, it cannot die out! And when they think that they have killed the plant, it will spring up everywhere more vigorous than before.

The sower is not only a man of an honorable line, but he is also a worker, together with God. It is God's design that every plant should propagate and reproduce its like and especially is it His design that wheat, and other cereals so useful to men, should be continued and multiplied on the face of the earth. Who is to do it? God will see that it is done and, usually, He employs men to be His agents. There are some seeds that never can be sown by men, but only by birds. I need not go into the details, but it is a fact that no man could make the seed grow if he did sow it—it must be done by a bird. But as to wheat, man must sow that—you cannot go into any part of the world and find a field of wheat unless a man has sown the seed to produce it. You may find fields full of thistles, but wheat must be sown. It is not a wild thing, it must have a man to care for it and God, therefore, links Himself with man in the continuance of wheat on the face of the earth. And he has so arranged that while He could spread the Gospel by His Spirit, without human voices—while He could bring untold myriads to Himself without any instrumentality—yet He does not do so and, as means to the end He has in view, He intends you to speak, that He may speak through you, and that, in the speaking, the Seed may be scattered, which He shall make to bring forth an abundant harvest!

II. Now, secondly, WHAT DID THIS SOWER DO? He went forth. I am going to dwell upon that fact for a few minutes.

I think this means, first, that *he bestirred himself.* He said, "It is time that I went forth to sow. I have waited quite long enough for favorable weather, but I remember that Solomon said, 'He that observes the wind shall not sow.' I feel that the sowing time has come for me and I must set about it." Can I look upon some here who have been members of the Church for years, but who have never yet done anything for the Lord? Brother or Sister, if you have been a servant of God for many years and have never yet really worked for the salvation of souls, I want you now to say to yourself, "Come now, I must really get at this work." You will be going Home soon and when your Master says to you, "Did you do any sowing for Me?" you will have to reply, "No, Lord, I did plenty of eating. I went to the Tabernacle and I enjoyed the services." "But did you do any sowing?" "No, Lord. I did a great deal of hoarding. I laid up a large quantity of the Good Seed." "But did you do any sowing?" He will still ask—and that will be a terrible question for those who never went forth to sow!

You are very comfortable at home, are you not? In the long winter evenings that are coming on, it will be so pleasant to enjoy yourselves at home for an evening. There, stir the fire and draw the curtain close, and let us sit down and spend a happy time. Yes, but is it not time for you, Mr. Sower, to go forth? The millions of London are perishing! Asylums for the insane are filling, jails are filling, poverty is abounding and drunkenness is at every street corner! Harlotry is making good men and women to blush! It is time to set about work for the Lord if you are ever to do it! What are some of you doing for God? Oh, that you would begin to take stock of your capacity, or your incapacity and say, "I must get to work for

the Master. I am not to spend my whole life thinking about what I am going to do—I must do the next thing and do it at once, or I may be called Home—and my day over before I have sown a single handful of wheat."

Next, *the sower gave up his privacy.* He came out from his solitude and began to sow. This is what I mean. At first, a Christian man very wisely lives indoors. There is a lot of cleaning and scrubbing to be done there. When the bees come out of their cells, they always spend the first few days of their life in the hive cleaning and getting everything tidy. They do not go out to gather honey till they have, first of all, done the housework at home. I wish that all Christian people would get their housework done as soon as they can. It needs to be done. I mean acquaintance with experimental matters of indwelling sin and overcoming Grace. But, after that, the sower went forth to sow. He was not content with his own private experience, but he went forth to sow. There are numbers of people who are miserable because they are always at home. They have cleaned up everything there, even to the bottoms of the saucepans outside, but now they do not know what to do—so they begin blacking them over again and cleaning them once more—always at work upon the little trifles of their own kitchen. Go out, Brother! Go out, Sister! Important as your experience is, it is only important as a platform for real usefulness. Get all right within in order that you may get to work without!

The sower, when he went forth to sow, also *gave up his occupation of a learner and an enjoyer of the Truth.* He was in the Bible class for a year or two and he gained a deal of Scriptural knowledge there. He was also a regular hearer of the Word. You could see him regularly sitting in his pew and drinking in the Word. But, after a while, he said to himself, "I have no right to remain in this Bible class—I ought to be in the Sunday school and lead a class myself." Then he said to himself, on a Sabbath evening, "I have been to one service, today, and have been spiritually fed, so I think I ought to go to one of the lodging houses in the Mint and speak to the people there, or find some other holy occupation in which I can be doing some good to others." So he went forth to sow and I want to stir you all up to do this! Perhaps I do not need to say much upon this matter to my own people here, but there are also many strangers with us. I would like to do with you what Samson did with the foxes and firebrands. We have far too many professing Christians who are doing next to nothing! If I could send you among the standing corn of some of the churches, to set them on fire, it would not be a bad Thursday evening's work!

"A sower went forth to sow." Where did he come from? I do not know what house he came from, but I can tell you the place from which he last came. *He came out of the granary.* He must have been to the granary to get the seed. At least if he did not go there before he went to sow, he did not have anything that was worth sowing! O my dear Brothers and Sisters, especially my Brothers in the ministry, we must always go to the granary, must we not? Without the diligent and constant study of Scrip-

ture, of what use will our preaching be? "I went into the pulpit," said one, "and I preached straight off just what came into my mind and thought nothing of it." "Yes," said another, "and your people thought nothing of it, too." That is sure to be the case! You teachers who go to your classes quite unprepared and open your Bible and say just what comes first, should remember that God does not need your nonsense. "Oh, but," says one, "it is not by human wisdom that souls are saved." No, nor is it by human ignorance! But if you profess to teach, learn. He can never be a teacher who is not first a learner. I am sure that when the sower went forth to sow, the last place he came from was the granary—and mind that you go to the granary, too, dear worker.

I wonder whether this sower did what I recommend every Christian sower to do, namely, to come forth from *the place where he had steeped his seed.* One farmer complained that his wheat did not grow and another asked him, "Do you steep your seed?" "No," he replied, "I never heard of such a thing." The first one said, "I steep mine in prayer and God prospers me." If we always steep our heavenly Seed in prayer, God will prosper us, also. For one solitary man to stand up and preach is poor work, but for two of us to be here is grand work. You have heard the story of the Welsh preacher who had not arrived when the service ought to have begun, so his host sent a boy to the room to tell him that it was time to go preach. The boy came hurrying back, and said, "Sir, he is in his room, but I do not think he is coming. There is somebody in there with him. I heard him speaking very loudly and very earnestly, and I heard him say that if that other person did not come with him, he would not come at all! And the other one never answered him, so I do not think he will come." "Ah," said the host, who understood the case, "he will come and the other One will come with him!" Oh, it is good sowing when the sower goes forth to sow and the Other comes with him! Then we go forth with steeped Seed, Seed that is sprouting in our hands as we go forth! This does not happen naturally, but it does happen *spiritually*. It seems to grow while we are handling it, for there is Life in it—and when it is sown, there will be Life in it for our hearers!

Further, this sower *went forth into the open field.* Wherever there was a field ready for the sowing, there he went. Beloved Friends, we must always try to do good where there is the greatest likelihood of doing good. I do not think that I need to go anywhere else than here, for here are the people to whom I can preach. But if this place were not filled with people, I should feel that I had no right to stand here and preach to empty pews. If it is so in your little Chapel—if the people do not come—I do not desire that the Chapel should be burned down, but it might be a very mitigated calamity if you had to turn out into the street to preach, or if you had to go to some hall, or barn, for some people might come and hear you, there, who will never hear you now. You must go forth to sow! You cannot sit at your parlor window and sow wheat—and you cannot stand on one little plot of ground and keep on sowing there. If you have done your work in that place, go forth to sow elsewhere! Oh, that the Church of

Christ would go forth into heathen lands! Oh, that there might be among Christians a general feeling that they must go forth to sow! What a vast acreage there still is upon which not a grain of God's Wheat has ever yet fallen! Oh, for a great increase of the missionary spirit! May God send it upon the entire Church until everywhere it shall be said, "Behold, a sower went forth to sow."

There is a, "behold," in my text, which I have saved up till now. "Behold, a sower went forth to sow." He went as far as ever he could to sow the good seed, that his master might have a great harvest from it—let us go and do likewise.

When did this man go forth to sow? Our farming friends begin to sow very soon after harvest. That is the time to sow for Christ. As soon as ever you have won one soul for Him, try and win another, by God's Grace! Say to yourself what the general said to his troops when some of them came riding up and said, "Sir, we have captured a gun from the enemy." "Then," said he, "go and capture another!" After the reaping, let the sowing follow as speedily as possible. In season, this sower sowed. It is a great thing to observe the proper season for sowing, but it is a greater thing to sow in improper seasons, also, for out of season is sometimes the best season for God's sowers to sow. "Be instant in season and out of season," was Paul's exhortation to Timothy. Oh, for Grace to be always sowing! I have known good men to go about and never to be without tracts to give away, and suitable tracts, too. They seem to have picked them out and God has given them an occasion suitable for the tracts, or if they have not given tracts, they have been ready with a good word, a choice word, a loving word, a tender word. There is a way of getting the Gospel in edgewise when you cannot get it in at the front. Wise sowers sow their seed broadcast, yet I have generally noticed that they never sow against the wind, for that would blow the dust into their eyes—and there is nothing like sowing with the wind. Whichever way the Holy Spirit seems to be moving and Providence is also moving, scatter your Seed that the wind may carry it as far as possible and that it may fall where God shall make it grow.

Thus I have told you what the man did—"A sower went forth to sow."

III. I must answer briefly the last of the three questions I mentioned, WHAT WAS THIS SOWER'S OBJECTIVE?

On this occasion, he did not go forth *to keep the seed to himself.* He went forth to throw it to the wind—he threw it away from himself, scattered it far and wide. He did not go out to defend it, but he threw it about, and left it to take its chance. He did not go, at this time, to examine it—to see whether it was good seed, or not. No doubt he had done that before, but he just scattered it. He did not go out to winnow it, and blow away the chaff, or pick out any darner that might be in it. That was all done at home. Now he has nothing to do but to sow it—*to sow it*—TO SOW IT. And he sows it with all his might. He did not even come to push others out of the field who might be sowing bad seed, but he took occasion, at this particular time, to go forth to sow and to do nothing else—

"One thing at a time, and that done well,
Is a very good rule, as many can tell"

and it is especially so in the service of God. Do not try to do 20 things at once—"A sower went forth to sow." *His objective was a limited one.* He did not go forth to make the seed grow. No, that was beyond his power—he went forth to sow. If we were responsible for the effect of the Gospel upon the hearts of men, we should be in a sorry plight, indeed, but we are only responsible for the sowing of the Good Seed. If you hear the Gospel, dear Friends, and reject it, that is your problem, and not ours. If you are saved by it, give God the Glory—but if it proves to be a savor of death unto death to you, yours is the sin, the shame and the sorrow. The preacher cannot save souls, so he will not take the responsibility that does not belong to him.

And he did not, at that time, go forth to reap. There are many instances in which the reaper has overtaken the sower and God has saved souls on the spot while we have been preaching. Still, what this man went forth to do was to sow. Whether there is any soul saved or not, our business is to preach the Gospel, the whole Gospel and nothing but the Gospel—and we must keep to this one point—preaching Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. That is sowing the Seed. We cannot create the harvest—that will come in God's own time.

This man's one objective was positively before him and we are to impart the Truth, to make known to men the whole of the Gospel. You are lost, God is gracious, Christ has come to seek and to save that which is lost. Whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life. On the Cross He offered the Sacrifice by which sin is put away. Believe in Him and you live by His death. This sowing, you see, is simply telling out the Truth of God and this is the main thing that we have to do, dear Friends—to keep on telling the same Truth over and over, and over and over again, till we get it into the minds and hearts of men—and they receive it through God's blessing.

If the sower had sat down at the corner of the field and played the harp all day, he would not have done his duty. And if, instead of preaching the simple Gospel, we talk of the high or deep mysteries of God, we shall not have done *our* duty. The sower's one business is to sow, so, stick to your sowing, Brothers and Sisters. When that is done and your Master calls you Home, He will find you other work to do for Him in Heaven, but, for the present, this is to be your occupation.

Now, to close, let me remind you that *sowing is an act of faith.* If a man had not great faith in God, he would not take the little seed he has and go and bury it. His good wife might say to him, "John, we shall need that wheat for the children, so don't you go and throw it out where the birds may eat it, or the worms destroy it." And you must preach the Gospel and you must teach the Gospel as an act of faith. You must believe that God will bless it. If not, you are not likely to get a blessing upon it. If it is done merely as a natural act, or a hopeful act, that will not be enough—it must be done as an act of confidence in the living God. He bids you speak the Word and makes you His lips for the time—and He

says that His Word shall not return to Him void, but that it shall prosper in the thing where He has sent it.

This sowing was also *an act of energy.* The word, sower, is meant to describe an energetic man. He was, as we say, "all there." So, when we teach Christ, we must teach Him with all our might, throwing our very soul into our teaching. O Brothers, never let the Gospel hang on our lips like icicles! Let it rather be like burning lava from the mouth of a volcano! Let us be all on fire with the Divine Truth that is within our hearts, sowing it with all our heart, mind, soul and strength.

This sowing was also *an act of concentrated energy.* The sower "went forth TO SOW." He went forth, not with two aims or objectives, but with this one—not dividing his life into a multitude of channels, but making all run in one strong, deep current along this one riverbed.

Now I have done when I invite my Brothers and Sisters here to go forth from this Tabernacle to sow. You will go down those front steps, or you will go out at the back doors and scatter all over London. I know not how far you may be going, but let it be written of you tonight, "The sowers went forth to sow"—they went forth from the Tabernacle with one resolve that, by the power of the living Spirit of God, they who are redeemed with the precious blood of Jesus would make known His Gospel to the sons of men, sowing that Good Seed in every place wherever they have the opportunity, trusting in God to make the Seed increase and multiply! Ah, but do not forget to do it even within these walls, for there are some here whom you may never be able to get at again. So, if you can speak to your neighbor in the pew, say a good word for Christ! If you will begin to be sowers, nothing is better than to begin at once. Throw a handful before you get outside the door—who knows whether that first handful shall not be more successful than all you have sown, or shall sow, in later days?

As for you dear Souls who have never received the Living Seed, oh, that you would receive it at once! May God, the Holy Spirit, make you to be like well-prepared ground that opens a thousand mouths to take in the Seed and then encloses the Seed within itself and makes it fructify! May God bless you. May He never leave you barren or unfruitful, but may you grow a great harvest to His Glory, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 106.

This is one of the "Songs of Degrees." They are supposed to have been sung as the pilgrim caravan was going up to the Temple at Jerusalem. Every time they halted and pitched their tents, they sang a Psalm. If carefully read, it will be found that these Psalms exhibit a real advance in experience. For instance, the keynote of the 125th is stability, while that of the 126th is joy, and especially joyful hope. Each one appears to advance a stage higher than the one that precedes it.

Verse 1. *When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like they that dream.* "It seemed too good to be true. We were in a deli-

rium of joy. 'We were like they that dream.' Our slumber had been profound—we thought that God had altogether forgotten us—but when we found that He was coming to our rescue, 'we were like they that dream.'"

2. *Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing.* "We wanted to express our joy, so laughter came, which is a natural, genuine mode of expressing delight. Our mouth was filled with laughter. We not only laughed, but we laughed again and again, even as Abraham laughed when a son was promised to him and as Sarah laughed when Isaac was born."

2. *Then said they among the heathen, The LORD has done great things for them.* It is a fine time when even the heathen begin to see the joy of Believers. They could not help hearing and seeing it and, with astonishment they said, "Jehovah has done great things for them," to which the godly replied that it was so. They were not at all ashamed to acknowledge it. They had not any of that unhallowed modesty which is afraid to speak to the glory of God, but they said—

3. *The LORD has done great things for us; of which we are glad.* I heard a Brother at a Prayer Meeting some time ago, say, "Of which we desire to be glad." That is not what these people said and if the Lord has done great things for you, you *are* glad, not only do you desire to be glad, but you *are* so! It is always a pity to try to improve on Holy Scripture, for it does not go to be improved upon. When the Lord does great things for His people, they are as glad as they can be, and they cannot help saying so.

4. *Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south.* The riverbeds, when the Southern torrents have been dried up, seem to be nothing but a gathering of stones and dust. Then comes a copious rain, bringing a sudden flush of water and the captivity of the stream is gone. That is the meaning of the prayer, "Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south."

5, 6. *They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goes forth and weeps, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.* Notice that word, "doubtless." If you have any doubt about it in your own case, may the Lord drive all your doubts away! When God says, "doubtless," we must not be doubtful. "He shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—427, 483, 539.

—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 SEED BY THE WAYSIDE
NO. 2843

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 9, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 13, 1888.

"As he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it."
Luke 8:5.

THIS parable is recorded by Matthew, Mark and Luke. It is a very important one and, therefore, it is very carefully preserved for us. Matthew puts it, "When he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came, and devoured them up."

Notice that the sower is always spoken of as a solitary man. In the harvest field, there is a great company and they sing and shout together in harmony, but the sower goes forth alone. Our Savior was the great Sower—"THE SOWER went forth to sow," unaccompanied. He pursued His solitary way and all day long He continued His personal task. For that reason, I feel that when we come together in large numbers, the majority of us, I hope, being earnest sowers of the Good Seed of the Kingdom, we help to cheer each other up, for, to a large extent, we have to work alone. I have, thank God, many helpers, but there are certain parts of this work in which I feel an almost unbearable solitude. I suppose that you who are engaged in your own spheres of service often derive much comfort from Christian communion, but there must be some parts of your work in which you have to act by yourselves—to labor alone and to wait upon God alone. I think that this experience is good for us. I do not believe that it is good for us to be continually leaning upon one another, like those houses of which so many are being run up nowadays. If you took the end one away, they would all fall down! We want to be self-contained—not merely semi-detached, but altogether detached—so as to be able to stand by ourselves upon our own foundation. God sometimes takes away a helper from us in order that we may learn to lean upon Him, only, and to go about our service in entire dependence upon the Master who is to derive Glory not only from the result of the service, but from the service itself.

It may do us good to talk a little while about our failures. I suppose that we have all had a good many. When some of you began your work for God, you thought that you were going to push the world before you and to drag the Church behind you—but you have not done it yet. You fancied that you were going to convert everybody by your preaching, but, like Melancthon, you have had to say, "Old Adam is too strong for young

Melancthon." And you have been driven closer to God by the very failures which you have experienced. If the Holy Spirit shall graciously help us, we may both glorify God and comfort one another while we meditate upon one set of failures with which we are constantly meeting, that is, those that are set forth in these words, "As he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it."

So, first, we learn that *we shall have some unprofitable labors.* Secondly, *we shall find that some soils will remain unsuitable for the Good Seed.* And, thirdly, *we shall have to watch that seed, that we may learn something from what happens to it.*

I. First, then, WE SHALL MOST CERTAINLY HAVE SOME UNPROFITABLE LABORS, something to sigh over, something that will drive us to cry, with Isaiah, "Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

We may expect this, first, *because it is so in everything else.* There is not a tradesman here who makes a profit on everything. There never was a merchant who was successful in every transaction. There are losses in the most gainful trade. Look at the fisherman—does he catch fish every time he casts his net? I have stood, many times, on the sea shore at Mentone and seen from a dozen to 20 men pull in a net which had encompassed many acres of sea—and when they had pulled it in, I could hold in my hand all that they had caught! And I have seen them go out again almost directly after, and come in again with as little as before! But they still kept on their task even though, often and often, the tiniest plate would hold all that they took. Fishermen do not give up their work because they have some failures in their fishing—and if we take the figure which our Lord used, that of the farmer, we find that all crops do not succeed. The farmer, after some years of experience, at any rate, does not expect that every seed will come up and that every crop will be, alike, bountiful. If he did, he would be sorely disappointed! He learns at last to set the gain over against the loss, to set the success over against the failure and so he perseveres and has patience, expecting and believing that, in the long run, he will be a gainer. So, dear Christian Friend, whatever is your sphere of service, I would lead you to expect that there will be some unprofitable parts of the field because it is so in everything else—and the analogies of Nature generally hold good in the sphere of Grace.

Do you not think, in the next place, that *our disappointments and our unprofitable labors teach us our dependence upon God?* Perhaps we are not yet able to bear a very large measure of success. If the Lord blesses some Brothers a little, and they see a few souls brought to Christ, they are not only very grateful and very happy, which is quite right, but they are very great in their own esteem, which is quite wrong! You should hear them at night after a successful meeting—you would hardly know them! God has given them a puff of wind in their sail and they are almost blown over, for they have so little ballast. There are some of us workers for God whom He cannot trust with success—that is one reason for our failures, for our Master means to make more use of us, by-and-by. It does not yet appear what we shall be and He is humbling us that we may be fitted to bear the exceeding weight of happiness which He means to

lay upon us when, in later years, He makes us bring forth abundantly to His praise and Glory.

O workers, mind that you are fit to be blessed by God! Do pray that you may be in such a state of spiritual health that it may be safe for your Heavenly Father to indulge you with very much success! I think that whenever we have been trying hard for the conversion of any person and we have not succeeded in it, it drives us to our knees. You must have met with some who have greatly disappointed you. You thought that you had that fish, but it has slipped away from you and gone back into the river or sea again. You supposed that that woman was really converted. What a sincere penitent she seemed to be! But she has gone back to her old sins and is as evil as ever. You thought that that man was really a most striking instance of Divine Grace, but you are ashamed of him now, for he is doing harm to others who think that there is nothing in religion when they see what a false profession he has made. Ah, some of you do not know the heartbreak which we who have to deal with many souls, have to endure, but, in your smaller sphere, you must often have had to go to God with tears wetting your cheeks because, after all, you have not won that boy for Christ, or you cannot induce that giddy girl to seek the Savior.

You have wept and you have prayed, and yet, for all that, there is some of the wayside still in front of you, and it seems as if it never can and never will yield any harvest to your sowing! We do not like wasting our breath. We do not like, above all, seeming to waste our breath in prayer—and I do not believe that we really do so. I believe that it all turns in some way to God's Glory, but yet it does so happen that, by our failures, we are driven to feel our entire dependence upon our God. We are emptied of our self-sufficiency and made to know that we can no more convert a soul than we can make a world! Any man who thinks that he can create a new heart in any other person, had better begin by creating a fly. When he has done that, then let him think that he can make a sinful man to be a new creature in Christ Jesus! Go and raise the dead, if you can. Speak to those who lie in our cemeteries and cause them to live again—and then imagine that you have within you the power to call a dead soul to spiritual life! This is the work of God alone! God's arm must be made bare before this miracle can be worked—and our failures teach us our absolute dependence upon Him.

This process is necessary, also, in order *to get at the good soil.* We must sometimes have to deal with persons who derive no benefit from us for the sake of others connected with them. The sower does not want to cast his seed upon the path that runs through the middle of the field. It is so hard that he knows that whatever falls upon it will be lost. But, then, he does want to sow right up to the edge of it. He does not want to leave a long strip on each side of the path without any wheat. His endeavor is, while he does not waste more than he can help upon the path, yet to sow right along by the edge of it that he may have a harvest close up to the barren pathway. It cannot be helped, in the nature of things, that some grains of wheat must fall upon the trodden path. So, if you want to be the means of blessing to a man's wife, it may be that you will have to

try to win her husband, also, although he will never be won to Christ. If it is your anxious desire that all the children in a certain house should be converted to God and all the family should come to hear the Word, it may be that one member of the family will never receive the blessing. Do not begin asking any questions about that matter—your business is to preach to them all, to "preach the Gospel to every creature"—and if there should be some who prove to be like the trodden pathway to the Good Seed, effectually resisting the Gospel, it is necessary that they should be in the audience, for, if they did not come, it is probable that somebody else, whom God means to bless, would not be there.

Further, consider that *this scattering of the Seed on the trodden road is necessary to the testing of the soil.* I believe that we would do a deal of mischief by keeping on sorting out certain characters in preaching the Gospel, for it would drive people to think of themselves rather than of the Gospel. If I were to come here and say, "Now if you are so-and-so, and so-and-so, then you may come to Christ and be saved"—the first thought in each of my hearer's minds would be, "Am I this, or am I that?" I do not want you to think in any such fashion as that—the main thing is to take you off from all thought of self, that you may think only of Christ and His all-sufficiency. Are you a creature? We are bid to preach the Gospel to every creature. Are you a sinner? Then, "it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." So, if we are to preach in this wholesale style, we must throw some handfuls of Seed where they will never spring up! But our great Lord has so much Good Seed, He is so rich a Farmer that He will not miss those handfuls that seem to be lost—and we have a far easier task to bear our failures and mourn over them, than if we had to be weighted with the responsibility of picking out our hearers and saying, "This one may have the Gospel, and that other one may not." That would be, indeed, a heavier burden than we could bear!

I remember Rowland Hill's reply, when somebody said that he ought to preach only to the elect. "Very well," he said, "next Sunday morning, chalk them all on the back and when you have done that, I will preach to them." But the chalking of them on the back is the difficulty—we cannot do that and, as we cannot do that, the best way is for us to leave our God to carry out the purposes of His distinguishing Grace in His own effectual way and not attempt to do what we certainly can never accomplish! There, scatter a handful of Seed "by the wayside." Even if the birds of the air devour it, there is plenty more where that came from and it would be a pity for us to leave any portion unsown because we were miserly and stingy with our Master's Seed!

Once more, I am sure that when we do meet with failures, as we all do, *this makes us the more grateful when we see the Seed spring up anywhere.* I could not help blessing God, in the Prayer Meeting before this service, for any soul that had ever found the Savior under my ministry. It always seems to stagger me how God can bless one who is so feeble and I think that it must often surprise you, my dear Friends, when you find that God has really brought a sinner to Jesus' feet through your instrumentality. When we remember the feebleness of our testimony and our

frequent lack of faith in God. When we recollect how often we go home groaning because we cannot preach as we would like to preach and, I suppose I may say of you teachers, because you cannot teach as you would like to teach—then we can say, "Blessed be God, ten thousand times, if but one poor servant girl has found the way to Heaven through me." If one poor Arab of the street should find Christ at the ragged-school, if there were only one as the result of a life of service, it would well repay you! Do not feel that because you seem to have no influence upon some people, the edge of the chisel is taken off—the material upon which you are working is so hard that you cannot make any impression upon it. When the Lord gives you another piece of wood that He has softened, you may work away at that and then you will be able to say, "Blessed be His name I do not have all the difficult side of the work, but I do have to sow in some honest and good soil, which brings forth its hundredfold as my reward."

II. But, secondly, it is certainly true that we shall find SOME SOULS WHICH, for the present, at any rate, SEEM UNSUITED TO THE GOSPEL.

This trodden track, through the field, was not a fit place for the seed to fall with any hope of a harvest following. Roadways, which have been long used, become very bad for sowing. I remember paying a visit to the old city of Silchester which still remains in England. Few ever seem to see it, but it is well worth seeing, though nothing remains but the walls. I went down to examine it and, standing on the wall, I could distinctly trace the streets of that old city, yet the whole of it was covered with wheat, but it would not come to perfection, or grow to any great length of straw where the old Roman roads had been. Near Croydon I have frequently traced the old Roman road through a field of grass or of wheat, by the fact that it was so well made that after the English plowing of centuries, it still seems difficult to raise good crops upon the ground. And those Oriental paths, though not made with all the skill of the Roman road makers, became very hard through being traversed by multitudes of feet.

In a similar manner, there are many persons into whom we cannot get the Gospel because *they are too much occupied.* There is too much traffic over them. They are not occupied with deep thought but with multitudes of frivolous thoughts which are well imaged by travelers who just pass continually along a road. Have we not many in our congregations who are always occupied with worldly thoughts? From the moment they are up till they go to bed, it is just one continuous tramp of the world! They are trodden with the multitudinous feet of worldly business.

Then, along a public road, you not only have business men, but you have persons bent on pleasure. How many young people there are whose hearts are just a road along which thoughts of levity and desires for amusement are continually going! How many precious hours are wasted over the novels of the day! I think that one of the worst enemies of the Gospel of Christ, at the present time, is to be found in the fiction of the day. People get these worthless books and sit, and sit—forgetful of the duties of this world and of all that relates to the world to come—just losing themselves in the story of the hero or heroine. I have seen them

shedding tears over things that never happened, as if there were not enough real sorrows in the world for us to grieve over! So these feet of fictitious personages, these feet of foolish frivolities, these feet of mere nonsense, or worse, keep traversing the hearts of men and making them hard so that the Gospel cannot enter.

I believe, too, that some are made hard even by hearing the Gospel. You can hear too much if you do not hear aright. One nail can drive another out. If one sermon were put into practice, it would be better than 50 that went in one ear and out the other. Some are always greedy to hear the last new orator who has been discovered. They will go all over London to listen to him. That is only another kind of traffic constantly going over the road and making it as hard as if it were traversed for unholy purposes.

Again, this was bad and unsuitable soil because *it was hardened by the constant traffic.* Sin hardens the heart. Every sin makes room for another sin and it is always easier to sin again after you have sinned once. No, more—I might even say that it becomes almost inevitable that you will sin again after you have sinned once. Sin hardens the mind so that it does not receive the Gospel.

And the world has a hardening effect, too. Association with its society, yielding to its customs, being engrossed in its business, all this makes a man's heart exceedingly hard. I have already reminded you that, alas, even the Gospel, itself, may harden sinners in their sin. After long hearing it, neglecting it, rejecting it, it seems to operate upon them in a very terrible way so that it becomes a savor of death unto death to them. Sad to relate, they are not alarmed by the fatal lethargy which has crept over them even while hearing the Word! And if they hear error, it has the same effect in a more dreadful way. Much of the preaching of the present day tends to harden the hearts of men against the Gospel. They are excused in their sins, taught to question the Inspiration of the Scriptures, led to doubt whether, after all, sin will bring the eternal punishment which our Lord Jesus plainly revealed! Oh, it is a sad, sad thing when all this traffic of things good, bad and indifferent has gone over a man's soul till it becomes harder than the nether millstone!

One other reason why this soil was so uncongenial was that *it was totally unprepared for the seed.* There had been no plowing before the seed was sown, and no harrowing afterwards. He that sows without a plow may reap without a sickle. He who preaches the Gospel without preaching the Law of God may hold all the results of it in his hand and there will be little for him to hold. Robbie Flockhart, when he preached in the streets of Edinburgh, used to say—"You must preach the Law, for the Gospel is a silken thread and you cannot get it into the hearts of men unless you have made a way for it with a sharp needle—the sharp needle of the Law will pull the silken thread of the Gospel after it." There must be plowing before there is sowing if there is to be reaping after the sowing!

And in this case there was no harrowing after sowing and that is a very important part of the work—to go over the ground again to get the seed well into the soil. I like those Prayer Meetings that harrow in the

seed and that private prayer, that secret study of the Word, that private crying unto God, after the seed has been sown, that He would be pleased to cover it up and keep it in the soil, and make it grow ready for the harvest! But, with no plowing before the sowing, and no harrowing afterwards, what result can you expect?

We meet with hearers who are just like that trodden path. I wonder how many of that sort are here now? As a rule, we have a choice congregation on a Thursday evening because it is not every hypocrite who comes out to a week-night service. I do not say that every hypocrite comes out on Sunday, but we have a hope that persons have some love for the things of God when they come out on a week-night to hear the Gospel. Yet I should not wonder if some of you are no better than you ought to be—as hearers of the Word, I mean. Some people come to see what kind of a place the Tabernacle is, or what kind of a person the preacher is. I hope that all of you are perfectly satisfied, now, on both those points, and that you will forget all about the place and the preacher and will just think about yourselves and about that Divine Truth which will not be blessed to your salvation unless it is honestly and genuinely received into your heart. If you receive Christ, He will bring forth fruit in you, but if you remain like the trodden pathway and do not receive Him, what can be the result but your greater condemnation?

III. The third thing that I learn from this part of the parable is that WE MUST WATCH THE SEED. Ministers have to do this—all Christian workers have to do this! We will try to do it now for a few minutes.

First, it is clear that *when this Seed was sown, it touched the heart.* In the 12th verse, we read, "Those by the wayside are they that hear, then comes the devil, and takes away the Word out of their hearts." Then it must have reached their hearts—and that is the sad part about it. These hearers were not, after all, merely hearers, for they were, to some extent, affected by the Word. They had some serious thoughts for the time being. The Seed did not get deep *into* their hearts, but it did touch them. It fell on the soil and remained on the soil for a while, though it could not get its rootlets down into it and could not really be absorbed into the ground. And oh, my dear Hearers, it may be that when you hear the Word of God, it does affect you! You have not yet reached that stage in which you can hear it without any feeling whatever. You do feel it and you sometimes weep when you hear it, yet how often we are disappointed, for you seem desperately resolved not to be saved!

In this case, *the Good Seed did not really reach the understanding.* Those who heard the Word did not understand it. We are told now that if you touch the heart, that is everything—but it is not. To touch the heart is something, but you must also touch the *understanding* if you are to effect any permanent good. I mean that you may gather people together and get up excitement, and work them up in any way you please, for some people are easily moved—but they must understand what it all means if they are to derive real benefit. It is not enough to say, "Believe! Believe! Believe!" Teach them *what* they have to believe, or else what good have you done? Shouting, stamping, trawling, crying does not amount to much. People need to be taught to understand the Truth of

God, to get a grip of it, to really know the meaning of what they hear. They must know that they are lost. They must know that Christ is the great Substitute for sinners. They must know what the new birth means. Otherwise, if the Truth is not received into the understanding, the mere receiving of it into the emotions will be of very little use whatever. These hearers understood not the Word, so Satan stole it away from them.

Notice that, all the while, this Good Seed, as it did not get into the understanding, *was really outside the man.* There it lay upon the surface. That which fell on the good ground had disappeared. You could not find it, for it had sunk into the earth. But here you can see every single grain that has been dropped—there it lies, outside the soil. O my dear Hearer, as long as the Gospel is outside you, it cannot do you any good! So, let it in. Oh, that your broken heart might receive it! Oh, that your plowed-up conscience might accept it and bury the Truth of God within your innermost self, that there it might grow!

The next thing that happened to it was that as it lay there, somebody came along and trod on it. "*It was trodden down.*" It was crushed and smashed. The hearer who does not receive the Truth into his heart, goes outside and meets an old companion who speedily treads on it. Or he gets home to his wife, who does not fear the Lord, and she treads on it. Or, tomorrow, he goes into the workshop and somebody there ridicules him and so treads on the Good Seed.

Yet, even then, *it retained so much of life as to arouse the opposition of Satan.* Notice how zealous the devil is. We may be careless about souls, but he never is. Although the Seed lay there on the surface and had never penetrated the soil. And although that Seed had been trodden on, Satan was not satisfied. He said, "There may be life in it and if there is, it is dangerous to have lying there, for it may grow." So he comes and takes it away altogether. Some bird of the air devours it. I believe that Satan does not like you to come to a place where the Gospel is preached. He knows that if you stand where the shots are flying, you may get one of them into your heart, so he would rather that you would not come at all. But if you do hear the Gospel, even though it does not penetrate into your heart, yet he still does not like it to be there. So he comes and takes it away—he makes you forget it—he brings something fresh before you, so that you may fail to remember the good Word of God. Perhaps he suggests a new line of business to you, or there is a new play at the theater, or something fresh to attract your attention because he is afraid of losing you. He does not like losing his servants and, from long experience, he knows that every now and then one of them runs away at night and never comes back. So he is always on the watch for would-be runaways. He does not want you to be gone, so he calls his birds of the air and says to them, "Take away that Seed. The man has not received it into his heart, but I do not even like it to be near him." I wish I could clap my hands and so drive those foul birds away, but I ask God's people to lift their hands in prayer that these sermon thieves may be driven off and that what has been said may abide in your memory.

My dear Hearers, are any of you content to be like this trodden wayside? Will you continue hearing the Gospel and yet never receive it into

your souls? Are you going to be trod on, and trod on, and trod on till you are simply a way for other people to use? Some of you work hard for your living and get nothing out of it. Somebody else is getting the whole of your life. You are simply a rut in which other people go to get riches for themselves. Are you content to let it be so with you in a spiritual sense? Do you mean to be nothing else but just a place for other people to walk over and to use your life for their own ends and purposes?

Oh, that the Holy Spirit would drive the great steam-plow through you and break you in pieces! It would be the happiest thing that could happen to you, though your misery might be deep and your anguish terrible. And then may He sow you with His own Good Seed, that you may bring forth fruit to life eternal, having in this life joy, peace, restfulness, usefulness— and in the world to come life everlasting! "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." There is a handful of Seed for you! Believe now, and you shall live. Look! Look! Look and live. Look even now, at this very moment, for you live the moment that you look! God save you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 8:1-21.

Verse 1. *And it came to pass afterward, that He went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God: and the twelve were with Him.* Our Lord's display of forgiving Grace to the woman who was a sinner seemed to whet His appetite for soul-saving, so that, "He went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God." Dear Friends, whenever we win a soul for God, let it spur us on to a greater diligence in His service! Let it make us insatiable for more of this best wine of the Kingdom of Heaven. It was so with our Divine Master. He went about preaching and, as He preached, He was training others to also preach— "the twelve were with Him." I think that whenever there is a successful ministry, there should be those round about who are being trained to continue it. Among the Waldensians, the pastors were always accompanied by young men who learned to preach from their example, and who shared their toils when they went from valley to valley proclaiming the Gospel.

2, 3. *And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary, called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto Him of their substance.* If they could not be Apostles, they could, at any rate, being women of property, contribute both to the sustenance of Christ and of the Apostles who were with Him. There is a place for everyone who is willing to be used by the great Master-Builder who leaves no stone out of the wall if it is fit to be built into it. There is something for the 12 to do and there is something for the holy women to do—and we cannot do without either of them. And in that Last Great Day when the rewards are distributed, there will be as much for Joanna as for John, and as much for Mary Magdalene as for Simon Pe-

ter. Did they not each, according to their utility, serve the Lord Jesus Christ?

4, 6. *And when much people were gathered together, and were come to Him out of every city, He spoke by a parable: a sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.* Or, as Mark records it, "because it had no depth of earth." There was just a little coating of earth, sufficient for the fructification and the early sprouting of the seed—it came up all the more quickly because it was so near the surface, and because the heat could get at it so easily—the hard pan of the rock speedily sending up the heat to it. But, for that very reason, "as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture."

7, 8. *And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up and bore fruit an hundredfold. And when He had said these things, He cried, He that has ears to hears let him hear.* There are many, who have ears, who do not hear to any real purpose. There is the physical act of hearing, but they do not hear in the heart and the mind. It is a very different thing to have an impression on the drum of the ear and to have an impression on the tablet of the heart. "He that has ears to hear, let him hear."

9, 10. *And His disciples asked Him, saying, What might this parable be? And He said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.* It was a time of judicial visitations. These people had for centuries refused to hear the Voice of God and now they were to pay the penalty for that refusal! The reward of virtue is capacity for higher virtue, just as the effect of vice is a tendency to yet greater vice. When men will not hear the Voice of God, it is a just judgment upon them that they cannot hear—their impotence being the result of their impudence. Since they would not hear, they shall not. Who shall say that this is not a very just and natural way of allowing sin to punish itself? So these people heard the words of our Savior's parable. It was like a clock, a covering to the Truth, but, to them, it hid the Truth—they did not see it. To the disciples of Christ, it set forth Truth in all its beauty, but, to the unbelieving people, it hid the Truth, so that they did not discern it. Brothers and Sisters, if you and I understand heavenly mysteries, let us not be proud that it is so, but let us hear our Savior saying to us, "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God." This is the gift of the Free Grace of God. Be very thankful for it, but give God all the praise for it. For if you begin to say to yourself, "I am a man of great understanding," and if you shall take to yourself a high place, God may leave you to your natural blindness and, then, where will you be?

11. *Now the parable is this: The seed is the Word of God.* Not the word of man. Have we a Word of God at all? Brothers, that is a question which we nowadays have to answer. Our fathers never questioned it—they believed in the Infallibility of the Bible, as we do. But, now, all our wise

men do not think so. They set to work to mend the Scriptures, to pick out of the Bible that which they imagine to be Inspired. Let us not do so, my Brothers and Sisters.

12. *Those by the wayside are they that hear, then comes the devil and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.* He does not mind their merely hearing. What he is afraid of is their *believing*, for he knows that in believing lies the secret of their salvation.

13. *They on the rock are they which, when they hear, receive the word with joy.* They are very hasty converts, like men who hurriedly take a bath. They are no sooner in than they are out—it is so speedy that there is more haste than real speed with some of them.

13. *And these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.* "These have no root," and they never had any root. If you give your child a little garden for himself, perhaps he will go and pluck the heads off some of your flowers, and put them in the ground, and say, "There, Father, see what a nice garden of flowers I have?" But they have no root, and so they very soon wither away. These are like men's converts, of whom we read that so many scores came forward the whole of the people in the parish were said to be converted—but in six weeks you cannot find one of them! How often is this the case! We begin to be afraid of those statistics because there is so little truth in them and yet, if there were but one saved out of a hundred, how grateful we would be!

14. *And that which fell among thorns are they which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.* How many we have of that sort! They continue somewhat longer than the others, yet they get choked after all.

15. *But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.* Or, "with perseverance, with continuance." "He that endures to the end, the same shall be saved." He is not converted at all who is not converted eternally. The work of man is temporary—the work of God is everlasting.

16. *No man, when he has lighted a candle, covers it with a vessel, or puts it under a bed; but sets it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light.* A candlestick, or lamp stand. True religion and true doctrine are not intended to be concealed, they are meant to be seen—and if any of you are hiding these blessed things away, I pray you to do so no longer. Bring out your candle and put it on the candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light.

17. *For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither anything hid, that shall not be known and come abroad.* You cannot conceal anything from the eyes of God, so do not try to do so. You are like bees in a glass hive, watched while you are working and your every movement observed. God can read the secret emotions of our hidden nature. "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

18. *Take heed, therefore, how you hear.* You think, and think very properly, that we ought to take heed how we *preach*. Yes, that is true, but you must take heed how you hear. There are a great many criticisms upon preaching—will you kindly make a few criticisms upon your own hearing? I like what a woman said to me some time ago, about a certain preacher. She said, "I heard him well last Sunday." Yes, that is the thing, she did not tell me how he preached, she told me *how she heard*, and that is the main point. Good hearers will make good preachers, in due time, I do not doubt. God grant that we may be all good hearers! "Take heed, therefore, how you hear."

18. *For whoever has, to him shall be given, and whoever has not, from him shall be taken even that which he seems to have.* Preaching will enrich you or impoverish you according to how you hear. There are some hearers who have nothing and the preacher gives them nothing. Hens like to lay where there is a nest-egg, and preachers of the Gospel like to preach to hearers who have received some Truth and want more. Where there is some love to God, and love to souls, there more will come. May all of you be among those who have, to whom more shall be given! But the Gospel is also "a savor of death unto death" to some who hear it. It takes away from some men what they never had. You call that a paradox? So it is, but it is true. They think they have it, but the Gospel reveals to them their mistake—and so it takes from them that which they seem to have.

19. *Then His mother and His brothers came to Him but could not reach Him because of the crowd.* I think that His mother and His brothers were under the delusion that He was mad, and they came to seize Him, to restrain Him, so little did even *they* understand Him!

20, 21. *And it was told Him by certain which said, Your mother and your brothers stand outside, desiring to see You. And He answered and said unto them, My mother and My brothers are these which hear the Word of God and do it.* The spiritual relationship overtops the natural. But what a sweet and condescending word this is. Dear Brothers and Sisters, do you hear the Word of God and do it? If so, Christ is at home with you. Christ calls you, "Brother." He knows that you will take care of His cause. He calls you, "Brother." He has deep sympathy with you. O blessed One, You who calls us mother and brother, how we welcome those loving and familiar titles!

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

THE SEED UPON A ROCK
NO. 2844

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 13, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 16, 1888.

"Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away."
Matthew 13:5, 6.

ON another occasion I hope to preach from the words, "because they had no root," but, at this time, my subject is, "They sprang up, because they had no deepness of earth." Every farmer knows the wonderful effect of heat below the soil, how quickly it makes things grow. I do not gather that this was a stony piece of ground, but that it had a mass of stone not far from the surface. It was ground where the soil was very shallow and underneath it was a hard pan of rock that had never been broken up, so that, when the sun shone upon it, the rock reflected the heat and what with the sun above, and the heat below, the seed was very soon made to sprout and up came the green blade almost immediately. But this very shallowness of the soil which made the seed spring up so quickly was the cause of its ruin, for the sun had not long shone upon it before that which made it grow also killed it. The heat scorched it and it withered away.

Those people who are represented by this soil which has no deepness of earth, very soon make the Good Seed to appear to grow in them. They hear a sermon, are apparently converted and they fancy that they are saved. Or there is a revival meeting where some earnest addresses are given by different speakers, and they at once profess to be Believers. They are brought forward as converts and there is great rejoicing over them—but after a very little while, days of trial arise and there being no depth in them, they wither away and their names are struck from the church roll. The hopeful success, as it seemed, becomes a bitter failure. Men ask, "Where are those converts?" And echo can only answer, "Where?" for nobody knows but the Lord—who was never deceived by them.

I want you to clearly understand that the fault did not lie in the suddenness of their supposed conversion. Many sudden conversions have been among the best that have ever happened. Take, for instance, the case of Saul of Tarsus, struck down on the road to Damascus. Within three days his sight is restored to him and he is baptized as a true, real,

out-and-out Christian. There was great depth of earth in him, yet the seed sprang up very rapidly! And we have hundreds and even thousands of instances of persons who have been suddenly converted and yet who have been truly converted. The work has been very thorough—nobody could doubt its genuineness—yet it took place quite unexpectedly and was looked upon as a wonder.

Do not judge the reality of your conversion either by the suddenness of it or by the length of time which it occupied, for it is true that superficial conversions are usually sudden, although all sudden conversions are not superficial. There are many who, in the sight of God, are not converted at all, who appeared as if they were the subjects of a great, remarkable and complete change. Where there is no depth, there is no durability. That familiar proverb is a true one, "Easy come, easy go." As a general rule, those persons who have, as they say, "found religion" all of a sudden, without any mental struggle and who have never found it in their heart and soul, are the very people to let it go quite as readily whenever a time of trial comes.

In case there should be any persons of that sort here unwarned, I am going to speak of them and to them now, answering these three questions. First, *what is meant by having deepness of earth?* Secondly, *what is meant by the scorching of the sun?* And, thirdly, *how can we avoid the evil of having no deepness of earth* and so being withered by the scorching of the sun?

I. First, then, WHAT IS MEANT BY HAVING NO DEEPNESS OF EARTH?

I think it is, with some people, *a general superficiality of character.* There are some persons whom you ought to be able to see through, for there is so little substance in them. I do not say that you can always see all there is in them, for a pool, if it is not deep, may be very muddy and you may not be able to see to the bottom of it, even though it is quite shallow. And I think I know some people in whom there is as much deception as there is superficiality. Probably we all know some persons who, from their very early days, have always been superficial and changeable, like the man described by Dryden—"Everything by starts and nothing long." Even in business they have been about 20 different things, "Jack of all trades and master of none." Nobody knows what they are going to be next and they, themselves, have no idea. The weathercock does not shift more often than they do! When they went to school, they pretended to learn a thing, but they forgot it the next day. Even in their play, they never put any heart—there never was any earnestness about them in anything! And now they are just thin, shallow, vapid, empty. Like the baseless fabric of a vision, "such stuff as dreams are made of," there is nothing in them.

When such people become affected by religion, they are just the same. They hear, yet they do not hear, for they are looking around the place half the time. If anyone else is affected by the preaching of the Word, they may be affected too, or may appear to be so. They are the kind of people who are always ready, like a flock of sheep, to follow the leader, but their following is only temporary, their affection is mere affectation. They pro-

fess to be Christians, but they will give up that profession before long. As far as they can be, they are sincere—what little there is of them—but their sincerity is, after all, a poor, feeble, fickle thing. They will soon be as sincerely wrong as they are, for the moment, sincerely right! You know the kind of people that they are—they were born without any backbone, and it is very hard to grow one if you do not possess one! They seem to go through the world soft, plastic, like Mr. Pliable, who figures in the early part of Bunyan's, "Pilgrim's Progress." He resolved to go to the Celestial City, but, very soon he was quite as determined to get out of the Slough of Despond on the side nearest to his own home. You know the sort of people that I am trying to describe.

Next, the lack of deepness may mean something else—not so much superficiality of character, *as lack of knowledge.* I believe that, at this present time, we are in great danger of being burdened with a crowd of so-called converts who do not really know anything as it ought to be known. They attended a revival meeting, were much excited and thought they were converted—but just ask them to explain to you the simplest Truths of the Gospel and you will soon discover how little they know. Could they explain the three R's—ruin, redemption and regeneration? Do they know what the ruin is? Do they know what the remedy for that ruin is? Do they understand at all what it means to be born-again? Do they comprehend what the new nature is, or what, "justification by faith" means? Perhaps someone says, "They do not comprehend your theological terms." I do not mind whether they know the meaning of the terms that are familiar to many of us, but do they know the *Truths*, themselves?

There is a certain degree of Christian knowledge which is absolutely necessary to salvation. David said, "The Lord is my light and my salvation" and we must always have light first. The first word of the spiritual creation, as of the natural, is, "Let there be light." Where there is no light, there is no life. Where there is no knowledge of God, there is no peace with God. O dear Hearers, if you think you are converted, I trust that it will prove to be so, but do not be content unless you really know the Truth! Search the Scriptures! Try to sit under an instructive ministry. You need not seek to make yourself a Doctor of Divinity, but do learn all you can of the Truth of God. "Grow in Grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." Know yourself. Know Christ Jesus as your Savior. Know the work of the Holy Spirit. All this is knowable and must be known, or else, before long, you will wither away because you have no deepness of earth. Some atheist or infidel will come along and turn you aside. Someone will lead you to trust in a priest, or in some false doctrine and if you do not know the Truth, you will be bowled over at once!

Sometimes, this lack of deepness of earth means *lack of thought*, because there may be people who have knowledge, but who have never used their knowledge to any proper purpose. Knowledge is the food of the mind, but thought is the digestion by which we turn knowledge into true mental nutriment. I believe in a serious thoughtful conversion and I hardly think that any other kind can be real. You have sinned against

God. *Think* of that great fact. You are lost. *Think* of that. "God is angry with the wicked every day" and He must punish them. *Think* that over most solemnly. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." *Think* that over and try to understand what is meant by that declaration. *Think* how He stood in the sinner's place, how He suffered in the sinner's place. While you are thinking all this over, it will look very different to you from what it did before you thought it over! Hearing of these Truths with the ear may just be a useless process, but when you get them into the *mind*—when you read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them—then your conversion will be like the Good Seed sown in deep, prepared soil and that which springs up in your heart will not wither away because there was no depth of earth.

So do, I pray you, especially before you make a profession of religion, think what you are doing. In joining a Church, I would try to find out what that Church believed and I would not join it if I did not believe its doctrines. I would also want to know what I, myself, believed, for I would be afraid to profess that I believed what I did not believe. I like to see a convert who thinks at every step and who does not put his foot down without first considering whether it is a right place to set his foot. Think, carefully, what the Lord would have you to do and, then, when you come to Him, you will come in deed, and of a Truth. Much thought produces much deepness of earth.

Further, I think that in truly gracious conversions, the deepness of earth, at least in part, lies in *deepness of emotion.* I often regret that I do not see so many converts of the old-fashioned sort as I used to meet with. I know that emotion does not save the soul, but I believe that those who are saved are usually filled with emotion. We are saved by faith, but that faith produces very decided feelings. For instance, where there is true deepness of earth, there is generally a deep sense of sin. A man does not usually truly say, "I believe in Christ," until he has first of all felt, "I need a Savior." In the present day, far too many seem to come out of the City of Destruction without any burden on their backs—and I am afraid that means that they never really come out at all. Some of us had the burden on our backs much longer than we need have, and we do not hold ourselves up as examples to others. But I, for my part, have often blessed God for those bitter years of conviction, because now I know what others may have to endure and I can help other poor souls who are deep down in the dungeons of Giant Despair. But where there is no true sense of sin, or very little of it, there is generally a very poor sort of conversion.

If that kind of man ever tries to preach, and he may do so, he never says much about Free Grace and dying love. He is the man who talks a great deal about the dignity of human nature and the evolution of Grace out of man's own sinfulness. He does not know any better, so he talks according to his light, which is darkness. But, my dear Hearers, may God give you to have so much depth of earth that you may be pricked in your hearts and may be weighed down with a sense of your own sinfulness! May the great steam-plow of the Law of God go right through the rock

that lies at the bottom of your heart! May God's almighty Grace change the rock into good, soft soil which will be suitable to the Good Seed!

Where there is very little feeling, there is generally only a poor conversion, for, as a general rule, where there is no great sense of sin, there is no great sense of love. It is a grand thing to see a converted Pharisee—but a converted harlot may bring more glory to God. Look, she is washing the Savior's feet with her tears, and wiping them with the hairs of her head! And why is that? Because she has had much forgiven and, therefore, she loves much! When publicans and sinners are converted, we find what precious metal there is in them. They love their Lord so fervently and oh, how they pray, and how they praise, and how they serve, and how they delight in God! You who have broken hearts on account of sin can indeed give joy to Christ when whole hearts do not. Bruised and mangled sinners glorify the Great Physician who sets their broken bones and binds up their gaping wounds. Poor bankrupt sinners who have not a rag left to put on their backs cannot help magnifying Him who paid all their debts and clothed them with the spotless robe of righteousness which He had, Himself, worked for them! But if any of you think that you do not owe Him much, I fear that thought comes to you because you have not much depth of earth and that you may be like those converts who soon wither away in the sun.

Another mark of those who are without much depth of earth is that *they do not count the cost when they are converted.* They never expect to meet with any difficulties, or troubles, or persecutions, or doubts or fears—and when they have, afterwards, to count the cost of being Christians, they turn back to the world.

This lack of depth of earth also means *lack of reality.* There is no soul in what they do and he who is not converted in his whole soul needs converting over again. He that does not go in for it with body, soul and spirit, all for Christ, and Christ all to him, needs to go back to the wicket-gate and start on the heavenly journey once more. The fact is, depth of earth means heart—putting our heart into whatever we do. But where there is no faith in the heart, no repentance in the heart, when everything is from the lips and outward, instead of being from the very heart, and upward, then it all comes to nothing in a very short time!

II. I shall only occupy a few minutes in trying to answer the second question, WHAT IS MEANT BY THE SCORCHING OF THE SUN?

Our Lord told His disciples that it meant that *tribulation arises.* The man was so joyful and felt so happy at being converted that, on the next Sunday, he shut his shop up. But, on the Monday night, he said to himself, "I lost so much yesterday that I shall not close my shop next Sunday." So he returns to his Sunday trading, or in some other way, if there is any trouble for the sake of the Gospel, the sudden convert who has not much depth of earth finds that he has made a mistake and he tries to retrieve his position and to get back to where he was before.

The scorching of the sun also means *persecution.* Yes, the man professed to be converted, but there was not much depth of earth in him so, when he went into the workshop where he was employed, he heard one of the men ask another, "Were you at such-and-such a place, the other

night?" "No," replied the other, "I was not there, but I heard that some of your mates were there and that one of them was converted. He is a full-blown saint this morning, the very man who used to swear and drink as much as any one of us." And the men chat away among themselves, all the while hitting side blows at him—and they say some very cruel, nasty, sarcastic things. And as he has not much depth of earth, he says, "I can't stand this chaff. If I lived in a Christian family, I should go to Heaven with the rest, but, as I have to work with the men in this shop, I shall have to do as they do. The old saying is, 'If you go to Rome, you must do as the Romans do.' Therefore I shall do just the same as the other men do." He was going to run with the hare, but the hounds barked so loudly that he must run with them, so away he goes! You know the gentleman, do you not? There are plenty of that sort all round us.

The scorching of the sun, however, comes in many other forms. Sometimes, it is in the form of *great depression of spirit.* The woman professed to be converted and she felt oh, so happy. But, after about a week or so, she was perhaps not in good health, or something happened that crossed her and she felt oh, so unhappy! "Oh, dear," she exclaimed, "I thought I was always going to travel in the sunshine." Do any of you think so? If so, you are mightily mistaken! If you fancy that all the way to Heaven it will be hosannas and palm branches, we may as well correct your mistake at once. There are lions to be faced and giants to be fought with! There is the Slough of Despond, the Valley of the Shadow of Death and Vanity Fair! The pilgrim's way lies through them all and if you are not prepared for these experiences, I do not wonder that, having no depth of earth, you say, "I shall give it all up." As for myself, I am resolved that if I never have a ray of comfort between here and Heaven. If I live to be 80 years of age in darkness, I will still follow Christ! "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." If that resolution is not in your mind, I fear that you have not much depth of earth and that you will very soon wither away.

Sometimes the scorching of the sun comes in another form, namely, that of *outward debate and discussion.* The young convert meets with somebody who says to him, "But you know that what Mr. Spurgeon tells you is not philosophical. Many discoveries have been made of late and the learned Dr. So-and-So says just the very opposite of what you hear at the Tabernacle." You do not know how to answer him and I do not suppose that anybody else does, because any fool can raise difficulties and it may not be easy, at once, to answer them, though they can be answered. Now, if you have much depth of earth, you will say to yourself, "Difficulty or no difficulty, I trusted my soul to Christ and I mean to do so to the very end." But if you have not much depth of earth, you will be staggered by the objections that you hear. "I cannot answer this man," you will say, "so I do not know what I shall do." Well, if you cannot answer him, do not try to answer him—is there any reason why you should? If nobody is to go to Heaven until he can explain all the difficulties that anybody can suggest to him, who will ever go there? What you need is not the wisdom which can answer puzzling questions, but the *faith* which clings to Christ through thick and thin. That is the deepness of earth which will keep the Good Seed alive within your soul.

I know another kind of scorching of the sun which many poor souls cannot endure, and that is *difficulties arising from Christian people.* "Well," you say, "when I was anxious about my soul, Mrs. So-and-So was very kind to me, but now that I trust I have believed in Christ, she does not take any notice of me." Well, what if she does not? Of course we nurse the babies, but when you begin to run alone, we do not keep on nursing you, for we are looking after other babies! A young man said, "When first I joined the Church, the members paid me great attention, but now I seldom get anybody to speak to me." Well, suppose it is so—have we not something else to do beside be always looking after you? We expect you now to be looking after other people! I have before mentioned to you that I had the portraits of my two sons taken on their birthdays for many years. The first year they were in a baby carriage. I did not object to that. But suppose that, at the age of twenty-one, they had still been in a baby carriage? I would have thought myself a very unhappy parent! And are we always to have Christians in baby carriages and, because we begin to treat you as you ought to be treated, namely, make you look to yourselves a little, is that to cause you to go away from us? Well, if it does, then it is evident that you have not much depth of earth.

"Ah," says another, "but I have not found Christian people to be all that I thought they were." I daresay you have not! Nor have I and, more than that, I have not found myself to be all that I ought to be, or hoped to be. And I should not wonder if it has been the same with you. But, after all, in this matter of cleaving to Christ, are you to forsake Him because you do not quite admire all His disciples? If they prove unworthy of your admiration, give it all to Him! If they do not write a good fair hand, imitate the style of the great Writing-Master, for then you will write correctly. The inconsistencies of Christians ought not to make you shrink back from following the eternal Son of God, but should rather cause you to cling the more closely to Him!

But perhaps the fiery trial comes to you in this form. *You are surrounded by evil examples.* You say, "I do not know how I am to be a Christian at home—and in the circle in which I move, I do not know how I am to hold out." Ah, such talk as that proves that you have not much depth of earth. May I beg you, in laying hold on Christ, to lay hold on Him with both hands for yourself? Do not be a sort of, "lean-to" Christian—you know what that expression means? A man built a lean-to house resting against his neighbor's wall and, when his neighbor took his wall down, his house went down too! Build your house with every wall of it your own, on your own ground, so that whoever pulls his wall down, your structure will stand! God help us to avoid being dependent upon other people about these things! Let us not have a second-hand religion which we bought from somebody else, but let us go direct to Jesus Christ, Himself, and get it for ourselves and believe in Him for ourselves. Then shall we have much depth of earth and, let the sun shine as fiercely as it may, its beams shall only cause us to grow and we shall give God all the Glory!

III. Now I must turn, for a little while, to the third question—HOW CAN WE AVOID THIS EVIL OF BEING SO SHALLOW, THEREFORE WITHERING IN THE SUNSHINE?

Dear Friends, above all things, dread insincerity and, next to that, above all other things, dread superficiality in religion. You know that the beginning of all godliness is believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, *so mind what and why you believe.* Do not be content to say, "I believe," but *really* believe and, in order to this, know *what* you believe and *why* you believe it. Get a clear view of who Christ is, what He did, what right you have to trust Him and the way in which what Christ did avails for your salvation. Clear out the space for the foundation of your building. Get right down to the solid rock before you lay a single brick or stone. That is to say, let your faith be real faith, clear, distinct, Scriptural faith in what God has revealed and in the Savior whom God has set forth as the Propitiation for our sins. Begin, in that way, with real faith—and you will begin with a good depth of earth.

Then, as repentance comes with faith, *see that you have real repentance.* Think much of the evil of sin and of the consequences of sin both in this life and in that which is to come. Pray to God, with Charles Wesley—

"Before me place, in dread array,
The pomp of that tremendous day,
When You with clouds shall come
To judge the nations at Your bar.
And tell me, Lord, shall I be there,
To meet a joyful doom?"

Think of what would result from your appearing there red with your guilt! And when you have thought that over most seriously, pray to God to make you really hate sin, every sin. If you do not hate every sin, you do not, with all your heart, hate *any* sin. They must all go. Sin, as sin, is to be abhorred, repented of and practically quitted in your life. Oh, may God help you to make sure work of your repentance! Make no profession of faith if you have not real faith—and have no repentance at all rather than sham repentance.

Then, *in every spiritual Grace, and in every religious duty, be thorough.* If you pray, really pray. If you praise, do praise. I like the thought of a holy man of God who said that he would never give up praying till he had prayed. When he came to be instructed in the reading of the Scriptures, he would read till he was instructed. And when he praised God, he said, he would not cease from the holy exercise till he felt that his heart did truly praise God. O Brothers and Sisters, let us beware of leaving our heart out of our worship or service! You never read, in the Old Testament, that anybody ever brought a fish to be offered upon God's altar. Why not? Because you could not bring it alive—and every victim must be brought to the altar alive. God loves living worship. Among the old Romans, when they killed a bullock as a sacrifice, if they did not find its heart, or if the heart was shriveled, they never offered that animal, for they considered that it was an omen of evil when the heart was not there in full vigor. So must it be with all the sacrifices that we bring to the Lord—

"God abhors a sacrifice
Where not the heart is found."

I pray you never to go beyond reality in any part of your worship. If you do not really pray, do not pretend to pray. If you have no experience of the things of God, do not talk as if you had. To be a liar anywhere is hateful—but to lie in religion is the most abominable form of lying that can be! God make us straight as a line about all these things! Then, we shall soon come to much depth of earth.

I would say finally, Beloved, *bring your hearts to God and ask Him to search you.* After many years of looking at one's self, how little one knows about himself after all! A gray-headed man of long experience thinks, "Well, now, I really do know something about my human nature." So you do, Brother, but not much, for "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." And when a man says, of any particular temptation, "I shall never fall in that way," the probability is that this is the very way in which the man will fall. I well remember a lady, whom I would not be slandering if I said that she was as proud as she was tall, but, on one occasion, when I scarcely knew her, she said to me, "I always pray for you, Mr. Spurgeon, every day." I said, "I thank you very much," and she added, "My one prayer for you is that God will keep you humble." I said, "Thank you, Madam, that is a very wise prayer. I am sorry that I have not remembered you in that way, but I will do so in the future." "Oh," she said, "but I do not need it, for I was never tempted to pride." "Madam," I said, "I shall remember you, now, twice a day, night and morning, for I think that you are in greater danger of pride than anybody whom I have met with for a long time."

There was a person who said that she had not any pride and was not in danger of being tempted to be proud, yet, if I had asked any half-dozen of her acquaintances to find me a proud woman, they would have called on her, and said that I needed to see her—I am sure that they would. So is it with us! When we think that we are getting over some particular temptation, it is just then that *it* is getting over us! When you suppose that you are master of that temptation, in all probability it has mastered you. Come, Brothers and Sisters, we had better give over this kind of folly. This person, whom we are trying to search, is much too deep for us. I mean, that we are so ready to cheat ourselves, that we cannot find ourselves out! Let us rather pray to the Lord, "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."

I suggest to you this prayer, "Lord, show me the worst of my case. Put me in the place where I ought to be. Make me to feel and know what I really am and then, my Lord, break my heart if it never was broken, and heal it if it is broken. Empty me of myself and bring me to Yourself. Turn me upside down till the last drop of my self-sufficiency runs out even to the dregs—and then pour in the fullness of Your Grace in Christ Jesus till I am filled even to the brim."

The Lord hear that prayer, and bless every soul here now, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 9:14-32, 43-48.

Our Lord had been absent from the people and transfigured on the top of the mountain. When He came down from this manifestation of His Glory, He was brought face to face with Satan's work at almost the first step He took. Let us read about what He did.

Verses 14, 15. *And when He came to His disciples, He saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes disputing with them. And straightway all the people, when they beheld Him, were greatly amazed, and running to Him saluted Him.* There was a Glory about His face not altogether unlike that of Moses when he came down from the other mountain, so that the people were struck with wonder when they looked upon Him.

16. *And He asked the scribes, What are you discussing with them?* The battle had been raging between Christ's enemies and His disciples but now that their Captain has come, He rallies His forces and at once attacks His foes—"What are you discussing with them?"

17. *And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto You my son, who has a dumb spirit.* We do not know if the scribes gave any answer to Christ's question and it does not matter at all. What does *always* matter is practical, living, earnest *prayer*. So what the scribes may have said is not recorded, but the prayer of the poor father is—"Master, I have brought unto You my son, who has a dumb spirit." If any of you have come here to quibble, we shall take no notice of that! But if there is a soul that has come here to pray, the recording angel will write it down in the eternal book.

18. *And wherever he takes him, he throws him down and he foams and gnashes his teeth, and pines away: and I spoke to Your disciples that they should cast him out, but they could not.* No, it was no use going to the disciples, it is of no use to pray to saints and angels—go to the Master Himself! "Straightforward makes the best runner." There is nothing like carrying your case to headquarters. Get to the Court of King's Bench as soon as you can, for there the matter will be finally settled.

19. *He answered him and said, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me.* Grand words, "Bring him to Me." Lord, he has a dumb spirit. "Bring him to me." It is the devil who is his enemy. "Bring him to Me."

20. *And they brought him to Him: and when He saw him, straightway the spirit threw him down; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.* What a dreadful sight! He struggled on the ground, like one in a fit of epilepsy.

21, 22. *And He asked his father, How long is it since this came unto him. And he said, From childhood. And oftentimes it has cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if You can do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.* "Help us," he cries, identifying himself with his child. Father, Mother, when you pray, use the plural, as this man did, "Have compassion on *us* and help us." That is the way to pray for every sinner whom you bring before Christ. Join yourself to the poor

soul for whom you are pleading and say, "Have compassion on us, and help us."

23. *Jesus said unto him, If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes.* Hear that, any of you who have come in here desiring to be delivered from sin, to be made holy, to break off old habits and to become new men in Christ Jesus! "All things are possible to him that believes." So, take courage, trust in Christ and cry unto Him to save you.

24. *And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief.* There were within him two men, as it were, a believing man and an unbelieving man—and the two struggled for mastery. "Lord, I do believe, but there is so much unbelief in me, I pray You to drive it out, that I may believe in You wholly."

25, 26. *When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, You dumb and deaf spirit, I charge you, come out of him and enter no more into him. And the spirit cried, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him.* It must obey Christ. The Master bids that dog of a devil to lie down and he must do so. It shows what an abject creature, after all, the Prince of Darkness is! He must obey the voice of Christ. Lord, speak to him at this moment and drive him out of other souls by your Omnipotent Word!

26. *And he was as one dead; inasmuch that many said, he is dead.* It was not a case of "kill or cure," but it seemed to be one of "cure and kill" and, sometimes, poor sinners, in their struggles with sin and Satan are brought to such despair that they are afraid that they will die before they get a glimpse of hope. "Many said, he is dead," but he was not.

27. *But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose.* So may the Lord come and take by the hand any here who seem to be dead in despair! A touch of His hand will enable them to stand.

28, 29. *And when He was come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, Why could not we cast him out? And He said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting.* The watchword for Christ's disciples is, "intensity." Here was the devil in an intensely terrible form and he could only be driven out by intense Grace. There must be prayer and fasting. Even Christ, Himself, must exert the greatness of His power to work a cure in such a case as this. Oh, for more intensity in us all! Carry that word in your ear as we read on.

30-32. *And they departed from there, and passed through Galilee; and He would not that any man should know it. For He taught His disciples, and said unto them, The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him; and after He is killed, He shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask Him.* See how intense He was—always thinking of His approaching death, that cruel, bitter death—yet He hastened towards it, longed for that baptism to be accomplished, for the great redeeming price to be paid! Oh, that you and I were as fully absorbed in the service of God as our great Master was! Now let us see what intensity He requires of us.

43. *And if your hand offends you, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into Hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched.* Anything is better than the loss of your soul. It

is better to lose the greatest joy, skill, comfort, honor that you ever had, than to lose your soul forever.

44-46. *Where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched. And if your foot offends you, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame, than having two feet to be cast into Hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched.* That is the second time He said these words. Our Lord was not fond of dreadful metaphors and terrible language, but He knew that they must be used, though some of His servants shrink from the use of them. Are they more loving than He is? Is it, after all, a greater love for souls that makes men keep back terrible Truths of God? Is it not more honest and loving to tell the whole Truth, whatever it may be? It is harder to speak, but does it not show a tender heart to be able to speak so as to warn men of their peril? If anything should seem as necessary to you as your foot, so that you can make no progress in life without it, yet if it would cost you your soul, give it up! Just as it would be better to live without a foot than to die, so is it better to go to Heaven without even the necessities of life on the road than to perish everlastingly.

47. *And if your eye offends you, pluck it out.* Notice how severe our Savior is, how deep He goes. He does not say, "Shut it, cover it up with a green shade," but, "Pluck it out."

47, 48. *It is better for you to enter into the Kingdom of God with one eye than having two eyes to be cast into Hell fire: where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched.* That is the third time He has uttered those terrible words! Then they must mean something. What do they mean? Can they mean anything less than everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord? Oh, that we might be prepared to sacrifice everything rather than be lost forever! Dear Hearts, are you saved or not? If you are not saved, see first to this all-important business! Let everything else go sooner than that, in eternity, you should find yourself forever shut in where hope can never come!

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

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A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 29, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 20, 1888.

"And some fell upon a rock, and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away because it lacked moisture."
Luke 8:6.

IN this parable of the sower, there is great discrimination of character, not only between those who bring forth fruit and those who bring forth none, but also between those who bring forth fruit in different degrees—not only between the fruitful and the fruitless—but also between various forms of fruitlessness. The reasons are given, not in bulk, but in detail—why this failed, and that failed, and the other failed. All this points to discrimination in hearing. When there is discrimination in the preacher, as there should always be, there should be an equal discrimination in the hearer, and each one should try to take to himself that special part of the Word which is intended for him.

The true preacher, especially our great Lord and Master, resembles a portrait painted by a real artist which always looks at you, no matter where you are in the room—to the right, or to the left of it, its eyes seem to be fixed upon you. So does our Lord, whenever He preaches, look at us. May He look at us in that way just now and may we catch His eyes as He gazes upon us—and may the preacher also seem to be looking straight at you, because you are on the watch for that particular part of the Truth which especially concerns you! If there is anything hopeful and cheering in the sermon, may it come to you who are mourning and doubtful! If there is anything awakening, may it come to those of you who happen to be tinged with self-confidence!

Coming to our text, I think it suggests to us three observations. First, *let us note well that there is a reception of the Word of God which fails to be effectual.* Secondly, we shall *enquire why it fails in these cases.* And, thirdly, *we shall consider how this failure is to be avoided.*

I. First, THERE IS A SOWING THAT COMES TO NOTHING. There is even a reception of the Seed into the soil which disappoints the sower.

This failure was not because the Seed was bad. It was the same Seed which, in the good soil, produced thirty, sixty, or a hundredfold. You know that, sometimes, when we do not succeed in impressing our hearers, we condemn ourselves, perhaps very justly. If men are not saved, the preacher must not put the blame upon Divine Sovereignty—he must

blame himself. He must also ask himself, "Have I really preached the Truth? Have I preached it in a right spirit? Have I preached different Truths in due proportion? Have I given the most weight to that which is of primary importance and have I put that which is secondary in its proper position?" We poor sowers often chastise ourselves for our failures, or, if we do not, we ought to do so—otherwise we shall never improve. God help us to preach better, to love men's souls more and to be more earnest in seeking to bring them to Christ! I mean this wish for myself and for all of you who love the Lord.

But there was no fault to be found with the Seed that fell on the rock, although it did not result in a harvest. The Seed was good, thoroughly good. The sower got it from his Master and his Master's granary contains no Seed which will not grow. True preachers can say with the Apostle Peter, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables." We have preached to you the Word of God, so that whenever we put our head upon our pillow, we can truly say that we have not preached what we thought, or what we imagined, but we have declared what we believe to be revealed in this blessed Book of God. That is the Good Seed that we sow and if it does not grow in you, it is not the fault of the Seed, it is your own fault. There is something about you that hinders it. Will you think of that, dear Hearer, if you are unconverted?

But, in the next place, *the failure was not from lack of receptiveness.* Those hearers who are like the Seed sown on the rock, do receive the Seed. We are expressly told that by our Lord, Himself—"They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the Word with joy." We have hearers who take in all we say, perhaps too readily. They hear indiscriminately. There are some hearers who are like a sponge—they suck up all—good, bad and indifferent. If they hear of a clever, oratorical preacher, they speedily run after him. What he preaches, or whether he preaches with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven, is not a matter about which they enquire. They have not much depth of earth, but what little earth there is takes in the Seed. There is not enough depth of earth for the Seed to really bear fruit, yet they do, in some sort of fashion, receive it. I am not going to pile up indiscriminate censure upon this receptiveness. It is a briar upon which a rose may grow but, still, it is a briar until it is properly grafted. Receptiveness may easily be carried too far and men may even ruin themselves by being too ready to receive what they hear—not by being too ready to rightly receive the real Word of Truth, but by receiving it in the wrong fashion. Do they disbelieve what you say? No, they are not earnest enough to do that! Do they doubt what you preach? No, they have not gone so far aside as that. Do they argue against the Gospel? Oh, no—they have not fallen into that form of depravity! They take in what they hear. They do not do much with it. There is not Grace enough in their heart, after they have nominally received the Word, to cause it to grow. There is a lack somewhere—not a lack of receptiveness, but a lack in another direction.

The failure, also, *was not caused through lack of heat.* There was a hard rock with a little soil upon it, just enough to take in the Seed. That

rock needed to be broken up, ground to powder and made into good soil, but as it was not broken up—when the sun shone, the rock refracted and reflected all the heat and gave great warmth to the soil in which the seed was lying—so that it grew very fast, for it was in a kind of hothouse. We have many hearers who, if enthusiasm could save them, would have been saved long ago. On Sundays they are very soon warmed up, and there is so little of them that the heat of the sun soon penetrates to their rocky nature. The heat is refracted and straightway they are all in a blaze. I know them, they are very nice people to preach to. How excited they grow! They are ready enough to shout, "Hallelujah!" They speedily receive the Word, but there is no depth about them, so they do not retain it. They will do anything that we want them to do. They are not only enthusiastic, but they soon grow fanatical. I am not blaming them for this. If there were something else to go with it, it would be a good thing.

The gardener or florist likes a good bottom heat to make his plants grow rapidly, but if it is all heat—if it is a dry heat and nothing else, very soon they are scorched to death. The little moisture that was in them at first, makes them grow rapidly, but when that is exhausted, they are soon withered. I do not deny that it is quite a pleasure to meet with a warm-hearted man. We have plenty of people about who are either cold or only lukewarm. If they give you their hand, you feel as if you had laid hold of a fish, it is so cold. We like to meet with hearers who respond to our appeals with kindly friendliness and who, when the Word is brought before them, display a warmth of feeling towards it. These are very hopeful people. I cannot say more about them. Their name is Hopeful, but they do not always grow into Faithful. They give us great encouragement, but, alas, they often cause us great discouragement.

Then, again, this failure *was not caused through lack of joy*, for we are told by our Savior that they received the Word with joy. Oh, they are so happy! They feel that they are saved and they are full of joy! And the main reason why they believe that they are saved is that they are so happy. Well, there is something in being joyful. I do not like to see people who seem to have a religion that disagrees with them. True religion does, indeed, make us glad. But then, my dear Friends, if your only evidence of the possession of Grace is that you are so happy, you may be unhappy tomorrow—and what will be your state then? Our human nature is so constructed and our body has so much influence upon our mind and soul, that we can soon become very low in spirit and scarcely know why we are in such a condition! That joy is part of the fruit of the Spirit, I cheerfully acknowledge, but there are many joys that are *not* fruits of the Spirit at all, for they are earth-born and carnal. And there is often a so-called religious joy which is the fruit of carnal excitement and supposed conversion—not the result of a real saving knowledge of God.

Perhaps if these people had received the Word with sorrow—if they had received it with a broken heart and a contrite spirit—if they had received it tremblingly, in the very depth of their souls. If they had gone home to cry to God in secret prayer instead of rejoicing in open exultation, there might have been evidences in them of a deeper, surer, truer

and more abiding work. These people had joy and plenty of it. I am not saying anything against their joy—it was not the point in which they failed. They failed somewhere else, as I shall try to show you presently.

And, once more, they did not fail *from lack of eagerness and speed in receiving the Truth.* They received it at once and the Seed sprang up at once. Just because they had no depth of earth, it sprang up all the faster. The Seed that fell upon the shallow soil covering the rock grew quickly—it sprang up because of the very absence of the element that was necessary to bring it to perfection! I believe in instantaneous conversion. I believe that the new birth must be instantaneous, that there is a moment in which a man is dead and another moment in which he is alive and that, just as there is a certain instant in which a child is born, so there is an instant in which we become the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. But there is also a supposed conversion which is undone as quickly as it is done. There are to be found, in some churches, men who have grown wonderfully fast. They were drunks a fortnight ago and they are taking the lead among experienced Christians today! Well, it may rightly be so. God acts according to His own Sovereign will and He can work such wonders of Grace and miracles of mercy. But it may turn out that a thing that grows very fast does so because it will not stand fast and will not last long. We have to deal with so many who are always procrastinating and putting off and, therefore, it seems a good fault when men are hasty about these things—it is a blessed fault, if a fault at all! Yet it did so happen that while these people were excellent in that direction, they failed in another, and failed in a fatal way, of which I have now to speak.

II. That brings me to ENQUIRE WHY THESE PEOPLE MADE SUCH A SAD FAILURE?

The seed that fell on the trodden path, while they were lost to the farmer, did feed the birds, at any rate. But these on the rock did not. They quickly sprang up, and were soon withered and good for nothing. They promised much, but it came to nothing at all. And, in this way, some of those who appear to be the most hopeful, may cause us most grief by being our greatest disappointments.

Now why was this? Luke tells us, and no other Evangelist tells us, that it was because they "lacked moisture."

Does not this mean, first of all, that *they lacked the influences of the Divine Spirit?* When we speak of spiritual dew, we refer to the operation of the Holy Spirit. When we talk of the river of the Water of Life, we mean those sacred things which come streaming down to us from the Throne of God through the working of the Spirit of God. These people lacked that moisture. They were converted, so far as they were converted at all, through the eloquence of the preacher—and a man who is converted by eloquence, can be unconverted by eloquence! Or they were converted by the zeal and earnestness of Christian people. But if you were converted by one man, another man can unconvert you. All that is of man is sure to be unraveled as all the spinning and the weaving of earthly machinery can be pulled to pieces. But the work of God's Grace endures forever. Have you, my dear Hearer, felt the power of the Holy Spirit first withering

you up? "The grass withers, the flower fades because the Spirit of the Lord blows upon it." Has He ever dried up, in you, all that was of yourself and turned the verdant meadow into a barren wilderness? It must be so with you at first—there is no sure work which does not begin with emptying and pulling down. Was the Spirit of God ever so worked in you as a spirit of bondage, shutting you up in prison under the Law, fixing your hands in handcuffs and your feet in fetters, putting you in the stocks and leaving you there? If you have never known anything about that experience, I am afraid you have, up to now, "lacked moisture."

Then, when the Spirit of God comes to a soul that is thus broken down, He reveals Christ as a Savior for that sinner, a full Savior for the empty sinner! And oh, how sweetly does the soul rejoice as it perceives the suitability, fullness and freeness of Christ—and looks to Jesus and trusts Him! Have you ever felt that sacred moisture which softens the heart so that it sweetly yields to Christ, that moisture which refreshes the heart and makes it bloom again with a holy hopefulness and delight in Christ? O my dear Hearers, what we say about the Holy Spirit is no mere talk—it is a matter of fact! "You must be born-again," born from above! You must be partakers of the Spirit of God, or else all your religion, however beautiful it may appear to be, will wither when the sun has risen with burning heat.

Now, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, you find that everything goes ill with you when you lack moisture. One of our Brothers sometimes says to me, after a service, "Oh, Sir, there will be good done today, for there was dew about!" I know what he means and hope you also do. You have a little flower at home which you keep in the window, a geranium, or perhaps a fuchsia. You set great store by it because of its associations. But perhaps you have been out for a week and when you come back it looks so drooping that it seems as if it must die—and you soon discovered the reason why. It was quite dry—"it lacked moisture." You gave it some water and it soon began to revive. These plants are kept alive by moisture. But when they lack moisture, the more the sun shines upon them, or the warmer the room is, the worse it is for them. They need moisture and so do we, poor plants that we are. We need the Holy Spirit and if the Lord does not water us daily from the living springs on the hilltops of Glory, we shall certainly die! So take heed, Brothers and Sisters, that you do not lack the moisture of the Holy Spirit's gracious influence.

Why did these people lack it? *There was moisture in the air.* It is evident that the other Seed which brought forth thirty, sixty, or a hundredfold, had moisture. Yet this, which was in the same air as the other, "lacked moisture." There were morning dews and there were mists and rains, yet these Seeds on the rock "lacked moisture." The reason was that there was a lack of power to retain the moisture in the soil. When it came down, it ran off again, or speedily evaporated because there was a rock and only a very little earth on the top of it to hold the moisture, and all that came there soon disappeared. There are many persons who seem to be like this rocky soil—they have no receptiveness for the Divine Spirit—they seem to manage to do without Him.

Now let me warn you of *certain things that indicate a lack of moisture*. The first is Doctrine without feeling. You believe the Bible Doctrine concerning Christ. I am glad that you do, but dry Doctrine, without the bedewing influence of the Spirit of God, is just a granite rock out of which you will get nothing whatever. You say that you believe the Doctrine of Human Depravity, but have you ever really felt it and mourned over it? You say that you believe the Doctrine of Redemption, but have you ever proved the power of the precious blood of Jesus? Have you ever been melted at the sight of the Cross? You say that you believe the Doctrine of Effectual Calling, but have you been effectually called by Grace? You say that you believe the Doctrine of Regeneration, but have you been born-again? If not, you lack moisture. I have known some Brothers and Sisters who have been so "sound" that they have been nothing but sound. "Sixteen ounces to the pound," they said they were. I thought that they were 17 ounces to the pound and that the last bad ounce spoilt the other sixteen! You may be wonderfully orthodox and yet be lost! That hard pan of rock must be broken up and ground to powder, that the moisture may get to the Seed. Of what use is Doctrine without feeling?

It is equally worthless where there is experience without humiliation. I mean that some talk about having felt this, and having felt that—and they boast of it. Some of them have even thought that they have become perfect—and they glory in it. Well, they lack moisture! As soon as you get side by side with them, you feel a need of something, you do not quite know what it is. It is dry experience. Perhaps it is boiling hot, but it is very dry. There is no bowing before the Lord in a humble confession of unworthiness. There is no understanding of what it is to feel the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should loathe ourselves, as condemned criminals ought to do. I pray the Lord to save us from an experience, however perfect it seems, which is not moist, which has not a living tenderness worked into it by the power of the Spirit of God. Avoid, then, experience without humiliation.

Also shun practice without heart-love. I have known some Brothers and Sisters who have been most exact and precise in all their conduct. I have thought that they scarcely ever sinned and I have not wondered that they did not because there did not seem to be enough juice in them to sin. They did not appear to have any human nature in them. They were just like dry pieces of leather—never excited, never getting into a bad temper—they have not seemed to have any temper, either bad or good. They never say a word too hastily. They always measure things out very exactly, yet a lack of love is a fatal lack. I knew one whom I greatly esteemed as a minister of the Word for many years. I esteemed him for his regularity of conduct. I believe that he got up to the tick of the clock, that he had family prayer to the tick of the clock and that he did everything in the same methodical manner. I remarked to him once, "There are many people, round about your Chapel, who are living in the depths of sin. Do you ever get any of them into your place of worship?" "No," he replied, "I do not want to get them in." I asked, "Why?" "Well," he ans-

wered, "they are mostly harlots and thieves. What could I do with such people?"

Then I saw that it was possible to be regular, precise and good up to a certain point, and yet to have no moisture. And as the moisture was not there, of course no thief or harlot would go to hear him—he was too dry for them. It is an awful thing to have a Pharisaic practice—perfect when looked at by the casual eye, yet without the life and light of love—and, therefore, lacking moisture.

Beware, dear Friends, of a belief that never had any repentance connected with it, for that is another way in which the lack of moisture is manifested. There are some people who are willing to believe a great deal, but you never hear of them groaning because of sin, or confessing it with a broken heart in true humility before God. To trust in repentance without faith would be ruinous to the soul—but to have a kind of faith without repentance, would also be ruinous. If faith never has tears in its eyes, it is a dead faith. He who has never wept because of his sin, has never really had his sin washed away. If your heart has never been broken on account of sin, I will not believe that it was ever broken *from* sin. And if your heart is not broken from your sin, you are still at a distance from your God and you will never see His face with acceptance.

Beware, also, of a confidence that is never associated with self-diffidence. Yes, my dear Sir, speak as boldly as you will, be as brave as you may for your Master, but, at the same time, be very lowly in spirit. Let your own weakness be seen, as well as your Master's strength. While you glory in Christ's merits, confess your own sinfulness and admit that in yourself, you are nothing. We can never have too much confidence in God, but, unless it is associated with deep self-distrust, it will lack moisture and it will never produce any real harvest unto God.

Beware, also, of action without spirituality. We have many people of that kind. They are very active in serving God in one way and another. Would that all were—if it were in a right spirit! They are busy from morning to night, but there is no prayer and no dependence upon God mingled with their efforts—that will not do. That is all wasted activity. However busy we may be, we shall effect nothing unless we receive from the Holy Spirit all the power with which we work and are dependent upon Him for the success of every word we say. Beware of having so much to do that you really do nothing at all because you do not wait upon God for the power to do it right.

Then there is another dry thing, namely, zeal without communion with God. Zeal for extending the Kingdom of Christ, zeal for spreading the denomination, zeal for the advance of a particular sect, zeal that is intolerant, probably, but, all the while, no careful walking according to God's Word, no observing what God would have us to be zealous about, no humbling of ourselves in the Presence of the great Lord of all, and no bathing of ourselves in the river of the Water of Life by fellowship with God.

Thus I might keep on showing you various ways in which people may have a great deal that is very good, yet it will all come to nothing because

they lack moisture. But *the seed cannot assimilate the dry earth until it is mixed with water and held in solution*, and spiritual life can only be fed by Truth held in solution by the Holy Spirit. When He softens and prepares us, then our roots and rootlets take up the true nutriment and we grow.

In the case of the seed upon the rocky ground, there was, also, *a deficiency of sensitive vitality*. The seed grew for a time, and then became dry—and are there not multitudes of people, in our Churches now, who are just like that? They are as dry as old hay, they have withered away. We cannot turn them out, but, oh, that we could turn life into them! Oh, that the Water of Life might flow all about them, so that they might live and bring forth fruit unto God!

I have said enough, if God shall bless it, to set many people searching their hearts to see whether this sacred moisture is there.

III. Now, to close, we are to CONSIDER HOW THE EVIL IS TO BE AVOIDED.

Well, first, let us one and all *cry to God to break up the rock.* Rock, rock, rock, will you never break? We may scatter the Seed upon you, but nothing will come of it till that rock is broken. The great steam-plow needs to be driven right through men's hearts till they are torn in sunder and the old rock of nature is ground to powder, made soft and turned into good soil. Dear Friend, do pray to God to make sure work of you. As far as you are concerned, the one thing you have to do is to believe in Christ Jesus, that you may be saved. But a part of the process of your salvation is the taking out of you the heart of stone and the giving to you of a heart of flesh. There is no true growing unless this takes place.

The next thing is, *look well to spirituality*. This moisture was a very subtle thing. Men might easily overlook that dampness in the atmosphere and in the soil which was all-essential. Who can tell you what unction is? Yet a sermon without unction is a poor, worthless thing. There is a certain secret something which distinguishes a true Christian from a worldling or a mere professor—see that you have it. Do not be content with the Creed, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, or anything else that is visible, but say, "Lord, give me the moisture that I need. Give me that secret something without which I shall be lacking the very thing which I most need." You cannot see your soul. You cannot fully tell what it is. Yet you know that it is a something that keeps your body alive and when that something is gone, the body becomes dead—so is all religion dead until it receives the life which comes from the moisture that so many lack.

That leads me further to say, *look to the Holy Spirit.* Be very tender towards the Holy Spirit. We preach Christ to you, as we are commanded to do, but we do not want you ever to forget the blessed Spirit, without whom nothing saving can ever be worked in you! You cannot make yourself to be born-again. Even the faith that saves is the work of the Spirit of God, if it is the faith of God's elect. Be zealous and tender, therefore, and walk carefully in reference to the Spirit of God lest you grieve Him.

Then I would say, next, *try to avoid all dry heat.* Do not work yourself up into a frenzy and think that there is anything saving in it. The heat of

excitement may be necessary, just as dust flies from the wheels of a chariot when it moves swiftly, but, as the dust does not help the chariot, but is a nuisance to those who are riding in it, so is it with excitement. It does not help the true movement and it is a nuisance to those who are living near to God.

Lastly, *be constantly looking for that Divine mystery of secret vitality which is called in the text, "moisture."* I commend to you this prayer, "Lord, give me this blessed moisture. Saturate me through and through with the heavenly dew, the Divine rain, that I may grow and bring forth fruit to the Glory of Your holy name." God bless you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 42.

We often read this Psalm because we are very often in the same state that the Psalmist was in when he wrote it—and the language seems to suit us at many periods of our life.

Verse 1. *As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God.* It is the "hart" that pants and, in the Hebrew, the word is in the feminine. The old naturalists say that the female has greater thirst than the male and that it shows it more, having more feebleness of body and less power of endurance. The hart is said to be, naturally, a thirsty creature, and when it has been long hunted, its thirst seems to be insatiable. The Psalmist does not say, "*your* soul hungers," but, "My soul thirsts." As man can bear hunger much longer than he can bear thirst, he may continue without food for days, but not without drink. So the Psalmist mentions the most thirsty creature and the most ardent of the natural passions—"As the hart pants after the water brooks." He does not merely say, "after the brooks," but, "after the water brooks." Why is this? I think it is because there are many brooks that are dry at certain seasons and the hart longs for those that have water in them. So the Christian thirsts, not only for the means of Grace—they are the brooks—but he longs for God in the means. When Grace is in the means of Grace, then they are water brooks, indeed. "So pants my soul after You, O God." He does not say, "So I pant after my former grandeur," or, "so pant I for my friend," but, "so pants my heart after You." His soul had only one longing, one thirst—and every power and every passion had united itself to that one desire—"so pants my soul after You, O God."

2. *My soul thirsts for God.* It was a soul thirst, not a throat thirst—the thirst had got as far down as the soul, till the inner spirit was as dry as a man's throat after a long journey through the desert. "My soul thirsts for God,"

2. *For the living God.* David had thirsted, you remember, for water from the well of Bethlehem that is within the gate and he said, "Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate!" But that was not living water—he had drunk of it before, yet he thirsted again. But now his soul thirsted for God, for the living God.

Nothing but the cool refreshing Living Water of the Living God can ever effectually quench human thirst!

2. *When shall I come and appear before God?* He valued the assembly of God's people because he believed that there, in a special manner, he was "before God." What a rebuke this is to those who despise public worship! We know some who say, "Well, we can read a good sermon at home, we can study the Scriptures there." David was a great lover of God's Word and read it both day and night, yet even he could not dispense with the outward means of Grace—the public assembly of the saints. "When shall I come and appear before God?" Brothers and Sisters, let us look upon our gatherings for worship as an appearance before God! You do not merely come to listen to the Lord's minister, or to join in the sacred song of the congregation, but you come to "appear before God," that you may show yourself to Him as His servants and that He may reveal Himself to you as your Lord. When you and I have been tossing upon the bed of languishing, or have been detained upon the sea, or have journeyed abroad, then we have learned to prize the means of Grace more than ever!

3. *My tears have been my food day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is your God?* The Psalmist had sorrow within and persecution without, and a Christian sometimes has to eat salty food. "My tears have been my food." He finds but very little sweetness or solace in such food as this, yet, after all, there is much in a Christian's tears. It is a comfort to be able to shed tears of repentance and tears of longing after God. There are some Believers who still have tears for their food, yet they can say, "Thank God we are not dead—if we can weep, we are not utterly left of God. If we can sigh after Him and so, though our tears are salt, they are nourishing to the spirit." "My tears have been my food day and night, while they continually say unto me, "Where is your God?" This is what our enemies always say to us when we are in trouble. This is what Queen Mary said when the Covenanters were obliged to flee to the Highlands. "Where now is John Knox's God?" But when her French soldiers were afterwards put to the rout by the brave Scots, she found out where God was! This was the taunt at the St. Bartholomew massacre in France. As they murdered the Protestants, the Papists cried, "Where is your God?" What a mercy it is that they say this, for nothing brings God so soon to His people as the taunts of their enemies. If any man supposes that God has forgotten His people and, therefore, insults them thus, God will come to them post-haste to rectify the mistake. "Where is your God?" He is coming to you, O Christian! He is near you now!

4. *When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the House of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day.* You see, Brothers and Sisters, the more a man enjoys the means of Grace at one time, the more he grieves when he loses them. "I had gone with the multitude." There is something very inspiring in worshipping God in a crowd. The joy is infectious, there is a holy contagion in it. As the sacred song floats upward from many joyous voices, we seem borne up upon its bil-

lows of praise. I like that word "holy day" even though it is rather like holiday, for our holy days should be our true holidays. There should be no rest to the Christian like the holiness of the Sabbath—the holiness should be the very joy of it. Keep it a holy day, and then it will be a holiday! Try to make it a holiday and then it will be neither a holiday nor a holy day. At the remembrance of these past joys, the Psalmist's soul was poured out like water, his heart was as water spilt upon the ground. See, Brothers and Sisters, how low a good man may come, and yet be safe—how near the rocks God's ships may go and yet not be wrecked.

5. *Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted in me? Hope you in God: for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His Countenance.* As one well remarks, Christian men have a deal of indoor work to do. They have not only to question others, but they have to question themselves. "Why are *you* cast down, O my soul?" Be very jealous, dear Friends, of doubts, and fears, and despondency. Some of us are sometimes the subjects of these emotions and this is sad, but when we try to pamper them, this is inexcusable. Endeavour to live above this disquietude—you cannot praise God, you cannot serve your fellow men, you cannot do anything well when your soul is in a disquieted state. Hope in God is the best cure for this despondency. "Hope you in God." When you have no hope in yourself, nor in your graces, nor in your experience, "hope you in God." He is loving, faithful, powerful and true, so, "hope you in God." "For I shall yet praise Him for the help of His Countenance." "My countenance is wrinkled and covered with sores through my sickness, but He is the help of my countenance, and I shall yet praise Him."

6. *O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember You from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.* Oh, what a mercy it is to be able to look back upon our past experiences of God's mercy! How delightful it is to remember what the Lord was to us in days gone by, for He is the same God still. When you are like Paul in the great storm, when neither sun, nor moon, nor stars for many days appeared, it is very pleasant to remember that the sun, moon and stars did shine in the past, and that they will shine forth again.

7. *Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterspouts: all Your waves and Your billows are gone over me.* When there is a great rain at sea, there is a peculiar kind of noise, as if the deep above were talking to the deep below. "Deep calls unto deep and, sometimes, the two deeps clasp hands and then there is what we call a waterspout. The Psalmist uses this as a picture of his sorrows and it is very remarkable that sorrows seldom come alone. When the rain comes down on land, it calls to the little brooks, and they say, "Here we are," and they go leaping down the hillside and speak to the rivulets, and they say, "Here we are," and the rivulets speak to the rivers, and they say, "Here we are," and they speak to the gulfs, and the gulfs to the broad sea till, "deep calls unto deep." So, little sorrows, great sorrows, overwhelming sorrows come to the Christian and they all seem to come at once! No, not only do they come to us, but they go over us till we cry, "All Your waves and Your billows are gone over me." Surely, this language is an exaggeration, for it is

only Christ who could say that, but, sometimes, when you and I are in a low dark frame of mind, we are apt to think that we have felt all the twigs of the rod and that we could not be made to smart more. Little do we really know of it—God grant that we may never know more than we do! Now comes an exercise for faith to be able, when down at the bottom of the sea, like Jonah, and at the mercy of every wave, to say with the Psalmist in the next verse—

8. *Yet the LORD will command His loving kindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.* We shall not only have daytime Grace, but nighttime Grace, too! "In the night His song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life." What a sweet title that is, "The God of my life," the source of my life, the strength of my life, the comfort of my life, without whom my life is not life at all!

9. *I will say unto God my rock, Why have You forgotten me?* He had been talking too much to himself—now he talks with his God.

9-11. *Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? As with a sword in my bones, my enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is your God? Why are you cast down, O my soul and why are you disquieted within me? Hope you in God: for I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance, and my God.* Notice how the Psalmist had been growing. In the 5th verse, where the refrain comes in, it is very nearly the same as it is here, yet there is some difference. There it was, "I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance," but here it is, "I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance." Then it was God helping the poor wrinkled brow to turn towards Heaven. Now it is God Himself giving the man joy and rest. Then there is the last utterance of the Psalmist on that occasion, "My God." He could not reach that note before, and when the Christian can say, "My God," his troubles are at an end.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—42 (VERSION 1), 40, 499.

—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.

"NO ROOT IN THEMSELVES"
NO. 2846

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 27, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 23, 1888.

"And have no root in themselves."
Mark 4:17.

THESE rocky-ground hearers have occupied our thoughts twice recently. [Sermon #*2844, Volume 49—THE SEED UPON A ROCK, and Sermon #2845, Volume 49—LACKING MOISTURE—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org*.] You remember that the first sermon concerning them was upon the text, "They had no deepness of earth" and that, in it, I tried to show the shallowness of some men's religious character, how the pan of rock below the thin layer of earth had never been broken, so the Seed could not really enter into them, but lay, for a little while, in the soil, rapidly springing up and just as rapidly perishing. The other discourse was upon the words, "It lacked moisture," a very instructive little sentence full of meaning. Only Luke tells us that the rocky-ground hearers "lacked moisture." This, you probably remember, I explained as meaning dry doctrine without gracious feeling, experience without humiliation, practice without heart-love, belief without repentance, confidence without self-diffidence, action without spirituality and zeal without communion. I went somewhat deeply into that part of the subject and I think that there must have been some who trembled as they thought that, possibly, they were among the number of those who have no deepness of earth and who lack moisture.

Now, my dear Hearers, I do feel intensely concerned that every work of Grace supposed to be worked in this house should be real and, therefore, permanent. We are thankful that we are constantly having conversions, but we are very grieved that we also have some perversions. It is a comparatively easy thing to increase the Church roll, but it is only God's almighty Grace that can preserve to the end those whose names are written in our Church records. Oh, for sure work! It is better to have only one convert who will endure to the end than 20 who only endure for a while and in time of trial fall away. We have so much of the superficial, the merely topsoil work, in these days, that I feel that I am not laying too much stress upon one point if, three times in succession, I preach on this same subject, taking these three forms of expression indicating different phases of the same evil—no depth of earth, no moisture and no root in themselves. According to our Savior's interpretation, this is what

happens to people of this sort—"Afterward, when affliction or persecution arises for the Word's sake, immediately they are offended."

I. Notice, first, that THEY WERE DEPENDENT UPON EXTERNALS. They had "no root in themselves." Their religion did not spring from within and was not fostered from within.

This reminds us of a class of persons who cause us much grief of heart, though at the first they give us cause for much hope. I mean *those whose religion depends upon their parents.* What a fearful calamity it often seems to a family when the father is taken away just when the boys are growing up! We have seen, in our own royal family, an example of it. Wherever it happens, it is always a cause of very terrible danger to the children. But do you not also think that there are many lads and lasses who are, in the main, favorable to the things of God simply because their father is an eminently devout man? Where that is the case and where there is no true work of Grace in their hearts, the death of their father will give them such a measure of liberty and release from restraint as will afford them an opportunity of showing that their religion was not real.

In another case it may be the influence the almost boundless influence of a godly mother over her sons and daughters. Some women are queens at home—they reign with a kind of imperial sway over their children and those gracious matrons, by God's Grace, often lead their sons and daughters in the way of Truth and righteousness. Yet sometimes it is not so much a work of Grace within, as the work of the mother upon the surface—and so, if the dear mother falls asleep—the family is never again quite what it used to be. There is no longer that deep devotion, that intense earnestness that there used to be in the religion of the household, and one reason is that its members have no root in themselves. Their root was in their mother, or their father.

Now, dear young Friends, any of you who are making a profession of religion, I say nothing against the gracious influence of your parents. God forbid that I should do so! I say everything in praise of it, but I pray you not to let the influence of your parents be substituted for the work of the Holy Spirit upon your own heart. The message to you, as to all others, is, "You must be born-again." He only is the true Christian who can say, "If my father and my mother were gone, it would greatly grieve me and I would feel it to be a serious loss. Yet, if it should happen, I would, by God's Grace, hold on to Christ with no less intensity, but rather with even more, for I should feel it to be my duty to help fill the great void which the loss of my parents had occasioned. I should think that I heard them speaking to me from the skies and bidding their son, their daughter, follow them even as they followed Christ."

So, dear Friends, there are other cases in which the *religious life is very much dependent upon Christian association.* That young lady was governess in a pious family and she seemed to be everything that we could wish and declared herself a Christian. But is she the same, now that she has taken a position in a worldly household, perhaps in a distant land where she never gets to hear the Word of God at all? If she has root in herself, she will grow and be fruitful even in that unkindly soil.

That working man, when he was apprenticed, and when he was a journeyman, had a godly employer and he worked with those who feared the Lord and he became, confessedly, a Christian. I am not speaking against the gracious influence of masters and of workmates. God grant that it may always be exercised in the right way! But, still, if any of you have a form of religion which is dependent upon the position in which you live, you are without root in yourselves and it will soon wither away. You must so know Christ, trust Him and love Him, that you would be true to Him even if you were carried off into a Muslim country, or if you were called to live in the midst of blasphemy and infidelity! Do not rely upon somebody else's example! Be not dependent upon external associations, but have root in yourselves.

I fear that in the case of a great many, their religion *is dependent upon externals in respect of a faithful and earnest ministry.* I have noticed, several times, that God has raised up different men to carry on His cause in the earth. Just now, it appears to me to be the age of the Judges, for God appears to call, first one Judge and then another to deliver Israel. But we long for the time when King David will reign on His Throne. It may be that we shall have antichrist first and Saul will rule before David comes. But when Samuel is gone, where will the people go? In many a place I have seen a good man raised up and he has gathered a large congregation around him. Many of them seemed to be truly converted and while he lived, their lives seemed to be all that one could desire. But he died and then where were they? At this present moment, I could put my finger upon many of the followers of dear Joseph Irons. They are very aged people, but the Lord has preserved them faithful until now. I could pick out, here and there, those who were educated in Divine things under Harrington Evans. What a gracious man of God he was! What sweet Christian people were fed at his table! If I were to make further enquiry, I could find a very large number of those who used to hear William Carey at the Victoria Theatre, but where are they now? A large number of them had no root in themselves while, happily, still a large number of them had root in themselves and are here with us, or in other Churches of Christ to this very day.

I could name other equally good men who used to labor in London and of whom I could say that when they were taken away, a considerable part of their work seemed to go with them. It was no fault of theirs that their hearers seemed to depend upon them and that their influence over them was very great. I do not doubt that it is the same in my own case and that, when I sleep with my fathers, there are some here who have been unwise enough to hang upon me, who will go back again to the world which they have never really left! And if so, when the man goes, their religion will go, too. But, dear Friends, if you are vitally united to the Lord, then, even if the scythe of death should cut off every minister who now preaches in God's name—if every candle in the Lord's house were put out—you would still cleave to your God with full purpose of heart and cry to Him in the cloudy and dark day, to return to bless His Beloved Zion. But, alas, there are many professors who have no root in themselves—

parents, associates, and ministers supply them with all the root they have.

Then there are many more *whose religion must be sustained by enthusiastic surroundings.* They seem to have been baptized in boiling water and unless the temperature around them is kept up to that point, they wither away. There are some persons, who, when they get thoroughly excited so that they do not know what they are doing, generally do right, but that is a poor kind of religion which always needs to have the drums beating and the trumpets sounding—for the religion that is born of mere excitement will die when the excitement is over. I am not saying a word against genuine revivals, or even against excitement—and I do not think that it is any argument against revivals that some of those who profess to be converted at them go back to the world.

I am reminded of that very good story—a somewhat amusing one, which Mr. Fullerton told us. He said that some persons find fault with revivals because all the converts do not stay. "Why," he said, "they remind me of the tale that is told of a countryman of mine who picked up a sovereign. When he went to change it, they said that it was light weight, and he only got 18 shillings for it. Still, you see, that was all clear gain to him. However, another day, seeing a sovereign lying on the ground, he said, 'No, I will not pick up another sovereign, for I lost two shillings by the last one.'" That was very unwise, if it ever happened. So, suppose that we do lose some of the converts of a revival, suppose that we even lose two out of twenty, a very large percentage, yet, still, the rest are all clear gain! Let us pick up another sovereign, even though there may be a discount upon its value. Yet I am sorry for those lost two shillings. I grudge the sovereign being light weight—I would like to have the whole twenty shillings and to have all those who profess to be converted—really converted to the living God. So I speak to those of you who, after a while, go back. When the cyclone of the revival is over, you drop to the earth like dead things. May God renew you, by His Grace, and work a work in your heart that will not be dependent upon any surroundings! May you have root in yourselves!

For you see that this class of persons who were dependent upon their surroundings, changed when their surroundings changed. Their parents were gone, they were placed in ungodly families and they became ungodly. They simply floated with the tide. It was said, a long while ago, that someone was asking whether such-and-such a person, who was a Quaker, was bathing in the Thames and the reply was, "How am I to know a Quaker when he is in the river? He would not have his broad-brimmed hat on, would he?" "No," said the other, "but you can distinguish him without that, for he is sure to be swimming against the stream." That is the way that we know a Christian—he is sure to be swimming against the stream. Live fish always do that, but dead fish go floating down the stream and are carried away with it. Dead fish just drift with the tide. If the tide goes up, they go up, but if the tide goes out, they go out. Whatever others do, they do. "Anything for an easy life," is their motto. They

profess to be Christians while they are with Christians, but they are ungodly as soon as they are with the ungodly. This will never do.

According to our Lord's parable, this is especially the case when they have to endure affliction or persecution because of the Word. They fear that they will be losers if they are Christians and they cannot afford to suffer so. Somebody points the finger of scorn at them and laughs at them, and they cannot stand that. They do not mind being thought respectable for going to Chapel and taking a seat, but to be shouted at in the streets, and to be made the subject of jest at private parties—they cannot endure that, so away they go! Poor things, dependent upon externals! God deliver you from that evil, that it may be no more said of you, "They have no root in themselves"! May you be straight, distinct, direct, thorough, true, solid, substantial, enduring, rooted, grounded, settled, by the Grace of God!

II. Notice, next, that THEY WERE DEFICIENT IN ESSENTIALS. These grains of wheat, when they fell upon the loose soil lying upon that pan of rock, grew very fast. They grew all the faster because the soil was so shallow and the sun so soon caused the seed to sprout—but it was only, "for a time." Listen to the sad note in my text—"They have no root in themselves, and so *endure but for a time*." They joined the Church "but for a time." They taught in the Sunday school "but for a time." They were zealous about religious matters "but for a time." These words seem to me to sound like the tolling of a knell, the knell of all our hope concerning them and of all their hope, too. Oh, what sorrow is hidden in those words! How terrible it is to be converted "but for a time"—to make a profession of religion "but for a time"! What innumerable curses seem to hiss out of every syllable, "but for a time"!

The pity is that they were deficient in the essentials of vitality. They were not deficient in blade, for they sprang up, but they were deficient in root—and that was a fatal deficiency. For a plant to have no root is much the same as for a man to have no heart. There cannot be life in a plant, for any length of time, at any rate, where such an essential thing as a root is lacking.

What is meant by a root in such a case as this? First, it means *hidden Graces*. You cannot see the roots, for they are underground. The best part of the plant is out of sight. It does not strike every casual observer, but I suppose that, as a rule, there is as much of a tree underground as there is aboveground and that, in many cases, it needs to be so in order that it may keep its hold upon the earth. Now, mark this, with a genuine Christian, there is always as much underground as there is aboveground. That underground work is often very much neglected, but it is exceedingly important. Indeed, it is essential. One of the roots of a true Christian is secret repentance—and secret prayer is another—those are roots that run down far into the soil. He who has not got them has no root. Secret communion with God, the talking of the heart with the great Father. Secret love pouring itself out in fervent fellowship and praise. The inside life, of which none of our neighbors can see anything—all that is the most important part of us. If you are a tradesman and have all your

goods in your shop window, you will fail before long. If you can show all your piety to anybody, you have not much to show. Underground work is, however, absolutely necessary. How many builders have had to prove this? They have "run up" houses in a hurry without a good foundation and, by-and-by, down they have come! Foundation-work is all-important, though nobody can see it and, therefore, nobody will praise it and, perhaps, for a long time nobody may discover that it is not there. O my dear Hearers, let us lay a good foundation! Let our souls be really built in secret upon the living Christ by a true and genuine faith, the faith of God's elect. That is what a root is, then, a hidden thing. These rocky-ground hearers had no root, that is, no hidden Graces.

In the next place, *a root is a holdfast.* When the winds of March come tearing through the woods, the trees will fall if they have no roots. Even the mighty oaks will be torn away from their places in the forest if they have no roots. These are the anchors of those great vegetable ships by which they are held fast in the earth! And it is essential to a Christian to have a holdfast, to have hold of something that he is sure of, something that he no longer questions, or, if he does question it, he battles with the question and holds fast by the Truth! A religion that may be true, or may not be true, is irreligion! The only real religion is that of which you are absolutely sure, that which you have tried, tested and proved in your very soul and know to be as true as your own existence. Doubts yield nothing to you but continual fear and trembling, starvation to your strength and restlessness to your soul. Christ bids you come and believe in Him with a child-like faith, for so will He give you rest.

Oh, how many Christians lack roots! Just look at them. They hear a certain form of doctrine taught one day; and they say, "That is not quite what I have been accustomed to hear, but still, it was prettily put." They go and hear another kind of doctrine and the preacher is such a clever man, as he had need to be to make that sort of stuff go down, that they take in all he says just because he is so clever! I believe that the devil is clever and if these people could only hear him preach, I expect they would receive all he said, for they do not know anything, they do not understand anything, they have no holdfast of anything! They are like ships drifting at sea with no chart, no compass, no captain, no rudder. They will probably end as derelicts—a menace to all ships that sail over the seas—or they will strike on a rock, or founder at sea. Only God knows what their end will be, but a bad end it must be, for certain. O dear Friends, I want all of you to have roots!

Truth understood is a grand holdfast. Resolution deliberately formed—that is another root, another holdfast. Communion with God continually enjoyed—that is another holdfast. A lady was once asked why she was so sure that the Bible was true and she replied, "Because I know the Author of it." And when you, Beloved, know the Author and know how true He is, then your doubts concerning His Truth will fly away. Confirmations continually experienced, such as answers to your prayers, Providential deliverances and the like—these things become Infallible proofs to you till you are as sure of your position as a mathematician is about the rules of

geometry. He cannot be convinced that they are false, for he has tested, tried and proved them. When anybody says to me, "God does not hear prayer," I never answer him. I laugh! The remark is as false and as foolish as if he had said that I did not hear! Do you say that God does not hear prayer, or that there is no God? Of course there is no God to you who have no God and who never go to Him! If He does not hear your prayers, how can you expect Him to hear such prayers as yours, seeing that you do not "believe that He is, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him"? He never said that He would hear such prayers as yours! But if you believe in Him and know Him, and come to Him as a child comes to his father, He will as certainly hear your prayers as that you, being evil, give good gifts unto your children! This is not a matter of supposition with us. It has become a matter of fact because we have these holdfasts, these roots in ourselves. If you do not have these, you will certainly wither.

A root, again, implies *a means of continuance.* The child who plucks the flowers from his father's garden and sticks them in his own little flowerbed, says, "Father, see how the dahlias have come up? My garden is pretty." Yes, but in a couple of days they are all gone because they had no roots in themselves. So, if you want to continue to be a Christian, there is a secret something which only God can put into the soul which ensures continuance—and where it once is, it will abide forever! You remember how our Lord said to the woman of Samaria, "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"? He also said to the Jews, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." That is what is meant by the root—the root implies continuance.

And, once more, a root means *living assimilation.* A plant might be tied to a stick that was stuck in the soil and it might continue there and yet wither. But you know what a root does, it goes travelling about until it finds the nourishment it needs. It is beautiful to take the case of a fir tree, to see it growing high up upon a bare rock. I have often seen, among the Alps, a huge rock standing all by itself with a fine pine growing right up the rock—one root comes down this side and another down the other side—till it looks as if it were a colossal eagle's claws that had grasped the big rock! What are these great roots doing? Why, there is some good soil down there and the roots have gone travelling down that great rock till they have reached the earth! By-and-by, these roots go to another rock, but, as there is nothing to be got out of it, they turn deliberately to the right, and to the left, and go in search of good soil and water just as if they had a kind of intelligence, as I suppose they really have! It is wonderful how they will wind and twist about for long distances. I have seen the roots of some trees in the South of France, running along almost as far as the entire length of the Tabernacle galleries—perhaps even further—right on until they have found water and then they have

brought it up to an insignificant-looking tree, which was thus nourished. Such is the power of a root.

For what purpose do we need roots? To be able to go after spiritual food, to be feeling after it all through the Word of God, sending roots into every text of Scripture that is likely to afford us spiritual nutriment! What do the roots do for the trees and plants to which they belong? They begin to suck up the materials by some strange living chemistry which I cannot explain—and they convert it into the life-blood of the plant or tree, selecting out of the soil this or that, and rejecting the other and enabling the plant or tree to make its leaves and its fruits with wondrous skill. No chemist could perform this feat, but the chemistry of God accomplishes it by means of these little roots. What you need is to have roots in yourselves, to be constantly going after spiritual food and especially laying hold of Christ to whom you are rooted, seeking from Him the nourishment of the spiritual life that He has imparted to you—living because He lives, feeding on Him and understanding these words of His, which, if you do truly understand them, will assure you that you shall live forever—"Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you have no life in you. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed."

III. My time has gone, yet I must briefly tell you HOW THESE PEOPLE WERE DESTROYED BY UNAVOIDABLE INFLUENCES. The sun shone—they could not help that, the sun was made to shine. The sun was hot. It could not help that, it was made to be hot. And this was quite sufficient to put an end to all the greenness of these poor dwindling things. So the common trials of life, the afflictions, the persecutions which are inevitable to the Christian life, scorch those who are mere professors and they, having no root in themselves, wither away.

First, *they lost their original stamina.* A seed, unless it is absolutely dead, has some nutriment within itself. Almost every seed contains a measure of nourishment for the life-germ. So, at first, this seed that was sown sprang up by itself through the influence of the heat. Thus do some people seem to begin to be religious with a few right notions and a little good feeling—but they soon use all this up.

Next, when that stamina was all used up, *they had no means of taking in a fresh supply.* A plant cannot live without roots, any more than you and I can live without mouths with which to eat. These people, having no root, could not go for anything more—they already had all they could get. They had no Christ to go to, they had no eternal life, no covenant purpose, no principle of the Holy Spirit to fall back upon. And when their little was all gone, they could not come to the great All-in-All for more—they had no connection with Him.

To drop the figure and speak plainly, what does actually happen in the case of such people? *Sometimes there is holy conduct.* At other times there is *a departure from sound doctrine*, which is just as great an evil in the sight of God. In others, there is *the losing of all their former zeal* and, by-and-by, there comes *the perishing altogether.*

I have upon my memory many cases of this sort, but some of the friends of those persons are still alive—perhaps some of the persons, themselves, are living, so that if I were to tell you about them, I might do harm instead of good. I remember, however, a man who was the terror of the village in which I preached in my early days. If ever there was a bad fellow on the earth, it was Tom _____. One afternoon, after I had been preaching, I was told that he was in the right-hand gallery of the Chapel. It was more than I could believe till my friends described to me a man whom I had noticed during the service—and then I was obliged to believe the evidence of my own eyes. He was a big rough navy and oh, such a terribly bad fellow! He came to hear me preach again and again—and he became to me very much what a faithful dog is to his master. There was nothing that he would not have done to please me if he could. He was broken down with deep repentance, as it seemed, for just a very short time, indeed. And then he became boisterously happy.

I often wished that his sorrow had lasted longer. Whenever I went out to preach, no matter how far off it might be, he was always there. I have seen him pull a barge, loaded with people, up the river Cam, that they might go to hear me at an open-air service. He was full of zeal and earnestness for a while, but, by-and-by, information reached me that Tom was drunk—and when he was drunk, he was capable of any evil. He remained drunk for months and we never saw anything of him all that time. Then he came slinking back and professed repentance. We hoped it was really so, but I never could make anything out of him. I think that he was just one of those who have "no root in themselves." If I could have lived with him in the house, always, he might have been as right as possible, but when he went out into the field to work, and met with other men, he was as wrong as possible, for he had no root in himself.

Strong as Samson, he was also as weak as Samson. I wonder if I am addressing anyone here who is like he? Dear Friends, do not be satisfied with following a minister and being earnestly in love with any Christian man, but get to God and ask Him to give you a new heart and a right spirit, or else it will only be a temporary reformation and, good as that may be, it will never land you in Heaven!

There came to this House of Prayer a working-man whose father had induced him to come. I will not indicate where he sat. He was in the habit of wasting his week's wages on a Saturday night and his family was, in consequence, miserable and poor. But he was brought here and the change in him was very amazing. He had not been attending with us long before there was an alteration, even in the rooms in which he lived, and in the appearance of his wife and children. We all felt glad, and his good old father, whom I know right well, was very happy about his boy. He said, "Surely, he will be converted." He was such a hopeful character that it was even arranged for him to come to see me about joining the Church.

But, alas, he never comes now! Saturday night is just the same as it used to be in his worst days and his family is just as unhappy. He had no root in himself—and he is just a picture of so many who come in here

and get impressed—and are only benefited "for a time." They take the pledge, but only to break it. God grant that they may not go so far as to be baptized and yet go back to their sin, as the sow that was washed goes again to wallow in the mire! Not long ago I was asked for alms by one who begged me to help him to get a meal. I looked at him and wanted to know who he was. And he said, at last, "Don't you know me?" "No, I do not know you." He mentioned his name, but I did not remember him. Then he told me some things about himself that brought him to my recollection, how he had sat among us here and we had esteemed and respected him, and he had been very zealous in all good things, but, after a while, that "sipping and nipping," which is so common among businessmen nowadays, led him astray—till he lost his position and could not get another situation. He has gone down, down, down, till, as he spoke to me and his breath reeked with spirits, I could only say, "I could not recommend you to a situation. Nobody could take you, you are not fit for it."

I gave him a little something to eat, but I could do no more for him. It is an awful thing to think of the many of that sort, who have no root in themselves and so, presently, wither away. Bad company in one case, a wicked woman in another case, the wine cup in a third case—all these things help to spoil the work which we had hoped had been a true work of Grace. What, then, is to be done? Why, come along to Jesus Christ and really trust Him! If you give yourselves to Him, He will change you and you shall be truly changed. If you commit your souls into His keeping, He will keep you forever and ever. Try to save yourselves and you will surely be lost—but come to Christ that He may save you, and you will be certainly and eternally saved! Oh, that His Grace might lead you thoroughly to quit yourselves and wholly to rest in Him, now and forevermore! And unto His name shall be all the praise and glory. Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 TIMOTHY 1:1-8; 3; 4:1-6

2 Timothy 1:1, 2. *Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, my dearly beloved son.* There is the greatest possible affection between the preacher and his convert. This is a relationship which even death will not destroy. They neither marry nor are given in marriage in the Heavenly Kingdom, but this fatherhood and sonship shall endure forever.

2. *Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.* Is it not a little remarkable that when the Apostle writes to Churches, he usually wishes them, "Grace and peace," but when he writes to ministers, he generally prays for "Grace, mercy, and peace," as if we needed more mercy than other Christians? Having so great a work to do, and falling into such great sin if we are unfaithful in it, we may well ask that we may have special mercy showed unto us by the God of mercy.

3. *I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of you in my prayers night and day.* At that time Timothy was very specially laid upon the Apostle's heart and he did not seem to think of anything without young Timothy's image rising up before him "night and day."

4. *Greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy.* Paul had seen Timothy's tears when he parted from him. He remembered, perhaps, his tears when under conviction of sin, his tears of joy when he found the Savior and the tears he shed in his early preaching when the gracious youth touched the hearts of others because he so evidently spoke out of his own heart.

5. *When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that is in you also.* There is no transmigration of souls, but there is a kind of transmigration of faith, as if the very form and shape of faith, which was in Lois and Eunice, afterwards appeared in Timothy. Truly, there are certain idiosyncrasies which may pass from some Christian people to others. And when those idiosyncrasies are of a high and noble kind, it is a great mercy to see them reproduced in children and children's children. "I thought I heard your mother speak," said one, when she heard a Christian woman talking of the Savior, "you speak in just the way in which she used to tell of her experience, and describe the love of Christ."

6. *Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God, which is in you by the putting on of my hands.* The fire needs stirring every now and then—it is apt to die out if it is not stirred.

7, 8. *For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not you, therefore, ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me, His prisoner: but be you partaker of the affliction of the Gospel according to the power of God.* Timothy, never be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, and never be ashamed of Paul when he is put in prison for the sake of the Gospel—but ask to partake, not only of the Gospel, and of the power of it, but even of the afflictions which come for its sake—for this is one of the highest honors that can be put upon us, that we may suffer with God's saints for the Truth's sake. Paul, in the 3rd Chapter, goes on to tell Timothy of the danger of his times.

2 Timothy 3:1-7. *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses and lead captive silly women laden with sin, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the Truth.* This is the photograph of the present age and I do not doubt that Paul spoke of it when thus the Spirit of Prophecy was upon him. This is the very motto of the present age, "Ever learning and never able to come

to the knowledge of the Truth." It glories in knowing nothing and its great boast is in its continual progress, "never able to come to the knowledge of the Truth."

8, 9. *Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the Truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was.* For, when God was with Moses and Aaron, Jannes and Jambres were soon, by the power and wisdom of God, proved to be fools.

10-12. *But you have fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecution I endured: but out of them all, the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.* The world does not love Christ or His Gospel an atom more, today, than it did in Paul's day. "The carnal mind is" still "enmity against God."

13. *But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.* We may look for even worse days and darker days than we have at present.

14-17. *But continue you in the things which you have learned and have been assured of, knowing of whom you have learned them; and that from a child you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 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.*

2 Timothy 4:1-6. *I charge you therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His Kingdom, preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the Truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch you in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of your ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—84 (SONG2), 375, 588.

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

BARRIERS OBLITERATED
NO. 2847

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 16, 1877.

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

WE noticed, as we read the chapter, the extreme folly of a man attempting to make a god for himself, or to worship anything as God save only the one living and true God. We consider the heathen to be very foolish for worshipping their hideous idols. Yet, you know, to be an idolater a man need not make an image of wood, or stone, or gold, for he can worship his own *thoughts*, his own *ideas*, his own notions. And every man whose great objective in life is anything less than the Glory of God is really a worshipper of idols. If that statement is true, and I challenge anyone to prove that it is not, London swarms with spiritual idolaters! He who lives to himself, practically worships himself. That, you know, is a very extreme form of idolatry, for even the heathen do not bow down and worship themselves. But there are many who do not call themselves heathen who do that. He who lives only to make money—what is he but a worshipper of the golden calf? And he who cares continually for the opinion of his fellow men—what does he worship but that shameless creature, Fame? He lives upon the breath from other men's nostrils and counts it worth his while to make himself a slave that he may win the applause of his fellow slaves! If we live to You, great God, we live wisely, for You alone are self-existent, and you can reward us and bless us. But if we live for anything less than You, we live foolishly since, even if we could attain the objectives which we seek, they would soon pass away from us, or else, by death, we should pass away from them. For an immortal spirit, there is nothing worth living for but to please God. "To glorify God and to enjoy Him forever" is the only worthy end of mortal man!

Now, Beloved Friends, it is strange that this, which seems so simple, is continually being forgotten. Indeed, by the mass of mankind, it is not remembered at all. They go their way and burn their sacrifices and their incense to this idol and to that, but God is not at all in their thoughts. And the worst of this evil is that even His own people have far too great a tendency to this kind of idolatry. Even those who are born-again and who love the Lord, find within themselves an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God and I feel sure that I am addressing many who, to a greater or lesser degree, have been guilty of turning away from the only

true God. And it is for them that my text is meant—"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed you." I am speaking, of course, to those who really are God's people, but who have lost somewhat of the fervor of their love and who have not been truly faithful to Him. But while I am especially addressing them, I hope that a good many others, who could not yet say that they are the Lord's people, will, nevertheless, perceive that the door of God's mercy is also open to them—and that they will enter in even while I am setting it open for the Lord's wandering children. Remember that if you do get in, you will never be put out! Whether I know that I have a right to go through the gate of mercy, or not—if I once get in, I am in, and I shall never be turned out. If I am only like a dog that goes into a house uninvited, yet, so long as I am once inside, there is no power that can expel me, for the Lord Jesus, Himself, said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out."

There are four things in our text that are worthy of notice. First, *the dividing medium*—a cloud of sins, a thick cloud of transgressions. Secondly, *its complete removal*—"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins." Thirdly, *the tender command*—"Return unto Me." And, fourthly, *the sacred claim*—"for I have redeemed you." I must speak briefly upon each point.

I. First, here is AN INTERPOSING AND DIVIDING MEDIUM—a cloud of sins. A vapor, says the Hebrew and, then, a thick cloud.

God's people ought always to dwell in fellowship with their God. There ought to be nothing between the renewed heart and God to prevent joyful and hallowed fellowship, but it is not so. Sometimes a cloud comes between, a cloud of sin and, whenever that cloud of sin comes between us and God, *it speedily chills us*. Our delight in God is no longer manifest—we have little or no zeal in His service, or joy in His worship. Beneath that cloud we feel like men who are frozen and, at the same time, *darkness comes over us*. We get into such a sad state that we hardly know whether we are God's people or not. Sin comes between us and our God and all our joy departs. To be near to God is to live in the sunlight, but to sin against God soon brings us under very heavy gloom. We are like men in a thick London fog—we can scarcely see our own hands and we have, sometimes, to stand still in utter astonishment and ask, "Where am I, and what am I doing? I thought I was a child of God, but if I were to die just now, where would I go?" Sin is the cloud which comes between us and God—and chills and darkens us.

Besides that, *it threatens us.* A great black cloud over one's head makes us wonder what may be in it. It may be charged with tempest and may burst upon our devoted heads. Backslider, when you get away from God, I do not wonder that you begin to be in distress and alarm! The thought of death distresses you. At one time you could have met death with a calm countenance, but you could not do so now. You begin to have thoughts of judgment and of eternal wrath and destruction from the Presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. You know you do, for he who is under the frown of God because of sin never knows what

woe may come out of that dark cloud! He is full of alarm and distress and has no true rest of heart. Affliction seems to be the judgment of God upon you who are in this sad state! And your present distress of mind, great as it is, seems to be nothing compared with what you think will come upon you. You fear that you will be utterly deserted, that God's mercy will be taken from you forever and that He will be favorable to you no more. It is your sins that look so black upon you—you have the dark side of them turned to you and can you wonder that it is so if you have been getting away from God, loving the world and acting like a fool in forsaking the Most High?

Remember, dear Friend, if you are in that condition, that *clouds are earth-born things.* There is not a drop of water in the cloud yonder but what went up, first of all, from the earth or the sea! And so your present darkness and distress have all arisen from your sins. You say that you go to the House of God and get no comfort. Remember the times when you used to go there and pay but little attention? And when you used to go home and pick holes in what you had heard, finding fault with your spiritual food, like naughty children do with food for the body when they have no appetite and cannot eat this, and do not like that? Like they, you need to be put on "short commons" till you get your spiritual appetite back again!

Do you remember how it used to be with you? You once had bright days and happy times, but then you used to be very careful of your walk and conversation. At that time you were almost afraid to put one foot before another, for fear you would not tread in your Lord's footprints! You used to watch your words. You were very particular as to the company you kept. You would not consort with worldlings, then—but now you can do, without compunction, a thousand things which you would not have done then! Things for which you have severely censured others, you now tolerate in yourself. And now you say, "There is a thick black cloud over my sky." Do you wonder that there is? With all those bogs and morasses of sin, is there any marvel that the mists of doubt and fear should have arisen around you? Your iniquities have come between you and your God!

Ah, there are some of you who used to be very fervent and earnest in Divine things. You used to speak of Christ to others and you were even the means of bringing some souls to Jesus. But now you have yourselves turned aside from Him! Oh, it is a sad thing when one who used to be a Sunday school teacher has forgotten the lessons he taught to his boys, or when the man who was once a street preacher, or even the pastor of a Christian Church has himself become a profaner of the Sabbath! Yet such things do happen.

I will mention only one more thought under this head, a very encouraging one. It is this—though your sins are like clouds which chill you and darken you—and though those clouds are of your own making, yet remember that *the sun is not affected by the clouds.* Though hidden for a while, it is still shining! This is a most comforting truth, but be careful not to pervert it. The everlasting love of God to His people is not changed

even by their wanderings and their sins. The child thinks that the clouds have destroyed the sun, but high up above the clouds it is as bright as ever—always glowing like a mighty furnace are you, O sun! And our damps and fogs quench not your brilliance! And, Backslider, the love of God, the Grace of God, the mercy of God, the power of God to bless—and the willingness of God to receive you back again remain just the same as ever they were, notwithstanding the density of these horrible vapors of sin and transgression! Do not, I pray you, make an ill use of this great Truth of God. If you do so, you will give sure evidence that you are no child of God, but a base hypocrite! But if there is any spiritual life within you, this blessed Truth will tend to bring upon you compunction of conscience to think that you should be offending against a God whose love is still the same, notwithstanding all your backsliding—and who does not turn aside from His Covenant, nor cast away His people whom He did foreknow!

II. Now, secondly, we are to consider THE COMPLETE REMOVAL OF THIS BARRIER—"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins."

Nobody but God can get at the clouds and drive them from the firmament of Heaven. There they are, floating high above our heads, and *no known human power can remove them.* So it is with your darkness and doubts—if you have fallen into sin, you cannot get rid of them. You may sit down under them in despondency and weep—and be almost in despair—but there they are and there they will remain. You may go to the so-called priests, if you like, as the poor African goes to the pretended rain-maker and asks him to bring rain when he needs it. And the priest can do just as much for you as the rain-maker can do for the African—certainly not any more. He and the rain-maker are a couple of deceivers, so do not be duped by either of them! There is no one who can forgive sins save God, only, so do not be deluded into the belief that there is any other forgiver in the whole universe!

But what a mercy it is that *God can remove these clouds of sin!* He can do it and do it effectually. How quickly God sweeps the sky clear of clouds! Sometimes, in this fickle climate, we have all sorts of weather mixed up together so that we experience spring, summer, autumn and winter in the course of a few hours. You have seen the clouds hanging thick and heavy all over the sky. You have gone into your house and said, "It will be a very wet day." But you have hardly gone indoors before there has been a clear blue sky above you, with not a cloud the size of a man's hand to be seen anywhere! Thus can God quickly sweep away the clouds and He can just as quickly take away sin. Before you can even get out of this building, you who are groaning under a sense of sin may be completely delivered from it! You who now see the clouds of your transgressions and iniquities hanging black above your heads, may, in a moment, be able to see the clear sky of God's forgiving love with not a trace of your transgression and iniquity!

The mercy is, that when God drives away these clouds from us, *though we may see other clouds, we shall never see those black ones anymore.*

When the Lord takes away His people's sins, they are gone and gone forever! They shall not be remembered against them anymore, forever. Whenever I get upon this topic, I feel as though I should like to keep on speaking upon it and go no further. The glorious forgiving love of God is an indescribable theme and it is altogether inexhaustible! We may continue to talk about it year after year, but we shall never get to the end of it. Yes, even throughout eternity we shall never be able to tell all the splendors of the pardoning mercy of our gracious God. O Backslider, He can take away all your sin this very moment! He can shine forth upon you like the sun in its strength and, then, every shadow and cloud shall be driven from your soul!

Now I am getting near to the very heart of the text, but I have not quite reached it yet, for the glory of it is that *the Lord has already done this great work of Grace.* The text does not say, "I *can* blot out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions." Nor, "I *will* blot them out," but, "I HAVE blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions." It is *done*—fully done, forever done! Did you hear this, poor wanderer? Perhaps you say, "I cannot come back to God, for I have been so long a wanderer from Him and my sins still lie heavily upon me." But, my Brother, my Sister, the Lord has forgiven you all your sin! He says, "Think no more about it, for I have blotted it all out." If you are, indeed, a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are like a child who has offended his father and run away from home, perhaps. In a distant land, in sin and sorrow, that son is longing to return and he gets a message from his father saying, "All is forgiven. Come home!" It is so with you, you wandering child of God—if you have repented of your wanderings, all is forgiven! Even the guilt of this backsliding of yours was laid upon Christ. If you are believing in Him, that is the clearest possible proof that all your transgressions were laid upon Him and that He has made a full and complete Atonement for them all.

Even while you are coming back to Him, all your sin is forgiven through the superabundant mercy which moves Him to run to meet you even as the father of the prodigal ran to meet his son! And before He falls upon your neck, before you have begun to confess your transgressions in His ear, He has already blotted them all out! What say you to this wondrous display of Sovereign Grace which He, Himself, bids us proclaim to you? He knows whether He has forgiven your sin, or not, and it is He who says, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins." Often and often have I mused upon this great Truth of God! The Lord has loved me with an everlasting love and He has washed me in the precious blood of Christ—and forgiven me all my transgressions—and whenever I think of that, I feel my heart drawn still more closely towards Him.

Unbelief will never bring you rest of heart, but faith will. I am speaking now to any of you who have wandered quite a long way from Christ. I may be even addressing some member of the Tabernacle who has not lately been very regular in hearing the Word. You have fallen into a very lean, sad state, my Brother. You are finding fault with other people, but it is yourself who ought to be blamed. Many things do not suit you, now,

as they used to do, and you lay upon others the blame which you ought to bear yourself. You could sit on any hard seat once, but you need a soft cushion now. You could stand in any hot place to hear the Gospel in those days, but you are too grand a gentleman to do that now. I do not know what we can do to get you into a good temper, for, after all, you are the one who is wrong! You know it is so, yet, notwithstanding that, I want to whisper in your ear that your Father is still your Father, that Christ is still your Savior, that the Holy Spirit is still your Guide and Teacher! So, come home! Stay no longer away because you fear your Father's frown. You have grieved Him, you have vexed His Holy Spirit, you have dishonored His Son, yet He has not changed! Still does His heart yearn for you, still does He cry, "How can I give you up?" And He will not. Come back to Him, for it is His mercy that is calling you!

III. I have already passed into the third division of my subject almost before I was aware of it. We have already seen that there is a barrier between some souls and God and that the Lord can clear that barrier. Now we are to consider THE TENDER COMMAND—"Return unto Me." "The great barrier that separated us is removed—so let us not be divided from one another any longer."

Perhaps, my Brother, you have thought that God had left off loving you, but He has not. You have begun to quarrel with God because you imagined that He had a quarrel with you, but it is not so, for He loves you still. It was your sin that He hated. Kindness is in His heart and words of Infinite Love are on His lips, still. Surely, if you know that the sin which has come like a great mountain chain between you and Him is regarded by Him as mere vapor—a cloud which He has removed by the power of His Almighty Grace—you will give heed to Him when He cries to you, "Come back. Come back. Come back. Bygones shall be bygones. The guilt of all your wanderings I have laid on the great Scapegoat's head. I have drawn My pen through the record of your sin in My Book of Remembrance and have struck it all out. Come back. Come back!" When, in your soul, you hear God speak to you thus, do not your hearts at once respond, "Lord, since You have taken away the barrier that separated us, we will come back to You and we will come back this very hour"?

When He says, "Return," He means that *He wants you to give up that which has grieved Him.* You cannot come back to God, you know, bringing your love of sin with you. Some of you professors, who are, I hope, still the Lord's people, fall into various evil ways which grieve the Holy Spirit. And then the black clouds form a great barrier between you and your God. He requires you to give up that which has caused the dark clouds to cover your sky. What is it that has brought about this sad result? I have known some professors fall into a sad state through keeping evil company. They have associated with some very fascinating person who has been able to greatly amuse them, but who certainly could not edify them, for he knew nothing savingly of the things of God!

I have known some professors go, by degrees, into very gross sin as the result of giving way to the habit of tippling. They would not like to be called drunks, but I am sure I do not know what other name I could give

them. And some nominally Christian trades people do things in their business which they would not like to have generally known. They seem to forget that God sees them and knows all about them. Now, any sin that is known and tolerated, will soon separate a Christian from his God as to any conscious enjoyment of His Presence. Be very careful, then, dear Brothers and Sisters, as to anything which is grieving your God. And though it should be a loss or a cross to you to give it up, do not hesitate a moment, but give it up and come back to your Heavenly Father. Nothing can compensate for the loss of His Presence and you cannot have His Presence as long as you continue to hug your sin! Therefore, give up the sin which He hates, especially as He has forgiven you in the past.

If a young man has left his father's house in anger, but his father writes to him, and says, "William, the trouble is all over. My Boy, I fully forgive you, so come back to me," will he still stay away? Let us hope not and, dear child of God, your Father says to you, "Return unto Me, for I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and as a cloud, your sins." So, give up your sin, seeing that God has blotted it all out.

The Lord's gracious invitation, "Return unto Me," also means, "*Come back, and love Me.* See how I have loved you? I have already forgiven you your sin, you who are, indeed, My child, but whose faith has almost disappeared. Though you have provoked Me by your sin, I still love you. Though there is nothing lovely about you, yet I still love you. For My name's sake and for My Son's sake, will you not love Me?" After such pleading, can you keep on in this cold-hearted state toward your God? Some of you professors make us weep when we think of how you live and how far you get away from your God. I do pray that He may cast the cords of His Almighty Love about you and bind you to Himself, so that you cannot escape from Him if you would and would not if you could.

The Lord also means, when He says, "Return unto Me," "*Return again to your old joys.*" Oh, you who have got away from the sunlight through making your sins into a thick cloud, come back into the sunlight! I would like to refresh the memories of some of you who are here as to the happy times you once had. Ah, then you were the people who loved the Prayer Meeting! How sweet the gatherings of the saints were to you! Do you not also remember your little room where, kneeling by your bedside, you had such communion with God that although you are very cold, now, you never can quite forget that holy fervor? You were not a hypocrite, were you? You know you were not! Oh, how your feet used to trip along as you went up to the House of God with the multitude that kept holy day! How earnestly you used to tell others of the joys of true religion!

Possibly you say, "Do not remind us of that joy, for we have lost it." Yes, but you can have it all back again! God can give you, once more, the years which the locusts have eaten. Those wasted days, those joys which have been starved to death, you shall have them back again and you shall yet lift up your voice with the sweet singer of Israel and praise the Lord that His mercy endures forever! Yes, though you feel like guilty Peter, when he denied his Lord, you may yet come back like Peter and be

all the stronger for your past bitter experience. Your Heavenly Father bids you return and I, your Brother in Christ, would stretch out my hand to you and say, "Come, my Brother. Come, my Sister—

'Come let us to the Lord our God,
With contrite hearts return.'"

IV. My last point is THE SACRED CLAIM WHICH BACKS UP THE GRACIOUS INVITATION—"Return unto Me," said the Lord, "*for I have redeemed you.*"

I do not know whether you see the meaning of this, but I think I do. It is this—"I have loved you so much that I redeemed you with the blood of My dear Son and, having loved you so much in the ages past, I still love you. Come back to Me. I did not make a mistake when I first loved you, through which I shall have to change the object of my choice. I knew all about you from eternity—all that you ever would be or could be, I knew—I saw it all with My foreseeing eyes and yet I loved you, and bought you with the precious blood of Jesus, My only-begotten and well-beloved Son. And I love you still. Therefore return unto Me—return, return!"

But even that does not convey the full force of this gracious invitation. It further means this—"*I have a right to you.* I have bought you. You are Mine and you shall not go away from Me. Come back to Me, for Redemption's sign, the blood-mark, is upon you." Many of you bear in your very bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus, for you have been immersed in water, in the name of the Sacred Trinity, on profession of your being dead to the world and alive unto the Christ. It is utterly impossible for you to get that watermark off you! It is upon you forever! And Christ has marked you as His own with His own blood and He will not let you go! Listen to what He says about the matter—"Behold these wounds on My head, and hands, and feet, and side. I bought you with the very blood of My heart, so do you think that I will lose you? Did I bow My head in unspeakable agony and cry, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' and shall I lose those whom I purchased by My death?"

Who is he that shall snatch out of the hands of Christ those whom He has bought with His own blood? Shall the arch-enemy come and steal away the sheep of Christ? Shall the lion of Hell devour even one stray lamb out of His flock? No, verily, our Greater David shall tear him in pieces, first, and deliver every one of the innumerable souls that His blood has redeemed! Buy them with His death and then leave them to be damned? I find no such sham redemption in this blessed Book, nor would I care the turn of a farthing for the value of it! But that Redemption which Jesus Christ has worked is a Redemption that does redeem! He has paid too great a price for His people for Him to ever lose those whom He purchased with His blood!

So He says to each one of you who have believed in Him but who have gone astray from Him, "Return unto Me, for I have redeemed you and I will have you. Your league with Hell is broken and your covenant with death is no more! Come back to Me. Come back to Me. You will never find rest anywhere else. You may go into sin, but you shall never find pleasure in it, neither shall you be content with it. If you were one of the swine, you might fill your belly with the husks that they eat, but you are

My child and you must starve till you come back to My table. For you there shall be no mirth, no music, no feast, no robe, no joy until you come back to Me. I have redeemed you and I will hedge up your way with thorns until you return to Me! I will not let you go. I will turn you out of your wicked paths. I will beat you as with blows of a cruel one. I will smite you with affliction upon affliction, but I will have you—I will not allow you to perish! Return ere this rough treatment is meted out to you. Return at Love's gentle wooing and with Mercy's tender voice, for I have redeemed you. 'It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.' I have you in hand and I can do with you as I please—and you shall, after all, be drawn back among the rest of My people."

Go, poor dove, and fly over the wild waste of waters. Look North, South, East, West, but you shall never see a log floating on the waves upon which you can rest. That foul raven, out yonder, can light upon a corpse and both rest and feed upon the carrion, but you cannot. Fly where you will, O dove, there is but one rest for you and Noah, alone, can tell you where it is! It is within the ark! But do you refuse to return to that ark? Do you still fly, and fly, and fly till your wings are weary, and you can scarcely keep yourself above the flood? Fly on, on, on, till your pinions, at last, cannot bear you up any longer! But, oh, if you will be wise, fly with your failing pinions to yonder ark and hide yourself there, for there, alone, is rest to be found. You shall go there, you *must* go there for there is rest for you nowhere else!

Ah, young man, you did not think of this when you came in to this service? You scarcely know why you came, for you meant to go with evil companions! But if Christ has really bought you with His blood, He will have you! So, in His name, I do arrest you and bid you trust in Him—

"Thus the eternal counsel ran
'Almighty Grace, arrest that man!'"

You are arrested in the name of the great King! Pause and turn to Him and live!

Perhaps you remember how Colonel Gardiner, on the very night when he had made a sinful appointment, was convicted of sin, brought to the Savior and became one of the most earnest followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. My dear Lord, with His sorrowful Countenance, looks into the faces of some of you. I do not know who it may be, but He does and, lifting up His pierced hand, He lays it upon one here, and another there, and He says, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed you." The Lord bless you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 43:21-25; 44:1-23.

Isaiah 43:21. *This people*—That is, God's own people. "This people."—

21, 22. *Have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise. But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob; but you have been weary of Me, O Israel.* The very people whom He had formed for His praise forgot to pray to Him, ceased to remember Him, grew weary of Him! Oh, how sad is this

and how great is the long-suffering of God, that He bore with them so long.

23. *You have not brought Me the small cattle of your burnt offerings; neither have you honored Me with your sacrifices. I have not caused you to serve with an offering, nor wearied you with incense.* God has laid no tax on His people. He does not ask any hard thing of us and yet, notwithstanding that, we have been slack in His service. His yoke is easy and His burden is light, yet our shoulders have been unwilling to bear them.

24, 25. *You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices: but you have made Me to serve with your sins, you have wearied Me with your iniquities. I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins.* That is a very astonishing verse, wherever we might find it, but to find it in such a connection is, indeed, a wonder! These people had wearied God, yet even then, He said, "I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions." Note on what a sure and blessed ground He puts it—"for My own sake." The Lord could not do anything for such sinners as we are for *our* sakes, for there is nothing deserving about us! But in order that His mercy may be the more clearly seen and His faithfulness and Immutability may be displayed, He says, "I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins."

26-28. *Put Me in remembrance: Let us plead together: declare you, that you may be justified. Your first father has sinned, and your teachers have transgressed against Me. Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.*

Isaiah 44:1, 2. *Yet now hear, O Jacob My servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: Thus said 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.* You see, the Lord goes on to show His people that if they were in trouble, they had brought it upon themselves. If the sanctuary had been degraded, it was because both they and their teachers had transgressed against God. But, after He has justified His wrath, He still goes on to talk of mercy and, oh, with what plenteousness of love does He address these wandering people of His!

3. *For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon your seed, and My blessing upon your offspring.* Here, O you needy souls, you who thirst after mercy, is a rich promise for you! How plenteously does God bestow it! "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." Your needs cannot be so great as the Divine Supply! All the Lord asks is that you should be willing to receive His mercy, willing that your emptiness should be filled out of His fullness.

4. *And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses.* Your shall spring up where there were none, before, and grow very quickly. These are our young converts. I trust that we shall have many such springing up "as willows by the water courses"!

5, 6. *One shall say, I am the LORD'S, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the*

LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel. Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and His Redeemer, the LORD of Hosts; I am the First, and I am the Last; and beside Me there is no God. That is a great Truth, always to be kept in mind—that there is no God beside Jehovah! Let us beware of ever attempting to set up, in our own hearts, any god save the one living and true God.

7-12. *And who, as I, shall call and shall declare it, and set it in order for Me, since I appointed the ancient people? And the things that are coming, and shall come, let them show unto them. Fear you not, neither be afraid: have not I told you from that time, and have declared it? You are even My witnesses. Is there a God beside Me? Yes, there is no God; I know not any. They that make a graven image are all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they are their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. Who has formed a god, or molten a graven image that is profitable for anything? Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed: and the workmen, they are of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; yet they shall fear, and they shall be ashamed together. The smith.*—Note how the Lord holds up to mockery and scorn the makers of idol gods! He shows the process of god-making, the making of idol gods but His words may be equally well applied to the making of the Virgin Mary and the various saints, crucifixes, and all other lumber of this kind in the idolatry that calls itself Christian! "The smith"—

12. *With the tongs works in the coals, and fashions it with hammers, and works it with the strength of his arms: yes, he is hungry, and his strength fails: he drinks no water, and is faint.* That is one of these god-makers, you see—a man who makes an idol god, yet who himself gets thirsty by reason of the heat of the coals in his forge! A fine god it must be that he makes! Next comes the carpenter.

13, 14. *The carpenter stretches out his rule; he marks it out with a line; he fits it with planes, and he marks it out with the compass, and makes it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house. He hews him down cedars, and takes the cypress and the oak, which he strengthens for himself among the trees of the forest: he plants an ash, and the rain does nourish it.* They like some choice wood out of which to make their gods. So we see that these idol gods grow first in the woods and then, afterwards, they need a carpenter's rule, and line, and compass, and plane in order to shape them according to his taste, or the order of his customers!

15-17. *Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself, yes, he kindles it, and bakes bread, yes, he makes a god and worships it; he makes it a graven image, and falls down thereto. He burns part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eats flesh; he roasts meat and is satisfied: yes, he warms himself, and says, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: and the residue thereof he makes a god, even his graven image: he falls down unto it, and worships it, and prays unto it, and says, Deliver me; for you are my god.* Did ever sarcasm—truthful and proper sarcasm—go further than this? Idolaters in various lands have

frequently been convinced of the absurdity of their worship as they have read this very remarkable piece of Inspired writing!

18, 19. *They have not known nor understood: for He has shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand. And none considers in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yes, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? Shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?* Shall I, an intelligent being, worship gold, silver, wood, or brass, however excellent may be the workmanship of it? Shall I, an immortal being, cast myself down before a piece of bread and worship that, as some do who first worship, and then eat their god? Oh, what strange infatuation!

20. *He feeds on ashes: a deceived heart has turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?* The Prophet concludes that madness must have laid hold upon the minds of men, or they never could have fallen into the debasing superstitions which degrade them all over the world. Yet, even in this present century old superstitions have come back to our country—it is strange that here, where so many martyrs were burnt, the sons of these martyrs should actually be willing to go back to the beggarly elements and superstitions of the olden times! The Lord have mercy upon this land and deliver it from all forms of idol worship!

21, 22. *Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for you are My servant: I have formed you, you are My servant: O Israel, you shall not be forgotten of Me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed you.* Out of all the world, God had a chosen people, His own Israel, to whom He revealed Himself—but they also turned aside to idols, yet here He bids them return to Him. Even to this day they bravely bear their protest against idols. I would to God that they also knew the Christ of God and worshipped Him. All Believers are the true Israel after the spirit and are to maintain forever the Glory of the one only living and true God.

23. *Sing, O you heavens; for the LORD has done it: shout, you lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—605, 545, 296.

—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.

THEOCRACY
NO. 2848

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 23, 1877.

"I will be your King."
Hosea 13:10.

"You are my King, O God."
Psalm 44:4.

THOSE of you who were present, this morning, will remember that I preached upon the Kingship of the Lord Jesus Christ and that I earnestly entreated my hearers to submit themselves to His Kingly authority. [Sermon #1375, Volume 23—*"NOW THEN, DO IT"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at* http://www.spurgeongems.org.] I hope that many who were with us felt that an Almighty force was operating upon them, making them willing to surrender themselves to the control of the great King of kings. I dwelt, then, mainly upon the need of decision for Christ and upon our duty to yield ourselves up wholly to Him. That is the human side of the question and is, by no means, to be kept in the background, but, on this occasion I want to speak to you upon the *privilege* of having Christ for our King and upon the graciousness of Christ in allowing Himself to be our King and permitting us to become His subjects. My purpose, at this time, is rather to set forth what God does for us in this matter than what He demands of us. To me it seems inexpressibly beautiful that while we are, in one place, bid to "kiss the Son" and accept Him as our King, we have, in another portion of Scripture, such a delightful declaration as this, "I will be your King." It is always interesting to trace great rivers to their sources. You usually find that their springs lie far up among the mountains and, if you trace back to their springs certain practical subjects that you find in the Word of God, you get to the eternal hills of Everlasting Love!

I am going, first, to run away from my text and to take another. If you look in the 10th verse of the 13th Chapter of Hosea, which contains our text, you will see these words near the end of the verse—"Give me a King." So, our first head is *the need of nature.* Then, in the second part of my discourse, I shall keep strictly to my first text—"I will be your King." That is *the answer of Grace.* And then, thirdly, we shall go back to the 44th Psalm, and at the 4th verse we shall find *the acknowledgment of faith*—"You are my King, O God." That is our program—may we be helped by the Spirit to carry it out and may we be able, in our hearts, to go from step to step all through!

I. First, then, we are to consider THE NEED OF NATURE—"Give me a king."

Man was once happy in Eden, for God was his King. But when he cast off his allegiance to God and became a rebel and a traitor, then he lost both his Paradise and his peace. Ever since then, man has, morally and spiritually, needed a king—and the deep groaning of the natural man is, "Give me a king."

Now, first, *this is the cry of weakness.* Man finds himself to be a poor puny creature and he feels that he needs to look up to someone greater, stronger, wiser, more enduring than himself. There are some plants that cannot grow much unless they can get something stronger than themselves to which they can cling and around which they can twine. You may, perhaps, have seen them when they have been away from a wall or a tree, stretching out their tendrils and seeking for something to climb upon. And if they do not find it, they fall to the ground till, in the damp weather, their leaves grow wet and rot—and the plant is in a sickly state in which it can barely exist. Such is human nature. It is a trailing thing and it gladly would be a climbing thing, and a clinging thing. In some persons, this trait is very conspicuous. They are always needing somebody to whom they can cling—and this tendency is the source of the greatest possible danger and sorrow to them. They select wrong objects for their love and trust and, consequently, they are betrayed, they are disappointed and they sadly learn the meaning of that text, "Cursed is the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord." That is the result when this clinging tendency is wrongly used, but many people have this tendency. Man is weak and he knows that he is weak and, therefore, he cries, "'Give me a king'—someone who will guide me, direct me, govern me, rule me, take care of me."

Besides being the cry of weakness, it is also, oftentimes, *the sigh of distress.* In the 9th verse of this Chapter, we read, "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself; but in Me is your help." Then follows my first text, "I will be your King." Do you see the connection of the two passages? A King is promised to them because they had destroyed themselves. When a man feels that he has destroyed himself, brought himself down to destruction by his sin and folly, then he, too, cries, "Give me a king." He needs help that he may be brought up out of his sad condition. When a soul is really convinced of its sin and made to see that it is brought under the sentence of God's righteous Law, it naturally cries out for something, or someone, that can give it the help which it does not find in itself. And this craving is often the cause of our being duped—for a so-called "priest" comes in and he says, "I can help you. I am ordained of God to rescue you from destruction." Many people are willing to trust in anything that has certain robes upon it, but, for my part, I will trust neither in chasubles, nor albs, nor stoles, nor any decorations or dresses, whether they are on linen-horses or on men-milliners!

What can there be in man, or in his clothes, that can be of help to his fellow man in such a case as this? Besides, God has not entrusted such a ministry as that to any man! God has bid His servants preach the Gospel—and that Gospel conveys help, light and power to all who believe it—but as for forms and ceremonies, musical performances, ornate ritual, masses and the like, they are sheer deceptions through and through! Trust not the weight of a feather to them—much less your souls! But again I remind you that there is in man a craving which makes him long for someone who can rescue him from destruction—and the mercy is that God meets that craving by setting before us His dear Son, who is Prophet, Priest and King! Prophet to reveal to us the mind of God. Priest to cleanse us by His own blood and to make us acceptable to His Father. And King to rule and control us and bring us into conformity to His own will. I know that cry right well and for years I sent it up from the very depths of my soul, "'Give me a king,' one who is wise enough, strong enough and willing enough to help my soul in its greatest extremity."

Further, dear Friends, if sinners were wise, this would also be *the prayer of thoughtfulness.* I will suppose that I am addressing a young man to whom God has given a wise and understanding heart. He has passed his majority and is just about to leave his father's roof. And he now feels that everything must depend upon himself and his own character. He cannot depend upon others as he has done in the past. Now, if he is a wise young man, he will say to God, "Give me a King," for he will know from observation, I hope, rather than from experience, that anarchy in the soul is a truly terrible thing. There have been men of great talents, who, it seems to me, in the Providence of God, have been permitted to live on purpose to show what a man is when there is no King in his soul—when every passion that rules him, leads the mob of his faculties to tumult and revolt. If his thirst said, "Drink," the man drank till he was drunk! If his natural appetite and taste said to him, "Gratify us," he gratified them even though, thereby, he plunged into all manner of licentiousness and excess!

There have been men, I say again, of great talents, who have blazed in the moral firmament like meteors and have astonished many with the brilliance, yet luridness, of their light—yet their influence has been baleful to the nation and mischievous to all men except those who learned from them not to try to govern their own passions in their own strength. To let all the powers within us be without a supreme Ruler is the most terrible thing that can happen to any man! Young man, never believe that it can be for your good to follow the leading of your own evil passions. No, it is in restraining yourself that your welfare and your happiness will lie, not in throwing the reins upon the neck of carnal desires, but in reining in these fiery steeds and keeping them well in hand. And, to do that, you need to pray, "Give me a King."

It is a dreadful thing to lead an aimless life. I know no person, in the whole world, who is more wretched than a man who has no true objective in life. His father, perhaps, left him all the wealth that he could desire

and now the sole occupation of his being is to kill time—and to dig its grave and his own, also—as quickly as he can! He does not live to benefit others, he has no high and noble objective as his guiding star—he simply squanders his time till it is all gone. Now that is the most miserable man I know. A man who is toiling hard to bring up a large family may be, and very often is, among the happiest of men. A man who has an objective in life, especially if it is an unselfish one and who strains all his faculties in order that he may attain it, is sure to be happy! Possibly happier while he is pursuing that goal, than after he has attained it. Trying to win a race warms a man and produces in him joy, the joy of activity, the joy of competition and, often, the joy of success. But there are some young men who start out in life intending to do nothing and they do it very thoroughly—they are great consumers of bread, meat, wine and such-like things, but, beyond that, I know not what is to be said about them! Such poor, aimless beings are always unhappy. They pretend to be merry and they make a great noise which is supposed to imply joy, but it is only like "the crackling of thorns under a pot." They know nothing of what substantial pleasure means. I would as gladly never have been born as live without an objective and, long ago, I said, "'Give me a King.' Give me something to live for, something to die for, something that commands all my faculties and wakens up all my powers, something that stirs my spirit and makes a man of me. 'Give me a King.' I must have a King, or else what is life worth to me?"

Any thoughtful man will also have noticed that selfishness, if it controls our life, is a mean thing. Look over there! Do not tell me that So-and-So is a man—tell me that he is one of a herd of swine greedily devouring all that he can grasp. He simply lives that he may be rich, that he may be famous, that he may be called respectable—he lives only for himself. His soul is so small that it is trooped up within his own ribs. His heart, if he has one, is so cramped that it never goes out on behalf of others, but only beats one tune and that is, "Take care of Number One." That is a wretched kind of life and any thoughtful young man must say, "I don't want to live like that, 'Give me a King.' Let me keep clear of all selfishness. I do not want to be under the sway of the tyrant, Self. Let me have something that will rule and govern me. Give me a constitutional monarchy. Give me someone who is worthy to have the control of my whole life."

I recollect that the thoughts which passed through my mind, when I was starting in life, were something like these. I distrusted self-guidance, for I saw how unsafe it was. I have told you before that I knew one who was at school with me, who used to be held up as a pattern and example to me, such a good boy, such an excellent young man. He came to London and within a few weeks, London was too much for him—I saw him come home in disgrace, his employer would not have such a fellow in his house! I then said to myself, "That may be my experience if I trust to myself. I should not like to begin life, away from home, in disgrace, to continue it in dishonor and to die with everybody feeling that it was a relief

to the world when I was gone." So I said to myself, "By what means can I ensure my character? Can I get a guarantee that I shall be kept?" And when I turned to this blessed Book and found that the Lord Jesus Christ had promised to keep those who committed themselves unto Him, I accepted Him upon this ground, as well as upon others, that He was able to keep that which I had committed unto Him until the Great Day of His appearing. In that sense, my prayer was, "'Give me a King,' somebody who will take charge of me, care for me and protect me." And I believe that such a cry as that is a very wise one for any young man to utter—and also for anyone else who has not yet acknowledged the Lord Jesus Christ as King.

Once more concerning this cry of nature, *it often comes up as the result of experience.* Ah, how little do we learn except as we go to the school of Dame Experience, who raps us on the knuckles very hard! When a man discovers, to his surprise, that he has played the fool—as soon as he becomes wiser, he says, "Give me a King." How many a man, who has made shipwreck of his life and has only discovered it when he has been upon the rocks, has at last cried, "Oh, that some strength greater than my own had saved me from this ruin!" I have known men, when they have been under a sense of danger, when they have seen death approaching, begin to cry, "'Give me a King'—one who can fight the last enemy for me, one who can ensure my safety when I pass through the Valley of Death Shade."

This experience, too, sometimes makes a man feel *the weight of responsibility.* He says, "How can I bear it?" And he wants someone who is his superior, someone who will tell him what to do so that, when he does it, the responsibility will no longer be with himself. Have not many of you who are without Christ felt a desire to have somebody with whom you could leave your responsibilities? Well, this is just what the Christian finds in Christ—that he can bring all the difficulties in his life to his great Lord and King, and leave them there—and find in his King, when he obeys Him, the promise that in obedience shall be the path of safety. It is a blessed thing to have such a King! When we have once yielded ourselves to Him, our care is ended and we are at peace.

So much about the need of nature.

II. Now, secondly, and but briefly, I have to speak upon THE ANSWER OF GRACE—"I will be your King." Listen to this short sentence, you who are longing for a Master-Spirit to rule your spirits—"I will be your King."

Notice *the condescension of this promise.* Here is a ruined Kingdom—"O Israel, you have destroyed yourself; but in Me is your help. I will be your King." Who will care to wear the battered crown of a desolate kingdom, whose metropolis is destroyed and whose land is sown with salt? The great Lord and King of Mercy says, "I will. Lost and ruined as you are, I will accept the monarchy of your soul. I will be your King. You have had many lords who have had dominion over you, yet I will be your King. And I know those pretenders are yet alive and seek to set up their old claims over you and to get the mastery over you again. It is an uneasy

throne, yet I will occupy it. I will be your King. Besides this, you are very unruly subjects. In this Kingdom there are many thoughts, forgings and lusting that are in rebellion against Me, yet I will be your King. Many disloyal subjects are there within My town of Mansoul, yet I will be the Prince of it and drive out all the followers of Diabolus. Enemies are threatening on the right hand and on the left, and whoever becomes king must carry on a long and serious war, yet I will take this crown of thorns and wear it—I will be your King." Is not this wonderful condescension on God's part? Do not you, Beloved, feel ready to spring up and say, "Blessed Lord, if You will be our King, we will gladly be Your subjects, rejoicing that we may have such a King as You"?

Notice next, *how suitable and satisfactory such a King as this is to be!* If a man must have a king and yet can have his choice as to which king shall be his, it is well for him to have the One whom Wisdom, itself, would select, for there is none to equal Him! He is a King who is able to subdue the whole territory of our nature through His Almighty power by which He is able to subdue all things unto Himself. O blessed King, we are glad to have You to rule over us and to have our stubborn and rebellious passions brought under the power of Your Grace! This gracious King is in every way worthy to rule over us. Think, Beloved, what your God is, what your Savior is. Ought He not to be King over you? Yes, verily, then let us set Him up on a glorious high throne and let us rejoice that we can bow down before One whom it is an honor to obey! What wisdom He has to govern us aright! Fools should not be kings, but Infinite Wisdom is fully qualified to rule us altogether! Then, what perfect goodness there is in the Lord Jesus Christ! What unspeakable goodness in the Divine Father and in the ever-blessed Spirit! Happy are the people whose King is the Lord of Hosts! Besides, think what love He has shown to His subjects! Behold His head, His hands, His feet! Look upon the spear-mark in His side, for it was by those wounds that He bought us! Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to be crowned as our King and to receive the loyal homage of our hearts—

"Let Him be crowned with majesty
Who bowed His head to death.
And be His honors sounded high
By all things that have breath!
Jesus, our Lord, how wondrous great
Is Your exalted name!
The glories of Your heavenly state
Let the whole earth proclaim."

So, it is a proof of Infinite Condescension, on God's part, for Him to say, "I will be your King," and we realize what a suitable King He is for us and how satisfactory it is for us to have such a blessed Master and Lord!

Then, Brothers and Sisters, how *unspeakably consoling* it is that the Lord should be our King! I say, "consoling," for who could feel unsafe or uneasy when Jehovah becomes his King? If the Eternal and Invincible God becomes our King, what foe can harm us? His shield can protect us from all the arrows that fly by night or by day! How consolatory it is for

us to submit to such a God—no longer to stand up in opposition to Him, but to lie down at His feet as His loyal subjects—no longer to have a will and a way of our own, but to submit unreservedly to the will of God, to lie passive in His hands and let Him be our King! Have you ever experienced this kind of consolation in a time of deep affliction or bereavement? You have lost the delight of your heart, the joy of your eyes, the dearest one you ever had—and you have somewhat rebelled. In that rebellion has been the very bitterness of your grief, but you have said, "The Lord has done it. He is my King, so He has the right to do with me just as He wills." That is the great source of your consolation—you never get relief from the anguish of your spirit till you see Jesus as your crowned King and only Lord and lay your hand upon your mouth and, in the silence of your soul say, 'It is the Lord. Let Him do what seems good to Him."

And, oftentimes, this same precious Truth has consoled you when you have been in great difficulties and embarrassments. I often sing to my Lord those lines by F. T. Faber—

"When obstacles and trials seem
Like prison walls to be,
I do the little I can do,
And leave the rest to Thee.
And when it seems no chance nor change
From grief can set me free,
Hope finds its strength in helplessness,
And patiently waits on Thee."

I do not know a stronger force in all the world than utter helplessness—for that is the end of all care. Many and many a time I have tried till my head has ached, to work out a problem in Church government, but have not discovered the solution—I could not see any way out of it. So I have just done as a schoolboy would who shuts up the two parts of his slate and puts it on the shelf. I have said to myself, "I will never have anything more to do with the matter, but will leave it for the Lord to solve." And I have found that the proposition has been worked out for me in due time.

So, dear Friends, your strength is to sit still and to feel that you have a King who can settle all your difficulties! When the servant at the door is puzzled by the many questions that are put to her, she says, if she is wise, "I cannot answer you, but I will go and ask my master." And when she has received the message from her master, she has no further trouble about the matter—she simply says, "I have told you what my master says. If you do not like it, I cannot help that, for I am only his messenger." That is the way to end all controversy! A young man, or anyone else who has a number of questions put to him by various persons, will be wise if he says, "Well, I have searched my Bible and found what the King says about these points. If that does not satisfy you, I am sure I cannot. Your quarrel is no longer with me, but with my Master—you must settle the matter with Him." This is a blessed consolation! It gives joy to the spirit to have God for your King. No man is so free, no man is

so happy as he who loyally bows before the King of kings—to serve God is to reign! He who has God for his King, is, himself, a king!

Further, think *how gloriously inspiring it is to have God as our King.* I should not like to be a soldier in the armies of certain kings whom I might mention. If I were in their service, I would try to run away as soon as I could, for I would feel ashamed to have anything to do with them. If you were a soldier in the army of some little, mean, beggarly tyrant, I think that you would be glad to leave your regimentals at home whenever you could. It is strange that any man could be found to fight for some of the miserable miscreants who have been found in the ranks of kings. But, with Alexander as leader, every Greek became a hero! He was so great a warrior that each man in his army felt that he was, himself, great. Now, when the Lord Jesus Christ becomes our King, it is most inspiring to us, for He leads us on to fight with sin, to fight with selfishness, to overcome evil by love and to conquer hate by kindness! It is a grand thing to serve the King whose fights are all of that sort and to have Him for a King who never shirked a battle, but who was always to the front, the bravest of the brave!

It is grand, even, to unloose the laces of His shoes. To be trodden on by Him would be a high honor. To do anything, however little, in His cause, makes us feel ourselves elevated! My dear young Friend, if you have God in Christ Jesus to be your King, your life will be sublime! With Him for your Example, with His Grace to lead you on, you shall continually rise higher and yet still higher until even your common life shall be made sublime! Oh, blessed, blessed, blessed, thrice blessed, is everyone to whom Jesus Christ is King and Lord! If we are linked with Him, we are ready either to live or to die!

III. Now turn with me to my second text, which you will find in the 44th Psalm, and the 4th verse—"You are my King, O God." That is THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF FAITH.

Let me just pause a moment and ask each one of you here, "Can you say that?" Can you say that, my Brother? Can you say that, my Sister? At the close of this morning's service, we sang—

"'Tis done, the real transaction's done!
I am my Lord's, and He is mine,"

and it was noticed by careful observers that there were some persons in the congregation who did not sing that verse. They shut their mouths quite firmly while others around them were singing. I was glad that they were honest enough to do so and that they would not sing what they could not truthfully sing. At the same time, I was very sorry that their honesty compelled them to make such a silent confession of their lack of subjection to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is not your King, then? He is your Creator, but not your King? He is your Preserver, but not your King? He will be the Judge of the quick and the dead, yet He is not your King? He is the one and only Savior of the lost, yet He is not your King? Sadly, sorrowfully, let this thought eat into your spirit, "Then, I am a rebel against the Lord Jesus Christ." For He is, lawfully and rightly, your

King—and you are a traitor, for your heart plots against Him! Remember, also, that if you die without accepting Him as your King, there is a text which I scarcely dare to quote, yet I must—and, as I do so, let it fall like fiery hail upon your spirit—"But those My enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring here and slay them before Me." God grant that none of you may ever know what that terrible verse means!

But now, having given you that word of warning, I ask you to think of the blessedness of having the Lord to be your King. If you look at this 44th Psalm, you will see that *when God is our King, we may confidently expect to enter upon our inheritance in the skies*—"You did drive out the heathen with Your hand, and planted them." That is to say, each one of the tribes that entered Canaan under Joshua, obtained its proper portion in the Covenant-given land of promise. And we who are under the leadership of King Jesus, the true Joshua, the one and only Savior, shall win the heritage above—and each one of us shall stand in his lot at the end of the days, blessed forever and ever in our portion in the heavenly Canaan!

Notice, next, that, if the Lord is our King, *we may expect help in the time of trouble.* Read the whole of verse four— "You are my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob." If ever you are in poverty. If ever you are in sickness. If ever you are under slander and reproach, if ever your spirit is depressed—if ever family trials affect you, if ever the clouds in your sky are heavy and the days are dark—you may go to your King and tell Him all and expect Him to "command deliverances" for you, for, if He is your King, He will see you through, bear you up and make what appears to be evil to work for your good and cause your troubles to prove to be the best of blessings to you! Who would not have such a King as this?

Next, notice that if the Lord is our King, *we should repose entirely in Him*, as the Psalmist says, "For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me." What a mercy it is to be able to put up your weapons away—to feel that there is Another who fights for you—to have done with care, worry, distress and just to feel that you have left everything with Jesus your King! If He cannot do it, then it must be left undone. Oh, it is blessed to feel that you have put the affairs of your soul into your King's hands and that you have left the whole of them with Him, in the utmost confidence! Who would not have a King upon whom it is perfectly safe to rely?

More than this, he who has God for his King *knows that he is saved.* Read the 7th verse—"But You have saved us from our enemies, and have put them to shame that hated us." He who acknowledges Christ as his Lord and Master knows that he is saved. His salvation is not a thing that is to be accomplished tomorrow—it is done now. It is not a privilege to be enjoyed only in the last few moments of our life, but it is to be enjoyed now, for our King has covered us with the garments of salvation! "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God," even now. Our salvation is finished! Our great Messiah said so on the Cross and He spoke the Truth. "He that believes on Him is not condemned."

And, last of all, he who takes Christ to be his King *has cause for great joy and rejoicing.* In the 8th verse, the Psalmist says, "In God we boast all the day long, and praise Your name forever." He who has Christ for his King need never be ashamed of his Monarch, or of his Monarch's livery, or of his Monarch's laws, or of his Monarch's friends. He may, rather, adopt the high strain of boasting in his God and triumphing in Him all the day long.

So I end by repeating the question I asked earlier in my discourse—can each of you say, "You are my King, O God"? If not, what is your position with regard to Him? If you do not acknowledge Him as your King, you are a rebel! Yet, if you are ready to acknowledge that fact, you come under the act of amnesty which is available for regicides—for you rebels are just that, and even Deicides in having conspired to put the King of Glory to death by your sin—and you shall have even this high crime of God-killing blotted out from the King's records! You shall be just as though you had never sinned at all if you are willing to take Christ to be your King and Savior! "Him has God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."

Will you have Him? I mean, the Son of God, who was also the Son of Mary. I mean the Man of Nazareth, who is also very God of very God. Trust to the Atonement which flowed from His wounds! Accept the power which God has given to Him, for all power in Heaven and in earth is given to Him! God has given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as His Father has given Him. Only trust Him! Cast your souls upon Him! Yield yourselves to His sway! Repent of your sin! If you lay hold upon His perfect righteousness at once, the guilt of the past is gone and you shall be admitted into the full privileges appertaining to citizens of the heavenly Kingdom and subjects of the great King of kings! I trust that even before this service closes, some of you will say. "By the Grace of God and through the power of the Holy Spirit, I yield myself to Jesus, my Lord and King, to be His loyal subject and faithful servant forever and ever." God grant it, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 44:1-8; PSALM 45.

Psalm 44:1. *We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us what work You did in their days, in the times of old.* Now Israel was restored to Canaan and the Canaanite and Perizzite were driven out, that God's chosen people might occupy their appointed place.

2, 3. *How You did drive out the heathen with Your hand, and planted them: how You did afflict the people, and cast them out. For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but Your right hand, and Your arm, and the light of Your Countenance, because You did favor them.* They did use their own arm and sword but, for all that, it was God who won the victory for them. It was His

might that made them brave and a consciousness of His gracious purpose that made them strong, so that they routed all their foes until, from Dan to Beersheba, the land was all their own.

4-6. *You are my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob. Through You will we push down our enemies: through Your name will we tread them under that rise up against us. For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me.* See how the lesson from ancient history was turned to practical account in the Psalmist's own experience? "As our forefathers were delivered, not by their own bow or sword, but by the right hand of the Most High, so I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me." Brothers and Sisters, let us always labor to reproduce in ourselves, by God's Grace, the best experiences of His saints. Wherever we see the hand of the Lord displayed in others of His people, let us pray that the same hand may be manifested to us and in us.

7, 8. *But You have saved us from our enemies, and have put them to shame that hated us. In God we boast all the day long, and praise Your name forever. Selah.*

Psalm 45:1. *My heart is overflowing with a good thing: I speak of the things which I have made touching the King.* You know what King is referred to here, it is He of whom the Psalmist said, in the 4th verse of the previous Psalm, "You are my King, O God." "I speak of the things which I have made touching the King."

1, 2. *My tongue is the pen of a ready writer. You are fairer than the children of men.* The Psalmist writes as if he had been actually looking upon Him. Faith has a wonderful realizing power—and when the soul is deeply meditative, it seems to be full of eyes—"'You are fairer than the children of men.' Though You are one of them, yet You are fairer than all the rest of them. There is a beauty about You, O Lord, that is not to be perceived in the brightest and best of the sons of Adam!"

2-5. *Grace is poured into Your lips: therefore God has blessed You forever. Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Most Mighty, with Your Glory and Your majesty. And in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness, and Your right hand shall teach You terrible things. Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under You.* There is no other conqueror who is equal to Christ, whether He smites with His sword, His foes who are near at hand, or shoots His arrows from His bow at those who are far away. Whether the Gospel is preached to us who have long heard it, or is proclaimed to the heathen in distant lands, it has the same Almighty Power in it to work the glorious purposes of God's Grace.

6, 7. *Your throne, O God, is forever and ever: the scepter of Your Kingdom is a right scepter. You love righteousness, and hate wickedness: therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows.* Note the connection here between God and Man—the very same Person who is addressed as God, is also spoken of as anointed by God above His fellows. God and yet Man are You, O blessed Jesus Christ!

You are very God of very God, yet just as truly Man, the God-Man, the Mediator between God and man!

8-10. *All Your garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made You glad. King's daughters were among Your honorable women: at Your right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir. Hearken, O daughter, and consider.* Listen, each one of you who are a part of this matchless bride of Christ, you who are part of her whom Christ has looked upon with infinite and eternal love—"Hearken, O daughter, and consider,"

10. *And incline your ear; forget also your own people, and your father's house.* God's message to His people in the world, today, is just what it was when the Spirit bade Paul write to the Corinthians, "Come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord almighty."

11. *So shall the king greatly desire your beauty: for He is your lord; and worship Him.* Our Savior is our King and He must be both loved and adored—"He is your Lord; and worship Him."

12. *And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall entreat your favor.* When Christ's Church really has her Lord in the midst of her, and when she is strong in the power of His might, there will never be any lack of wealth for the carrying on of His cause—"Even the rich among the people shall entreat your favor."

13. *The King's daughter is all glorious within.* Other daughters are often far too glorious without, but that is the best beauty which is inward. "The King's daughter is all glorious within."

13-16. *Her clothing is of worked gold. She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework: the virgins, her companions that follow her, shall be brought unto You. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the King's palace. Instead of Your fathers shall be Your children.* We often see the hoary head laid low, and the ripe saint taken home to Heaven—but the ranks of Christ's retinue are not thereby thinned, for the sons shall stand in the place of their fathers. God be thanked for this cheering promise! "Instead of Your fathers shall be Your children,"

16, 17. *Whom You may make princes in all the earth. I will make Your name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise You forever and ever.*

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

REMEMBERING GOD'S WORKS
NO. 2849

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 4, 1877.

"He has made His wonderful works to be remembered: the LORD is gracious and full of compassion. He has given meat unto them that fear Him: He will ever be mindful of His Covenant."
Psalm 111:4, 5.

GOD'S works are, of course, wonderful because they are His works, but they are not "a nine days' wonder." They are not intended to be admired for a little while and then to be forgotten. The Psalmist says, "He has made His wonderful works to be remembered." I fear that we too often fail to keep in our memory the recollection of God's exceeding goodness and that we allow the works of the Lord, as well as His mercies, to lie "forgotten in unthankfulness." If it has been so in the past with any of us, let us, at the outset of our meditation, begin to chide ourselves for our forgetfulness and ask the Holy Spirit to strengthen our memories that we may remember the wonderful works of the Lord more than we have done.

Our subject is twofold. First, *it is God's design that His wonderful works should be remembered.* And, secondly, *it is our wisdom constantly to have those wonderful works in remembrance.*

I. First then, I learn from our text that IT IS GOD'S DESIGN THAT HIS WONDERFUL WORKS SHOULD BE REMEMBERED.

He has ensured the carrying out of this design, for, first, *the very greatness of His works prevents them from being forgotten.* When God has come forth out of His secret places to work Redemption for His people with a high hand and an outstretched arm, He has worked such mighty marvels that all history has been made to ring with the tidings of them. Is it possible that Israel could ever forget what the Lord did in Egypt when He smote the hosts of their oppressors and brought forth His people with a great deliverance? Could they ever forget the wondrous scene at the Red Sea, when Pharaoh and all his army sank like lead in the surging waters that had stood upright, like massive walls, to make a way for the ransomed hosts to escape? There were other events, in the conquest of Canaan and in the life of David which must have been, through their extraordinary character, forever burned into the recollection of God's ancient people and, truly, you and I can say of many of God's works on our behalf, that they have been so great that it would be quite impossible for us to forget them! Do you remember your conversion, beloved Friend? Perhaps you were a great and open sinner and the

change in you was so remarkable that you can easily remember the time when it occurred—and it would not be possible for Satan himself to make you doubt that such a change did happen to you! You remember, my Brother, when the load of your guilt was removed from your burdened heart? I can imagine that I could forget my own name and that I could forget my own sons, but I think I never could, under any circumstances, forget the day when I began to sing to my dear Lord and Savior—

"I will praise You every day
Now Your anger's turned away."

It was such a marvelous thing—so amazing a thing in itself—so altogether extraordinary that it could never, never, never be forgotten! "He has made His wonderful works to be remembered" because they are so wonderful. Study deeply what Sovereign Grace has done to you, that you may see the greatness of the mercy and admire it, for, very much in proportion as you appraise the mercy of God at its proper value, will you be sure to have it fixed upon your memory all your life.

God made His wonderful works to be remembered, in the next place, *because of the persons upon whom those works were worked.* There is many a man who would soon forget all he hears about the favor of God because he is not conscious of his own need of it, but when a person is, spiritually, in an exceedingly anxious state of mind and heart, and God's great mercy comes to him, he is sure to remember it. You remember that the Israelites were in Egypt as a nation of slaves, so that when God fetched them out, the serfs of the brick-kiln, the men who were driven to their daily tasks by the oppressors' whips, the poor slaves who were denied even the straw with which to make the bricks—well, when they were Divinely delivered, at the very time when Pharaoh's tyranny had become utterly unbearable, they could not possibly forget how they had been delivered! That day of their emancipation became the beginning of months to them and they numbered their years from it, for, to poor oppressed Israel, it was like life from the dead!

At the present time, in a spiritual sense, God, in His mercy, interposes on behalf of those who are in a similar condition to that of Israel in Egypt. You remember how Hannah sang, "He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory"? That dunghill would help the beggar's memory. He would say, "How can I forget that I was thrown away like a worthless thing? In my own estimation, I was a rotten, worthless, useless thing, fit only to be thrown among the rubbish of creation. But the Lord suddenly appeared to me, lifted me up and set me among the princes of His people! Can I ever forget that? Let the bride forget her ornaments and let my right hand forget her cunning, but never can my soul forget how the Lord brought me up out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings."

Some of us were mere wrecks of humanity—yawning chasms gaped beneath us and we thought that we would be speedily swallowed up. But we cried unto the Lord in our trouble and He brought us unto a quiet haven. Can we ever forget His wonderful works? We were sorely sick. Our

soul abhorred all manner of food and we drew near to the gates of the grave—but the Good Physician came and restored us from all our sicknesses just when death stared us in the face. Beloved Brothers and Sisters, I feel certain that I can appeal to many of you and say that you were in such a plight as this when the Lord revealed Himself to you. Such was your distress and the abject condition in which you were, that, for you to forget what the Lord did for you would be such base ingratitude that I cannot believe that it is possible! Surely you feel that you must remember Him, and that sooner might a woman forget her sucking child than that you should forget the wonderful works which the Lord your God has worked for you!

Besides this, the Lord took care that His wonderful works would be remembered *by putting them on record in the Scriptures.* The five Books of Moses—the Pentateuch—are the Divinely-Inspired record of the wonderful works which God did for His people in the very early times of the world's history. The pen of Inspiration was carefully employed in order that what God had done might be written down for all future generations to read. This blessed Book has made the wonderful works of God to be remembered for all time—it was written for that very purpose! It tells the unique story of the eternal love of God to us. It also tells us the wonderful story of Love Incarnate in the Christ of Bethlehem and further tells us how He died, how He rose again and how He lives in Heaven to plead for us as our great Intercessor before the Throne of God! Let us bless Him more and more for these sacred pages in which He makes His wonderful works to be remembered! And I venture to suggest to you, Beloved, that it is well when God performs any work of mercy for you, that you should cause it to be remembered in a similar way.

Much of God's praise is never made known on this earth for lack of a ready pen to record the gracious experiences of His people. The keeping of a diary is very apt to lead to a stilted form of piety. If a man feels that he must put something down every day, he is very liable to put down that which is not true. He may think it is true even when it is really false. But the recording of the many special mercies that we receive from God appears to me to be a duty which we owe to our age and also to our successors. If some of the wonderful deliverances which are recorded in the biographies of the saints had not been jotted down at the time, we would have been great losers. And if we have anything worth recording and I think we have, even if we do not care to write it down to be seen by the public eye, yet, at least, let us record it for the sake of the little circle in which we live and move, that, perhaps, some of our descendants, or some of our friends may gather comfort from our personal experience of God's mercy. "He has made His wonderful works to be remembered." Let us act in harmony with this grand design and preserve the memory of the Lord's great goodness to us!

Moreover, in order to preserve the memory of His wonderful works, *God was pleased to command His people to teach their children to remember what He had done for them.* In addition to the Inspired records, He told them to make their children's memories into books of remembrance. Jewish fathers were commanded to call their children together and tell

them how the Lord brought them out of Egypt, how He led them through the wilderness and how He gave them the land of Canaan to be their own possession. They were to teach their children and their children's children, the wonderful story of the Lord's dealings with them. And we ought to be concerned to hand down, from father to son, the memory of God's great goodness to us. Tell your own children if you cannot tell anyone else, what God has done for their father. Sitting around the fire in the evening, your children might often be not merely interested, but instructed and impressed by the narrative of God's Providential dealings with you. Possibly the story might not read well in print, but never mind that, for there will be an interest about it to your own household! So, be sure that you tell it. My memory recalls, at this very moment, many a pleasing incident from what my grandfather told me concerning his early struggles in the ministry and the Providential interpositions of God on his behalf. Perhaps he might as well have written them down, but he did not. I think that, possibly, he knew that he had a living book within his grandchild's brain and that the boy might, in later days, tell to others what his grandfather had told him. At any rate, I do earnestly exhort all Christians to make God's wonderful works to be remembered wherever they can, and do it especially by telling your children what you have experienced of His goodness. Do not die, O you gray heads, you who have passed your threescore years and ten—do not pass away from this earth with all those pleasant memories of God's loving kindness to be buried with you in your coffin—but let your children and your children's children know what the everlasting God did for you!

Once more, in order to make His wonderful works to be remembered, *the Lord was pleased to institute certain ordinances to keep them in the minds of His people.* To preserve the memory of the deliverance out of Egypt, there was the significant rite of the Passover. On that night when God brought His people out of the house of bondage, it was the blood of the paschal lamb that protected each house that was sprinkled with it. And so Israel ever afterwards kept the Passover in memory of that night when God said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." And you know how our blessed Redeemer has given us the institution of the Lord's Supper, saying, "This do in remembrance of Me," that the Atonement, that great master-fact of the Christian religion might always be fresh upon our memories and Christ be set forth visibly crucified among us as though it were but yesterday! If anything may be forgotten, it must not be Gethsemane, Gabbatha and Calvary!

Beloved, take care that you attend carefully to that sacred memorial. If I am addressing any true Believers in Christ, who, nevertheless, have been disobedient to their Lord's command, "This do in remembrance of Me," I would solemnly ask them to be disobedient no longer! I am sure, Beloved, you miss a great privilege and I am equally sure that you are omitting a very sacred duty by not obeying your Lord's command. If it is right for you, as a Believer in Christ, to stay away from your Master's Table, it is also right for me, and right for all God's servants. If we all did so, there would be no celebration of the Lord's Supper anywhere! And, so, that which our Savior, in His Divine Wisdom, instituted for a me-

morial, would cease to be. Perhaps you say that you are not a church member. If so, I reply that if you are a Christian, you ought to be a member of Christ's visible Church on earth, for, if you have a right not to be a member, I have a right not to be one and so have all the people of God. And, so, the Church of God, as an organization in the world, would cease to exist! Who is to maintain the ministry of the Word? Who is to keep up the ordinances of God's House if all His people break up into separate grains of sand instead of being living stones built up into His spiritual Temple? "He has made His wonderful works to be remembered." So, join with Him in that sacred purpose and, in observing the ordinances instituted by your Lord, set forth in your Baptism, your death, burial and resurrection with Him and, in the memorial Supper, show forth His death until He come.

Thus I have shown you how God has made His wonderful works to be remembered and I press it upon the heart and conscience of all the Lord's people to see that their memory is happily burdened with the recollection of God's mercy. Study diligently, in the Biblical record, what He did in the olden times. Learn, from Church History, what He has done from the days of Christ's sojourn upon the earth until now. But especially recollect what He has done for *you* and often say, "Come and hear, all you that fear God, and I will declare what He has done for my soul." Abundantly utter the memory of God's great goodness! The Lord's children should not be dumb! Worldlings are noisy enough in praising their false gods—they often make night hideous and startle us from our sleep as they sing the songs of Bacchus, or Mars, or other heathen deities.

Then shall the children of God be silent and allow His mercies to lie forgotten in unthankfulness? No, no! But write the record of them upon your doors! Let it be seen upon the walls of your houses! Publish the glad news wherever you go! Tell it even to unwilling ears and say, again and again, "The Lord is good, and His mercy endures forever. I can speak with confidence upon this matter, for in my experience I have proved it to be so." Facts like these are among the best arguments to silence infidel doubts and Satanic temptations. Tell the skeptics what God has done for you and ask them whether unbelief can work such wonders for them. You, poor widow, with your seven little children, tell them how you took your troubles to the Lord and He helped you, so that you know that there is a God, for you rested and your family rested upon Him in your great sorrow—and He upheld and delivered you. Tell them, you who have been sick, and in poverty, and who cried unto God and He helped you—tell them that you know that there is a God that hears prayer! Tell them, you who are rejoicing in God with unspeakable joy and who often feel so happy that you scarcely can bear the great delight—tell them that God still lifts up the light of His Countenance upon His people! And if they sneer at you, tell them that you are as honest as they are and that they have as much reason to believe your word as you have to believe theirs. Pit your experience against their arguments! Lay your facts over against their fallacies and, in this way, you shall become valiant soldiers for the Truth as it is in Jesus.

II. Now, secondly, IT IS WISDOM ON OUR PART TO REMEMBER THESE WONDERFUL WORKS OF THE LORD, for the effect upon our minds will be useful in many ways.

First, *it will assure us of the Lord's mercy and compassion.* Read the next sentence of the text, "The Lord is gracious and full of compassion." Gracious, that is, to the sinful! Full of compassion, that is, to the weak and to the sorrowful! If we keep in remembrance the wonderful works of God, our experience will prove the Truth of the text. How gracious the Lord was to sinful Israel! When they rebelled against Him and murmured at Him, He still worked great wonders for them. He fed them with manna from Heaven and brought them flesh to eat and guided them by His fiery-cloudy pillar. He would not let their sin turn away His Grace, but He still loved them. Does not your life, Beloved, prove to you that God is very gracious to you, forgiving your sin, overlooking your infirmities and bearing long with you? I want you to notice that it has been so in your own life because, then, when you meet with a poor trembling sinner, you can say to him, or to her, "I know that God is very gracious, for He has been gracious to me." You can tell the man with a troubled conscience that Christ can ease it for He has eased yours. You can tell how your great sin was taken away by Christ's great Atonement and you can comfort those who are burdened and bowed down, by saying, "He did all this for me and though, to my shame, I have to confess that I have often grieved Him, He has never left me, nor forsaken me. Even when I have lost the Light of His Countenance, through my own fault, yet, when I have mourned over my guilt, He has beamed upon me again. In great mercy has He dealt with me and He has been wonderfully gracious to me." Such testimony as that will be a great encouragement to others. As they hear what the Lord has done for you, they will be led by the Spirit of God to turn to Him that the like favor may be displayed towards them.

Recollect, also, the great compassion of the Lord. I hope your own life has shown you how very tender He is towards those who trust Him, even as the Psalmist says, "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." I can recollect how, in a time of terrible depression of spirit and of intense anguish of pain, I cast myself upon my God with that text in my mouth. I said to Him, "O Lord, I am Your child and if any child of mine were pained as I am, and I could take away his pain, I would do so. You are my Father. Prove your fatherliness by easing me, or else by strengthening my frail spirit to endure all this agony." I can even now recall the wonderful relief that came over both body and mind when I had pleaded like that before God and I, therefore, speak with confidence of His fullness of compassion, for I have tried it and proved it for myself! And I invite all who are bowed down to do as I did.

Some of you may be in great distress of mind, a distress out of which no fellow creature can deliver you, you poor nervous people at whom others often laugh. I can assure you that God will not laugh at you! He knows all about that sad complaint of yours, so I urge you to go to Him, for the experience of many of us has taught us that "the Lord is gracious and full of compassion." As a mother comforts her children so will He comfort you. He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking

flax—so go to Him in all the weakness of your deep contrition and you shall find a mother's heart in the bosom of Jesus—something more tender than a man's heart could ever be! Flee to your God this very hour! Our own experience leads us to urge you to do so, does it not, Brothers and Sisters in Christ? If this were the time and place, and we could turn this service into an experience meeting, would not many of you rise and say, "It is even so," as you remembered God's wonderful works to you? Would you not say, "Yes, truly He is the God of Grace, gracious and full of compassion"?

The next effect that this remembrance will have on our mind is this. *It will make us consider and acknowledge the Divine bounty to us throughout all our lives.* Observe what the Psalmist says next—"He has given meat unto them that fear Him." Now, as we remember that—as the Israelites might have recollected how they had abundance of food even in the wilderness—we shall be led to think of what poor creatures we must be to be so dependent upon our God. We would not have been alive if He had not fed us. How poor we all are in our natural condition! I heard one say of another, who had grown to be a rich man, and it was said in a wicked, envious spirit, "I recollect the time when he had not two shirts to his back and I said to him, 'And your mother remembers the time when you had not one.'" There is not much for the richest man to boast of—men glory in their possessions, and they talk of others who are poor, as though they were to be despised. There is not a man alive who has not had to be indebted to God for the breath in his nostrils! We owe everything to Him and, in looking back upon our spiritual career, we have to say, "He has given meat unto them that fear Him."

We have had to receive from the Lord the daily food that our souls have required. In temporal things and in spiritual, we have been pensioners at His gate, beggars wholly dependent upon His bounty. We have not been able to provide for ourselves one morsel of the bread of Heaven! The Lord has had to give us all that we have had all through our whole life, both physically and spiritually. He has not only given meat to His people once or twice, but all their lives! The bread you eat to nourish your body and the spiritual food whereon your soul has been fed have been continually given to you. Have you ever counted how many meals you have eaten from the first day until now? Have you ever thought of the great store of spiritual food that you have received from the Lord? The queen of Sheba was astonished at the provision that Solomon made for his household for a single day, but oh, what wonderful provision Christ has made for you! He has given you, spiritually, His flesh to eat and His blood to drink! He has given you, even in superabundance, the riches of His Grace and He will, in due time, give you the riches of His Glory! Do not fail to recollect His wonderful works, in order that, while you realize your absolute dependence upon Him, you may also see how He has continually supplied all your needs so that you have lacked nothing from the first day even until now! He has prepared a table before you in the presence of your enemies and He has made you to lie down in green pastures and led you beside the still waters.

Recollect, too, *the circumstances under which some of you have been fed.* It was a great wonder when God furnished a table in the wilderness and it has been a wonder, to some of you, where your daily bread has come from, has it not? I can look back upon the past history of some of you and note how trying your circumstances have been. Yet all your real needs have been supplied. You often woke up in the morning feeling very much like the little birds that do not know where their breakfast is to be found. But I hope that you, like the little birds, began to sing even before you found your breakfast, for you did find it! I love, in the winter, to see the robins sit on the bare tree limbs and yet sing. It is easy enough to sing in springtime when all the birds are singing—but it is not so easy to sit on the bare limbs and still praise the Lord. Still, you should do even that, for you have been fed up till now, have you not? You know that ancient promise, "Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure"? And that promise has been fulfilled in your experience. Sometimes, perhaps, you have attended a ministry where your soul has been well-nigh starved and you have not known where to look for the spiritual meat that you needed to make you grow. Yet, you are still alive, for the Lord Jesus has, Himself, fed you. "Not by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" has your soul been nourished! So, bless Him and praise His holy name, this very hour, and let not the memory of His great goodness ever be forgotten by you.

Then remember, dear Brothers and Sisters, *the variety of supplies that you have had.* "He has given meat to them that fear Him." All sorts of spiritual meat has He given you. When you were a child, you fed upon the simple doctrines of the Word. But since then, your Lord has given you strong meat that you may become a man in Christ Jesus. In all conditions, you have had food convenient for you. At some stages of your spiritual history, it was not every ministry that could meet your needs. You could not listen with profit to this man or that, but the Lord Himself fed you with His Word—and many a choice morsel you had while you were reading your morning chapter—and it seemed as if every verse in that chapter had been written specially for you, or as if the ink were still wet upon the page and that the love-letter came to you fresh from your dear Father's hand! Thus has He, many a time, given meat to you who fear Him.

Blessed be His holy name, not one good thing has failed of all that He has promised! Have you ever lacked anything? Has your Lord been a wilderness unto you, a land of barrenness? No, you have dwelt in a land flowing with milk and honey and you have been fed to the fullest! Do not forget this but tell the story of it to others. Tell it to your poorer neighbors. Tell it to poor saints when they are in low water. Tell it to the poor distressed children of God who cannot feed upon the Word. Tell them that their Heavenly Father will never let them die of starvation, for God, who feeds the ravens and the sparrows, will surely not allow His own children to starve!

There is another thing to be learned from the memory of God's goodness. *It is intended to certify us of His faithfulness.* "He will ever be mindful of His Covenant," is the last clause of our text. The Lord never forgot

the Covenant He made with Abraham. Often, when He might, otherwise, have destroyed Israel, He remembered that Covenant and He turned aside His wrath. And do you think He will ever forget the Covenant which He has made with His only-begotten Son, a Covenant signed, sealed and ratified, "in all things ordered well," a Covenant confirmed by the Sacrifice of His well-beloved Son, a Covenant which He signed with His own blood and which is to stand fast forever and ever? No, He cannot be false to His oath! He cannot lie! He must perform what He has promised. "Has He said, and shall He not do it?" All the past history of our lives goes to show that God is faithful and will be faithful even to the end. I have never met with a child of God whose experience did not go to confirm the fidelity of God. "You are My witnesses," said the Lord. And if He were to call me into the witness-box and, I may say that if He were to call many of you, your witness would be very straightforward, very plain, very clear, very definite. You would say, "He keeps His Covenant forever and ever." He is not forgetful of the pledge which He gave to David, and to David's Lord, therefore, go forward with unwavering confidence in Him. Doubt not, nor be discouraged, but rejoice in Him and trust Him evermore!

The last thing that this memory of God's wonderful works ought to do for us is to make us praise Him. This Psalm begins with, "Praise you the Lord," and it finishes up with, "His praise endures forever." Well, Beloved, the memory of His great goodness is intended to make us praise Him forever and ever, so let us begin to do it at once! Do not go out of this place sorrowful—let your recollection of God's goodness move you to praise Him. If you have no present cause for joy, so far as you can see, think of the past mercies that you have received. If everything looks gloomy ahead, recollect how the Lord has helped you in all the steps you have already trod. Give Him a grateful song this very hour. Smooth those wrinkles from your brow. Let your eyelids no longer hang down with heaviness, but say in your soul, "The Lord has dealt well with His servants, according to His Word. Therefore will we praise Him with our whole heart in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation." I frequently exhort you to praise the Lord because I feel how necessary it is and because we shall soon be in Heaven—therefore, it is well to be holding frequent rehearsals here of that which is to be our everlasting song!

Now I turn to the unconverted and say, Dear Friends, from our own experience we can tell you that to serve God is a blessed thing. He is a grand Master—there is none like He. He makes His servants blessed forever. He never leaves them, nor forsakes them. Therefore, come and put your trust in Him. Hide yourself under the shadow of His wings and then, you, too, shall be able to say, even as we do, "He is faithful. His mercy endures forever." God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 111.

Verse 1. *Praise you the LORD.* Or, "Hallelujah," "Praise be unto Jehovah." "Praise you the Lord." I invite all Christians to give good heed to this injunction, whether others praise Him, or not, "Praise you the Lord."

Do it now! Do it always, do it heartily, do it instead of what you sometimes do, namely, doubt Him, murmur at Him, rebel against Him. "Praise you the Lord." You who are beginning the Christian life, praise Him for your regeneration. You who have long continued in it, praise Him for sustaining you. You who are the most ripe for Heaven, begin now the praises that will never, never end!

1. *I will praise the LORD with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation.* It is always well when a preacher practices what he preaches. David does that here—"Praise you the Lord. I will praise the Lord." One of the best ways of enforcing an exhortation is to practically obey it. "Praise you the Lord. I will praise the Lord." But when a man becomes an example to others, he should be very careful to set a *good* example. Hence, the Psalmist not only says that he will praise the Lord, but that he will do it heartily, yes, with his whole heart. Such a God as Jehovah is, is worthy of all the praise we can give Him. We ought to praise Him with all our thought, with all our skill, with all our love, with all our zeal, with all our heart. David tells us that he would render this praise both among the choice and select company of God's people, "in the assembly of the upright," and also in the larger congregation, where a more mixed multitude would be found. Brothers and Sisters, praise is never out of place and never out of season. If you are with a little company of two or three choice Christian Friends, praise the Lord in their midst. Tell them your experience and bless the name of the Lord for His Grace and mercy. But if you should be in a larger assembly, where the characters of some may be doubtful, be not abashed, but still continue to praise the Lord.

2. *The works of the LORD are great.* They are great in number, in size, in purpose, and in effect. Even when God makes a little thing, it is great because of the wisdom displayed in making it. The microscope has taught us the greatness of God in creating tiny creatures of wondrous beauty, yet so small as not to be perceptible to the naked eye. "The works of the Lord are great,"

2. *Sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.* If we take pleasure in a man, we also take pleasure in his works—we like to see what he has made and, in like manner, the saints of God take pleasure in His works. They revel in the beauties of creation. They delight to study His wisdom in Providence, but, best of all, they are most charmed with the wonders of Divine Grace. These works are so marvelous that a mere surface glance at them is not sufficient—you need to search them out, to dig deep in the mines of God's Wisdom as seen in His works, to try to find out the secret motive of His everlasting purposes and, the more you study them, the more they will grow! Some things impress you at first with greater significance than they do afterwards, but the works of God are so great that if you look at them throughout your whole lifetime, they will continue to grow still greater.

3. *His work.* I suppose the Psalmist means God's chief work, His grand work of Grace. "His work."

3. *Is honorable and glorious: and His righteousness endures forever.* The work of God is full of Grace and it is full of honor and glory to His

blessed name. And every single portion of the work of Grace is full of that which resounds to the honor and glory of the Triune Jehovah. I hope, dear Friends, that you delight to study the whole plan of saving mercy, from its initiation in the eternal purpose to its culmination in the gathering together of all the people of God. If you do, you will see that all through, it "is honorable and glorious: and His righteousness endures forever." As it endured Calvary, it may well endure forever! Though the Lord Jesus Christ purposed so to save His people, He would not do it by sacrificing His righteousness. He fulfilled righteousness to the utmost by His perfect life and by His suffering even unto death and now we are quite sure that no further strain will ever be put upon that Divine Attribute. "His righteousness endures forever."

4. *He has made His wonderful works to be remembered.* Do not be forgetful of God's wonderful works! They are made on purpose to be remembered, so treasure them up, for they are worthy of being held in everlasting remembrance.

4. *The LORD is gracious and full of compassion.* This is what His people always find to be true whenever they read the history of His works. The thought that strikes them is, "The Lord is gracious and full of compassion." If any of you long to be at peace with God, however far you may have wandered from Him, He is ready to receive you if you will but return to Him, for He "is gracious and full of compassion"—not merely tender-hearted, but full of graciousness. He abounds with thoughts of love towards His people! Come and try Him for yourselves.

5. *He has given meat unto them that fear Him: He will ever be mindful of His Covenant.* The needs of all His people are always supplied by Him. He finds food, both for body and soul, and you may rest assured that every promise of His Covenant will be faithfully kept. You may forget it, but He will not. "He will ever be mindful of His Covenant" and mindful of you because of that Covenant—mindful of your heavy cares, mindful of your bitter griefs, mindful of your weakness and infirmity because you are in His Covenant and He is mindful of it!

6. *He has showed His people the power of His works.* He showed the Israelites what He could do, what force He could throw into what He did and He has shown to us Christians the same thing in another way, by the power of His gracious Spirit, blessing the preaching of His Word to the conversion of sinners and maintaining the great fight against the dread powers of darkness. "He has showed His people the power of His works."

6. *That He may give them the heritage of the heathen.* He gave to Israel the land of Canaan where the heathen dwelt. And He will give to Christ, when He asks for them, the heathen for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession! Let us pray God to prove the power of His works in the subduing of the nations unto Christ.

7. *The works of His hands are verity and judgment.* He never acts contrary to Truth and righteousness. Even when He puts on His most terrible look and smites His enemies in His wrath, still, "the works of His hands are verity and judgment."

7, 8. *All His commandments are sure. They stand fast forever and ever, and are done in Truth and uprightness.* Whatever God commands, determines, purposes—you may rest assured that it will be accomplished. But His purposes are always accomplished, not by caprice, but by "Truth and uprightness." God is a Sovereign, doing as He wills, but He never wills to do anything that is inconsistent with justice, truth, and uprightness.

9. *He sent redemption unto His people.* He brought them up out of Egypt with a high hand and a stretched out arm. And He has sent redemption to us, first, by price, when He redeemed us from our guilt upon the tree. And then by power, when the Holy Spirit came and broke our bands asunder and set us free from the dominion of our sins!

9. *He has commanded His Covenant forever: holy and reverend is His name.* His whole Character commands our reverence because it is superlatively holy and His name is to us a word of awe never to be mentioned flippantly and never to be quoted without earnest thought and prostration of heart before Him. I fear that there are some professors who use the name of God far too freely—they do not recollect that "holy and reverend is *His* name." I can hardly think that any man can be "reverend." There are some who choose to be called by that title—I suppose they mean something less than the word means here. "Holy and reverend is His name," not mine, certainly.

10. *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.* It is the A B C of true wisdom. He who has learned to fear God has learned the first part of wisdom. According to some, the word, "beginning," here means the chief, the head, the front, just as, often in Scripture, "beginning," signifies that. "The fear of the Lord" is the chief part of "wisdom," the essence of it.

10. *A good understanding have all they that do His commandments.* Practical goodness is the proof of a good understanding. A man may have an orthodox head and yet not have a good understanding. A man may be able to talk very glibly about the commandments of God and even to preach about them with considerable power—but it is the *doing* of them that is the main point.

10. *His praise endures forever.*

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

THE NEW SONG AND THE OLD STORY
NO. 2850

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the LORD, all the earth. Sing unto the LORD, bless His name; show forth His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the heathen, His wonders among all people."
Psalm 96:1-3.

THERE are mighty passions of the human soul which seek vent and can get no relief until they find it in expression. Grief, acute, but silent, has often destroyed the mind because it has not been able to weep itself away in tears. The glow of passion, fond of enterprise and full of enthusiasm, has often seemed to tear the very fabric of manhood when unable either to attain its end or to utter its strong desires. So it is in true religion. It not only lays hold upon our intellectual nature with appeals to our judgment and our understanding, but, at the same time, it engages our affections, brings our passions into play and fires them with a holy zeal, producing a mighty furor, so that, when this spell is on a man, and the Spirit of God thoroughly possesses him, he must express his vehement emotions.

Some professors of religion are ingenious enough to conceal whatever Grace they possess. Little enough they have, I guarantee you, or it would soon be discovered. Have you never seen the brooks that were known to come down the hillsides filled up with stones through the greater part of the summer? You wonder whether there is any streamlet there at all. You may go and search among the rounded stones and scarcely find a trace of water. How different after the snows have melted, or the mists upon the mountain's brows have turned to showers! Then the water comes rushing down like a mighty torrent, nor is there any question about its being a genuine stream. It shows itself as it rolls the great stones along, perhaps breaking down the banks and overflowing the country!

And so there is a religion—a poor, miserable, ordinary Christianity which is not worth the name it bears, that can hide itself—but vital godliness must assert itself. It must speak plainly, it must act vigorously, it must appear conspicuously. The Cross reveals the hearts of men—it unveils their true character. Till the Cross was set up, Joseph of Arimathaea was scarcely known to be a disciple. And Nicodemus continued to do habitually what he once did literally—resort to Jesus by night. Openly he remained in the Sanhedrim, though secretly he was a profound ad-

mirer of the great Redeemer. But when the Cross was lifted up, Joseph went boldly in, with senatorial authority, and obtained the body of Jesus for burial—and Nicodemus came out with well-timed liberality to provide his hundred pounds of spices and his fair white linen. Thus the Cross reveals the thoughts of many hearts!

If you have real Grace and true love to Jesus in your soul, you will need some way of expressing yourselves. Our purpose, therefore, is now to suggest to you two modes of expressing your consecration to God and your devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. These two methods are *to sing about* and *to talk about* the good things the Lord has done for you and the great things He has made known to you. Let sacred song take the lead—"O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, bless His name." Then let gracious discourse follow—be it in public sermons or in private conversations—"Show forth His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people."

I. We begin with THE VOICE OF MELODY.

All you who love the Lord, give vent to your heart's emotion by holy song and take care that *it is sung to the Lord, alone.* What a noble instrument the human voice is! What a compass it has! Its low, soft whispers—how they can hold us spellbound! Its full volume, as it peals forth like thunder—how it can startle and produce dismay! What profanity, then, to use such an instrument in the service of sin! Is not our tongue the glory of our frame? Had I no conscientious objection to instrumental music in worship, I would still, I think, be compelled to admit that all the instruments that were ever devised by men, however sweetly attuned, are harsh and grating compared with the unparalleled sweetness of the human voice. When it is naturally, melodious and skillfully trained, (and every true worshipper should be zealous to dedicate his richest talent and his highest acquirement to this sacred service), there can be no music under Heaven that can equal the combination of voices which belong to men, women and children whose hearts really love the Savior! So sweet, so enchanting is the melody of song, that, surely, its best efforts should not be put forth to celebrate martial victories or national jubilations, much less should it lend its potent charm to anything that is trivial or lascivious. By sacred right, its highest beauties should be consecrated to Jehovah! If you can sing, sing the songs of Zion! If God has gifted you with a sweet, liquid voice, be sure and use it to render homage unto Him who cried out for you upon the Cross, "It is finished!" "Sing unto the Lord."

How much public singing, even in the House of God, is of no account! How little of it is singing unto the Lord! Does not the conscience of full many among you bear witness that you sing a hymn because others are singing it? You go right straight through with it by a kind of mechanical action. You cannot *pretend* that you are singing unto the Lord! He is not in all your thoughts. Have you not been at places of worship where there is a trained choir evidently singing to the congregation? Tunes and tones

are alike arranged for popular effect. There is an artistic appeal to human passions. Harmony is attended to—homage is neglected. That is not what God approves of. I remember a criticism upon a certain minister's prayers. It was reported, in the newspaper, that he uttered the finest prayer that had ever been offered to a Boston audience! I am afraid there is a good deal of vocal and instrumental music of the same species. It may be the finest praise ever offered to a congregation, but, surely, that is not what we come together for! If you need the sensual gratification of music's melting, mystic sound, let me commend to you the concert room—there you will get the enchanting ravishment—but when you come to the House of God, let it be to "sing unto the Lord." As you stand up to sing, there should be a fixed intent of the soul, a positive volition of the mind, an absolute determination of the heart that all the flame which kindles in your breast—and all the melody that breaks from your tongue—and all the sacred swell of grateful song shall be unto the Lord, and unto the Lord, alone.

And if you would sing unto the Lord, let me recommend you to *flavor your mouth with the Gospel doctrines which savor most of Grace unmerited and free.* Any other form of theology would tempt us, more or less, to chant the praise of men. Gratitude has full play when we come to know that salvation is of the Lord, alone, and that mercy is Divinely free. He who has once heard the echo of that awful thunder, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," will learn to rejoice with trembling, to sing with deep feeling and to adore, with lowliest reverence, the great Supreme to whom might and majesty belong, and from whom Grace and goodness flow! Human counsels and conceits sink into insignificance, for thoughts of loving kindness and deeds of renown belong unto the Lord alone!

Kindly glance your eyes down the Psalm from which our text is taken and note how the exhortation to sing is given three times. I draw no absolute inference from this peculiar construction, but, to say the least, it is remarkable that the number three is so continually employed. Further down in the same Psalm it is written, "Give unto the Lord," "Give unto the Lord," "Give unto the Lord," three times. Is there not here some kind of allusion to the wondrous Doctrine of the Trinity? At any rate, I boldly use the threefold cord to express the homage with which it behooves us to adore the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. As for Unitarianism, it is a religion of units and I suppose it always will be. There is no danger of its ever spreading very widely. It is cold as a moonlight night, though scarcely as clear. It has not enough of power in it to fire men's hearts to laud and magnify the Lord. It produces, now and then, a hymn, but it cannot kindle the passions of men to sing it with fervor and devout enthusiasm. Certainly, it cannot gather a crowd of grateful people, who will make a joyful noise unto the Lord and with all their heart and voice shout the chorus of gratitude. O Beloved, I beseech you to let your souls have vent in praise! Sing, often, such a verse as this—

"Blessed be the Father and His love,

To whose celestial source we owe
Rivers of endless joy above,
And rills of comfort here below."

Praise the God of Glory who loved you before the foundation of the world! Praise the God of Grace who called you when you sought Him not. Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has begotten us again unto a lively hope—our Heavenly Father who provides for us, educates us, instructs us, leads and guides us, and will bring us, by-and-by, to the many mansions in His own house.

Sing you also unto the Son. Never fail to adore the Son of God who left the royalties of Heaven to bear the indignities of earth. Adore the Lamb slain! Kneel at the foot of the Cross and praise each wound, and magnify the Immortal who became mortal for our sakes—

"Glory to You, great Son of God!
From whose dear wounded body rolls
A precious stream of vital blood
Pardon and life for dying souls."

And, then, sing you to the Holy Spirit! Let us never fail in praising Him. I am afraid we often do. We forget Him too much in our sermons, our prayers and our hymns—or we mention Him, perhaps, as a matter of course, with formal expressions rather than with feelings of the most intense fervor. Oh, how our hearts are bound reverently to worship the Divine Indweller who, according to His abundant mercy, has made our bodies to be His Temple wherein He deigns to dwell!—

"We give You, sacred Spirit, praise,
Who in our hearts of sin and woe
Makes living springs of Grace arise,
And into boundless Glory flow."

Praise you, with your songs, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—the Triune God of Israel! Have you understood this? To Jehovah let your song be addressed. Thrice be His holy name repeated!

Then, be careful of the Psalmist's instructions. Let the song that you sing be a new song. "O sing unto the Lord a new song!" Not the song of your old legal bondage which you used to sing so tremblingly, with the dread of a slave—a new and nobler song becomes you who are the Lord's children, His sons and daughters! "O sing unto the Lord a new song!" To some of you the song of Redemption is quite new. Once you sang the songs of Bacchus or of Venus, or else you hummed over some light air, without meaning or motive, unless to while away your time and drive away all serious thoughts. O you who used so readily to sing the songs of Babylon, sing now the songs of Zion quite as freely and earnestly! "Sing unto the Lord a new song."

By a "new" song, is meant the *best* song. It is put for that which is most elegant, most exquisite and best composed. Pindar says, "Give me old wine, but give me a new song." So may we say, "Give us the old wines of the Kingdom of God, but let us sing unto the Lord a new song"—the best that we can find, no borrowed air, no hackneyed lyric—and let our spirits sing unto the Lord that which wells up fresh out of the quickened heart. A new song, always new! Keep up the freshness of your praise. Do

not drivel down into dull routine. The drowsy old clerks in the dreary old churches used always to say, "Let us sing to the praise and glory of God such-and-such a Psalm," till I should think the poor old Tate and Brady version was pretty well used up. We have new mercies to celebrate, therefore we must have new songs—

"Blest be his love who now has set
New time upon the score."

With "new time upon the score," let there be new notes for Him who renews the face of Nature.

And have we not, dear Brothers and Sisters, new graces? Then let us sing with our new faith, our new love and our new hope! Some of you have very lately been made new creatures in Christ Jesus—sing you unto the Lord a new song. Surely He has done great things for you, whereof you are glad. Others of you have been converted for years, yet, if your inward man is renewed day by day, your praises shall be always new. Luther used to say that the wounds of Christ seemed to him to bleed today as if they had never bled before, for he found such freshness in his Master. You pluck a flower and it soon loses its scent and begins to wither, but our sweet Lord Jesus has a savor about His name that never departs. We take His name to lie like a bundle of camphire all night between our breasts and in the morning it smells as sweet as when we laid down to sleep. And when we come to die, that Lily of the valleys will drop with the same profusion as it did when, with our youthful hands, we first plucked it and came to Jesus and gave Him all our trust! "Sing unto the Lord a new song." Let the freshness of your joy and the fullness of your thanks be perennial as the days of Heaven!

This song, according to our text, *is designed to be universal.* "Sing unto the Lord all the earth." Let parents and children mingle in its strains. Let not the aged among you say, "Our voices are cracked," but sing to the Lord with all the voice you have and all the compass you can. And you young people, give the Lord the highest notes you are able to reach! Still sing unto the Lord, you that are rich—sing unto the Lord who has saved you, for it is not many of your sort that He saves—

"Gold and the Gospel seem to ill agree—
Religion always sides with poverty,"

said John Bunyan, and he spoke the truth! Sing unto the Lord, you poor ones whom the Lord has favored, for still does it happen that "the poor have the Gospel preached unto them." Sing unto Him, you who are learned in many matters. Let your talents make your song more full of understanding. And you who are unlearned, if you cannot put so much of understanding into the song, put more of the spirit and sing with all the more heartiness. All the earth should sing! There is not one of us but has cause for song and certainly not one saint but ought especially to praise the name of the Lord. You remember that passage in the 107th Psalm, (it is worth noticing), where the Psalmist says, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy," as if they, above all others, ought to say, "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endures forever."

In addition to its being a new song, and a universal one, it is to be *a very inspiration of gratitude*. "Sing unto the Lord: bless His name." How apt you are, in speaking of anyone who has been kind to you, to say, "God bless him!" The expression comes right up from your heart. And although you cannot invoke any blessing on God, you can desire for His name every blessing and every tribute of homage. You can desire for His cause that it may be established and may be triumphant. You may desire for His people that they may be helped, made holy and guided to their eternal rest. You may desire for mankind that they may hallow God's holy name and all because you feel you owe so much to the Lord that you cannot help praising—and cannot help wishing that your praise should be fruitful on earth and acceptable in Heaven.

In two ways, I think, it becomes us to sing God's praises. We ought to *sing with the voice.* I do not consider we sing enough to God. The poet speaks of "angel harp and human voice." If the angel harp is more skillful, surely the human voice is more grateful. For my part, I like to hear sacred songs in all sorts of places. The maidservant can sing at her work and the carter as he drives his team. The occupations are few which could not be enlivened by repeating the words and running over the tune of a hymn. If it were only in a faint whisper, the habit might be cultivated. You might expose yourselves, it is true, to a taunt and be upbraided as "a Psalm-singing Methodist," but that would not do you any hurt—better that than make a ribald jest or utter an impious blasphemy! Those who lend their tongues to such vile uses have something to be ashamed of. Lovers of pleasure sing their songs and poor trash, for the most part, they are. If the snatches we catch in the streets are the echoes of the saloon and the music hall, little credit is due to those who cater for public amusement. Lacking alike in sense and sentiment, they betray the degeneracy of the times and the depravity of popular taste.

There is a literature of song in which peasants may rejoice, of which patriots may be proud and to which poets may turn with envious eyes. Why wed your pretty tunes to paltry words? The higher the art, the more the pity to debase it. If you cull over our hymn books for samples of bad poetry, loose rhyme, and puerile thoughts, that reviewers like to revile, and libertines like to laugh at, we can only say, "Well, we cannot always vindicate the culture of those whose sincerity we hold in the highest esteem. But we will dare to confront you on equal terms—the sanctuary *versus* the saloon—our vocalists against your vocalists, from the sacred oratorios of Handel to the choicest of your operas, from the cant of our revival hymns to the catch of your last sensational songs! Yes, indeed, the people of God should sing more. Were we to try the exercise, we would find no small degree of pleasure in the practice. It would do us good to praise God more day by day. When we get together, two or three of us, we are in the habit of saying, "Let us pray." Might we not sometimes say, "Let us sing"? We have our regular Prayer Meetings, why do we not have Praise Meetings just as often?—

"Prayer and praise for sins forgiven

Make up on earth the bliss of Heaven."

We are like a bird that has only one wing. There is much prayer, but there is little praise. "Sing unto the Lord. Sing unto the Lord."

To *sing with the heart*, is the very essence of song—

"In the heavenly Lamb thrice happy I am
And my heart it does leap at the sound of His name."

Though the tongue may not be able to express the language of the soul, the heart is glad. Some persons seem never to sing with their heart. Their lips move, but their heart does not beat. In their common daily life, they move about as if they had been born on a dark winter's night and carried the cold chill into all their concerns. The lamentation they constantly utter is this, "All these things are against me." Their experience is comprised in this sentence, "In the world you shall have tribulation." They never get into the harbor. "In Me you shall have peace," is a secret they have never realized. They are fond of calling this world a howling wilderness and they are utterly oblivious of its orchards and vineyards. Were God to put them in the garden of Eden, they would not take any notice of the fruit or the flowers. They would go straight away to the serpent and begin saying, "Ah, there's a snake here!" Their harp is hung on the willows—they never can sing, for their heart is unstrung.

Well, dear Friends, a Christian ought to be like a horse that has bells on his head, so that he cannot go anywhere without ringing them and making music! His whole life should be a Psalm—every step should be in harmony, every thought should constitute a note, every word he utters should be a component part of the joyful strain! It is a blessed thing to see a Christian going about his business like the high priest of old who, wherever he went, made music with the golden bells. Oh, to have a cheerful spirit, not the levity of the thoughtless, nor the gaiety of the foolish, nor even the mirth of the healthy—there is a cheerful spirit which is the gift of Grace—that can and does rejoice evermore. Then, when troubles come we bear them cheerfully! Let fortune smile, we receive it with equanimity. Or let losses befall us, we endure them with resignation, being willing, so long as God is glorified, to accept anything at His hands.

These are the people to recommend Christianity. Their cheerful conversation attracts others to Christ. As for those people who are morose or morbid, sullen or severe, harsh in their judgment of their fellow men, or rebellious against the will of God, people of a covetous disposition, a peevish temper and a quarrelsome character—unto them it is of no use to say, "O sing unto the Lord," for they will never do it! They have not any bells in the tower of their heart—what chimes can they ring? Their harps have lost their strings—how can they magnify the Most High? But genuine piety finds expression in jubilant song—this is the initiative, though it is far from exhausting its resources!

II. Now, in the second place, let me stir you up, especially you who are members of this Church, to such DAILY CONVERSATION and such HA-

BITUAL DISCOURSE as shall be fitted to spread the Gospel which you love.

Our text admonishes you to "show forth His salvation." You believe in the salvation of God—a salvation all of Grace from first to last. You have seen it. You have received it. You have experienced it. Well, now, show it forth! Explain it to others and with the explanation let there be an illustration--exemplify it by your lives. God has shone upon you with the light of His Countenance that you may reflect His brightness and irradiate others. Every Christian here is like the moon which shines with borrowed light. But the sun lends not its bright rays to be hoarded up. It is that they may scatter beams of brightness over this world of night! Take care, then, that you are faithful to your trust. Show forth His salvation. God knows that I try to do so from the pulpit. I wish that you would all try and do so from the pews. Are you lacking in opportunities? I think not. Before and after service, especially to strangers and such as may have been induced to come and hear the Gospel, speak a word in season—thoughtfully, prayerfully, softly, talk with them.

Show forth this salvation, too, in your own houses, or on your visits, or wherever your lot may happen, in God's Providence, to be cast. It is wonderful how God blesses little efforts, very little efforts! I have sometimes, I am sorry to say not as often as I ought, scattered Seed by the wayside. Only a few nights ago, I had been driven by a driver and after I had alighted and given him the fare, he took a little Testament out of his pocket and said, "It is about 15 years ago since you gave me this, and said a word to me about my soul—and it has stuck by me and I have not let a day pass since without reading it." I felt glad. I know that if Christian people would try and show forth God's salvation, they would often be surprised to find how many hearts would gladly receive it. Beloved, show forth this salvation from day to day. Let it not be merely on a Sunday! While you hold that day as specially sacred, let no other day be common or unclean. We are thankful for the kindly efforts put forth in the Sunday school and elsewhere, on our Sabbaths, but we want Christian activity to be put forth from day to day! Let your zeal for the conversion of your fellow creatures be continuous. "In the morning sow your seed and in the evening withhold not your hand: for you know not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." The result of the Sabbath work may, perhaps, not be seen by you, when the result of Monday's work may very speedily appear.

"Show forth His salvation from day to day." This admonition is enforced in three clauses, so let us notice the second. "Declare His glory among the heathen." It is the same thing in another form. When you are telling out the Gospel, point especially to the glory of it. Show them the justice of the great Substitution and the mercy of it. Show them the wisdom which devised the plan whereby, without a violation of His Law, God could yet pardon rebellious sinners. Impress upon those whom you talk that the Gospel you have to tell them of is no common-place system of expediency, but it is really a glorious Revelation of Divinity. You know

men are very much attracted by anything of glory and renown. They will even rush to the cannon's mouth for so-called glory! Now, be sure, when you are talking to others about the salvation you have received at the hands of your dear Lord and Master, that you tell them about the glory thereof—what a glory it brings to Christ and to what a glory it will bring every sinner by-and-by. Tell them of the glory of being pardoned, the glory of being accepted, the glory of being justified, the glory of being sanctified. Is it not all "according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus"? I think you might relate some scenes from the deathbeds of the saints you have known, on which rays of glory have fallen—but I am sure you might anticipate the glory, which words cannot picture, or imagination realize, in the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus, the Resurrection of the just and the establishment of the everlasting Kingdom. Dwell upon these things! Declare His glory!

And do not be ashamed to do this in the presence of people of a disreputable character, though their ignorance and degradation be ever so palpable. "Declare His glory among the heathen." "I am going on a mission to the heathen," said a minister once to his people. Mistaking his meaning, they went home deploring the loss of their pastor. On the following Sunday, when they found him in the pulpit, they discovered that he had not been out of the city all week and when they wanted to know what parts he had visited, and what people he had seen, he reminded them that he had heathens at home—and they were to be found even in his own congregation. Ah, and there may be some heathens here! At any rate, there are plenty of heathens in this great city of London. I have no doubt there are parts of this metropolis in which hundreds and even thousands of people reside who are as ignorant of the plan of salvation as the inhabitants of Coomassie. They know nothing of Jesus, even though the Light of God is so bright around them. "Declare His glory among the heathen," you lovers of Christ! Penetrate into the dark places! Break up fresh ground, Christian men and women!

I am persuaded and this is a matter I have often spoken of, that many of you who sit and hear sermons on the Sunday, ought rather to turn out and preach the Gospel. While we are glad to see you occupying pews, it will be a greater joy to miss you from your seats if we only know that you are declaring God's glory among the heathen! I am not sure that we are, all of us, right to be living cooped up in this little island of ours. There are, in England, enough disciples of Jesus to bear the Gospel to the uttermost ends of the earth—but perhaps there is not one Christian in five or ten thousand who ever deliberately thinks about going to the heathen to make known to them the way of salvation and to declare the glory of the Lord among those who have never heard His name. Pray that there may yet come a wonderful wave of God's Spirit over our Churches which shall bear upon its crest hundreds of ardent spirits resolved to carry the tidings of redemption to the jungle and the fever swamps, to the high latitudes and the southern islands! Oh, that the love of Christ may constrain them! Know you not that Christ has determined to save men by

the preaching of the Gospel? Has He not charged His disciples to go into all the word and preach the Gospel to every creature? How poorly has His Church carried out this commission! If you love Christ, here is the opportunity for you to show your love—go and declare His glory among the heathen!

A third expression is used here. "Declare His wonders among all people." Our Gospel is a Gospel of wonders. It deals with amazing sin in a wonderful way. It presents to us a wonderful Savior and tells us of His wonderful complex Person. It points us to His wonderful Atonement and it takes the blackest sinner and makes him wonderfully clean! It makes him a new creature and works a wonderful change in him. It conducts him to wonders of happiness and wonders of strength, and yet onward to greater wonders of light and life, for it opens up to him the wonders of the Covenant. It gives him wonderful provisions, wonderful deliverances and leads him right up, by the power of Him who is called Wonderful, to the gates of that Wonderland where we shall forever—

"Sing, with rapture and surprise,
His loving kindness in the skies."

Surely, dear Christian Friends, we ought to talk about the wonders of the Lord our God, and especially should we dwell upon those wonders which we have ourselves seen. Of every Christian, it might be said that he is a wonder. Will you think a minute, Christian, of the wonder that God has made of you and the wonders that He has done for you? "That ever I should be," is a wonder—will you not say that? And then, "That ever I should be saved, is a wonder of wonders." That you should have been kept till now, that you should not have been allowed to go back, that you should have been preserved under so many troubles, that your prayers should have been heard so continuously, that, notwithstanding your ill manners, the love of Christ should still have remained the same—oh, but I cannot recite the tale of marvels—it is a long series of wonders! The Christian's life, if the worldling could understand it, would seem to him like a romance. The wonders of Grace far exceed the wonders of Nature and, of all the miracles God, Himself, has ever worked, there are no miracles so matchless in wonder as the miracles of Grace in the heart of man! Beloved, declare these miracles, these wonders—tell them to others!

Men like to hear a tale of wonder. They will gather round the fire, at eventide, when the logs are burning, and delightedly listen to a story of wonder. When you go home, young man, for your next holiday—if God has converted you, tell what great things the Lord has done for you. And when you go home, Mary, and see your mother—if the Lord has met with you, tell her what the Lord has done for you. "Declare His wonders among all people." Do not be afraid of speaking about the Gospel to anybody or in any company. Whoever they may be—whether they are rich or poor, high or low—if you get an opportunity of declaring the wonders of God's Grace, do not let the Gospel be unknown for lack of a tongue to tell it.

So, you see, I have put before you these two outlets for your love. First, sacred song and, secondly, gracious discourse. Be sure to use them both and if any bid you hold your peace, shall I tell you the answer? Use the same answer which your Master did to the Pharisees when they complained of the shouts of the little children—"If these should hold their tongues, the very stones would cry out." Ordinary Christians may be quiet because God has done nothing very wonderful for them. They go through the world in a very ordinary kind of way. Their religion is skin-deep and no more. But those who know that they deserved the deepest Hell and who have been saved by a mighty effort of Infinite Mercy must tell what God has done for them! They must come out from the world and be separate. They must be decided, zealous and even enthusiastic. Necessity is laid upon them to be earnest and intense in all they do and in all they say. They cannot help it, for the love of Jesus will fire their souls with a passion that cannot be quenched. "We thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not live henceforth unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again." God help you, Beloved, thus to live!

As for those of you who have never found the Savior, you cannot tell of His excellence or publish His worth. But I do trust that you will not forget that Jesus is to be found by those who seek Him, for whoever believes on Him shall be saved. Take Him at His word. Rely on His promise. Trust Him. Commit your soul into His keeping. Cast yourself unreservedly on His mercy. He will not spurn you, but He will receive you graciously. And you shall yet praise Him and He will be the health of your countenance and your God.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
DANIEL 9:14-23.

Verses 14-21. *Therefore has the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the LORD our God is righteous in all His works which He does, for we obeyed not His voice. And now, O Lord our God, that has brought Your people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and has gotten You renown, as at this day, we have sinned, we have done wickedly. O Lord, according to all Your righteousness, I beseech You, let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain: because for our sins and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people are become a reproach to all that are about us. Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of Your servant, and his supplications, and cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary, that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. O my God, incline Your ears and hear, open Your eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name: for we do not present our supplications before You for our righteousness, but for Your great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not for Your own sake, O my God: for Your city and Your people are called by Your name. And while I was speaking,*

and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God; yes, while I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. That is the time when prayer is always heard, when the lamb is offered, and his blood is sprinkled, and blessed be God, the Sacrifice in which we trust has been offered once and for all. The Christ, who has gone into Heaven as a Lamb that had been slain, has, by His one offering, made perpetual oblation unto the Most High on our behalf. So pray when we will, we may expect an answer. See how quick it was in Daniel's case: "While I was speaking in prayer," the angel Gabriel, in the form of a man, appeared unto him, and brought him the answer to his petition.

22, 23. *And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give you skill and understanding. At the beginning of your supplications the commandant came forth, and I am come to show you, for you are greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision.* And then he told him of the Messiah who was coming, of all that would happen to Him, of the week of respite, and then of the final consummation when God would permit the foreign prince to come and destroy the city, and the sanctuary, and to pour upon them the desolations which He had determined to inflict upon them.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—
885, 102 (PART 2), 135 (VERSION 2).

—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.

UNSEASONABLE PRAYER
NO. 2851

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 14, 1877.

"Why do you cry unto Me?"
Exodus 14:15.

AT first sight we might suppose that crying unto God was so good a thing that it would never be necessary for the Lord to ask the question, "Why do you cry unto Me?" But the question we are now to consider shows that there may be a time when, even to a man like Moses, it is necessary for God to ask, "Why do you cry unto Me?" Think of the circumstances in which the Israelites were then—the Red Sea was before them and the Egyptians were behind—so that when the Lord said to Moses, "Why do you cry unto Me?" Moses might very properly have replied, "What else can I do? There are great multitudes of blood-thirsty foes behind us and nothing but the roaring sea in front of us—what can we do except cry unto You?" But the fact was that the time for praying about the matter was past and the time for acting had come. So the Lord said to Moses, in effect, "Speak not to Me, but 'Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward'—forward through the sea that now rolls in front of them. That sea will divide as they march into it, so you need not pray any more about that difficulty. I will prepare a pathway for the people as they advance and they shall go safely through the very midst of the sea."

There is a time for praying, but there is also a time for holy activity. Prayer is adapted for almost every season, yet not prayer alone, for there comes, every now and then, a time when even prayer must take a secondary place and *faith* must come in and lead us not to cry unto God but to act as He bids us, even as the Lord said to Moses, "Why do you cry unto Me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward; but lift you up your rod and stretch out your hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea."

It is perfectly clear, then, that there may come a time when crying unto God becomes unseasonable. Our Lord's command to His disciples is, "Ask." But what follows that command? Why, the promise, "you shall receive." Then there must be a time for *receiving* as well as season for asking! But if, instead of stretching out my hands gratefully to receive what God is waiting to give, I continue to ask and forget or neglect to receive, I put prayer out of its proper place! Our Savior also said, "Seek, and you

shall find." Well, if I have sought and, at last, have found the treasure I have been seeking—but if, instead of perceiving that it is there and taking possession of it, and blessing God that I have found it—if I still go on seeking for it, then I have forgotten that while there is a time to seek, there is also a time to find, and my seeking then becomes unseasonable!

It is the same with the command and promise, "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Suppose that I have knocked and that the door has been opened to me, but that I still stand knocking at it? It is manifest that I am acting foolishly and wrongly—that I am casting reflections upon the owner of the house and also upon the sincerity of my own knocking, for it is doubtful whether I really did knock with the honest purpose of getting the door opened if, when that opening has taken place, I do not avail myself of the opportunity to enter, but continue still to knock. I do not say that we may not pray for something else, but I do say, in respect to the one thing which we have asked of God, that there comes a time for receiving rather than asking. With regard to the thing which we have sought at the Lord's hands, there comes a time for finding. And concerning the door at which we have knocked, there comes a time for opening. And, in each of these cases, the Lord's question to Moses comes with appropriateness to each one of us, "Why do you cry unto Me?"

When do you think, dear Friends, that prayer about anything becomes out of date? I answer, When we ought to believe that we have the answer to our supplication. I do believe that many a time some of you go on asking for a certain blessing after you have received it though you are not conscious that you have it. I am glad that you still ask for it as you think that you have not received it, but it would be a better evidence of your spiritual growth if you perceived that when God has given you a certain thing in answer to your petitions, you certainly do not need to continue asking for it. You have it, so rejoice over it and bless the Lord for giving it to you! I think there are some Christians who have received many blessings of which they are quite unaware. They have what they asked for, yet they still continue to pray for them. For instance, in some cases the prayer for assurance is offered long after assurance has been granted. Someone says that he believes the promise of God, but he needs to be more fully assured concerning it. My dear Brother, what do you mean? To be more assured that God made the promise? Because if so, you will have to go into the question of the authenticity of that particular passage and of the Bible in general!

"No," you say, "I do not mean that, for I am quite sure that God gave that promise." Then, do you mean that you doubt whether God will fulfill the promise that He has given? Because if so, I must say with all solemnity, that you ought to be assured that God cannot lie. This is not a thing for you to pray about, but for you to believe! It is the Lord's due that you should not allow anything like a question to arise over this matter. "Has He said, and shall He not do it? Or has He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" There is His definite promise and yet I go and ask Him to give me an assurance concerning it? If I were to give a promise to any of you and you were, afterwards, to come to me and say, "Give me further assurance," I would feel that you did not believe that I could or would do

what I had promised! If such treatment as that were meted out to me by any of you, I would not feel that you had done me any honor by finding it difficult to believe my word—yet why should I expect you to honor me? But I do expect that a son should honor his own father! And I do expect that a child of God should so fully believe his Heavenly Father that he should not talk about needing assurance of the truthfulness and reliability of His promises of Grace! Instead of continuing to pray for God to keep His word, it would be far better for you to believe that He has done so and that He always will do so!

"But it may be presumption," says someone. No, it can never be presumption to believe God! It is presumption to ever *doubt* Him. However great His promise may be, it must be true—and it is presumptuous for anyone to ask, "Can this be true?" or, "How can it be accomplished?" It would be enough for me that God has said it—how He will fulfill His promise is His business, not mine. I rest upon His word with a simple, childlike faith—and I am sorry if any of you are not doing the same. I feel that, sometimes, in the matter of assurance, God might say to us, "'Why do you cry unto Me?' Believe My word and rest assured that I shall certainly fulfill all that I have promised."

It is the same, also, in plain matters of Christian duty. It is a very shocking thing, but I have known the case of a man, I hope a Christian, knowing such-and-such a thing to be right, yet not attending to it, but saying that he was praying about it. He is quite certain about that particular thing—it could not possibly be plainer than it is, yet he is praying about it! Such-and-such a Truth of God is revealed plainly enough in the Scriptures—the man could see it there and did not doubt its authenticity—but he wanted it to be "brought home" to his conscience, so he said. Well, all I can say about such conduct as that is that it is a kind of rebellion against God, a shameful piece of hypocrisy—pretending to honor God in one duty while you know that you are neglecting another!

My dear Brothers and Sisters, if you are a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you know that it is the will of Christ that all Believers should be baptized even as He was, do not go home and pray about it—but be baptized! If you are not a member of a Christian Church and you know that it was the practice of the early Christians to first give themselves to the Lord and afterwards to give themselves to His Church, do not tell me that you have been praying about that matter for months—cease praying about it and go and do it! It is idle to talk of praying about things which are clearly according to the will of God. Cease praying about them—practice them!

You feel that you ought to have family prayer, yet you say that you have been praying about it! Praying about it? That is not what you have been doing—you have only been trying to see whether you could not find a loophole by which you could escape from an uncongenial but recognized duty! Go and do it, dear Friend—do not, any longer, act the hypocrite's part by pretending to pray about it! Yet this is the way in which some, who say that they love the Lord, try to play fast and loose with known precepts and duties. Do not let any of us fall into this sin—if we do, the Lord may well say to us, as he did to Moses—only He may say it

to us with more anger—"'Why do you cry unto Me' about such a thing as that? Do what you know to be right."

I. Now, leaving that part of our theme altogether, I come to a more general subject, which is this, IT IS GOOD FOR A MAN OFTEN TO ASK HIMSELF THE QUESTION, "WHY DO I PRAY? WHY DO I CRY UNTO GOD?"

In some cases, I fear that the answer will be exceedingly unsatisfactory. One replies, "*I pray because I was always trained to do so.* My dear mother, now in Heaven, taught me a form of prayer and that is why I continue to repeat it." If your mother had taught you the Muslim form of prayer, I suppose you would have kept on repeating it. Or if she had taught you to worship a block of wood or stone, would you have done so? I do not wish to speak with contempt concerning the influence of a mother's teaching, but I must say that this, alone, is a very unsatisfactory reason for presenting a prayer to God. Let me ask, Did your mother, when she taught you that form of prayer, merely mean that you should repeat those words without any particular thought as to what they meant? If she did, your mother knew but little of vital godliness and, probably, you know even less! You must pray to God from your inmost heart. Your soul must have real fellowship with Him, or else the prayer your mother taught you may be of no more use for you than if you repeated the alphabet backwards or forwards. I have heard of a man of 70 who said that he always prayed night and morning. When he was asked what he said in his prayer, it turned out that he only repeated the form which he had been taught to say as a little child. Now, if you had taught a parrot to say a prayer like that, the parrot would not have been saved, nor will you, if that is all you have to depend upon. There must be something, as a reason for prayer, vastly superior to that, or else your prayer may be nothing but a mockery of supplication, a sepulcher of devotion with no life in it, an external form which cannot please God.

Another says, "*I pray because prayer is a part of my religion."* Yes, and it is a part of every true Christian's religion to pray. It must be an essential part of his religion. But what sort of prayer is this of yours which seeks to justify itself upon the ground of being a part of your religion? And what is the religion of which it is a part? Is it a religion which knows God and draws near to Him? Is it a religion which leads you to seek the Lord in spirit and in Truth? If so, God bless your religion and the prayer that is a part of it! But if your religion consists merely in attendance at church, or at the meeting house so many times on the Lord's-Day and in the repetition of certain words which you have been taught, God deliver you from it! If your religion is to be worth anything, it must have a heart—there must be heart-work—the work of the Holy Spirit upon your heart and the drawing near of your soul unto God. Otherwise, all your outward performances, however excellent they may appear to be, will land you short of Heaven.

Another friend replies, "I pray because it is a right thing to do." There is something hopeful about that answer, but the question is, What sort of prayer do you pray? I make that enquiry because, although it is right to pray, it is not right to pray some sorts of prayer. It is the right thing for a

clerk in the telegraph office to work the telegraphic apparatus, but suppose that he should merely move a handle backwards and forwards for a whole day, yet never send a message or receive one? I would not think it was right for him to keep on moving that handle to no purpose. Evidently a wire is broken, or something is out of order—there is no connection with the electric current, for the machinery does not work. And in like manner, a prayer that never reaches the heart of God as it should and never brings an answer to your suppliant soul—a prayer in which you have no fellowship with the invisible Jehovah—is not a right kind of prayer to pray. And I cannot say of such prayer that it has any good reason why it should be presented. If you do not mean the petitions that you present, you mock God when you utter them, for they are only words and nothing but words.

There are some who would not like to say, just in so many words, exactly what they think, but *they really pray because they regard prayer as being more or less meritorious.* They do not consider it so meritorious that they expect to be saved by it, but they have some kind of notion that it helps with a great many other things, among the rest, faith in Jesus Christ to procure salvation for the soul. All these things go into the scale and, at last, they make up the weight required—that seems to be their idea. In fact, according to some, our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, is only a make-weight—our prayers, tears, alms and good works count for a great deal. These people do not quite advocate salvation by works. They do not go the full length of the road that the Romanist takes, but they go a very long way in the same direction through their belief that there is some kind of merit about various things appertaining to themselves, and, especially, that their prayers are meritorious.

I will speak about this error very strongly, lest I should not be understood by all and I state my final conviction that if any man thinks that his prayers have any merit in them, of themselves, every prayer that he presents is an insult to the Lord Jesus Christ, for He is set forth as the *only* Propitiation for sin! If you think that your prayers help in any degree to put away sin, you make an antichrist of your prayers! Christ's blood and righteousness form the *only* ground of your acceptance before God. If you reckon your prayers as a ground, or medium, or even a *help* to your acceptance with God, you push the Cross of Christ far into the background and put your prayers into the place of the only Substitute for sinners—and the more you pile them up, the more you multiply your sin!

Possibly I have quoted the answers which would be given if I were to ask many of you why you cry unto the Lord in prayer. I would like to listen to the prayer of every man here present—without his knowing that I was doing so—I would like to put my ear to the keyhole of his room and hear the style of his praying, but, as I cannot do that, I would like to ask whether you would wish anybody to hear them? How do your prayers appear to the eyes of God? Has it been humble, earnest, sincere, trustful, relying upon the atoning Sacrifice of Christ, and upon the effectual working of the Holy Spirit? If so, it is well, but if not, it is only vanity of vanities. All is vanity! How would it be with some of us if we were put into the

condition of the Highland soldier of whom I have read? In our war with our American colonists, before they gained their freedom from this country, a certain Highland regiment was engaged. Every evening one of the men was observed to go away from the camp into an adjacent woods—and it was suspected that he had gone to give information to the enemy. He was, therefore, arrested and brought before the colonel of the regiment.

The other officers said to him, "Now tell us what you have been doing while you have been absent from the camp." "Well," he said, "I have been accustomed, whenever I can, to retire for an hour or two of private prayer." The colonel happened to be a Scotchman and a Presbyterian, so he said to the soldier, "Well, you never had such reason to pray before as you have tonight. If you do go for an hour together to pray, you can pray—so let us hear you now." The man knelt down and poured out his soul before God, seeking deliverance at the Lord's hands and resigning his spirit into the keeping of his Heavenly Father. He prayed with such an earnest, simple power that when he had finished, the colonel said to the other officers, "A man who can come on parade like that must have been drilled a good many times. I think we may confidently accept what he has said as being true. There is no doubt about his having been alone in prayer to God, now that he can pray like that before us."

Happy is the man whose prayer would bear to be listened to by his fellow men in such a critical season as that, so that they should be compelled to say of him, "That man has often prayed before tonight—he has the very brogue of one who communes with Heaven." But he who gives such answers as I have been quoting would certainly not be able to pray before others as that soldier did!

II. But now, secondly, THERE ARE SOME ANSWERS TO THIS QUESTION WHICH BETRAY A GREAT DEAL OF IGNORANCE.

"Why do you cry unto Me?" There are times, dear Brothers and Sisters, when *a sinner's crying to God in prayer hinders him from immediate repentance.* The Gospel comes to each man and says, "Repent, and be converted." The man says, "I will pray." So he gets away alone and he prays—but such prayer as that cannot be acceptable to God. There is a favorite sin, of which he has long been guilty. He does not give it up, but he says that he will pray about it. God says to such a man, "'Why do you cry unto Me?' Give up your sin! This is not a matter for you to pray about, but to repent of." The man says, "I was asking for repentance." Ask, if you will, for repentance, but *exercise* it as well. Christ does not bid us pray to have our right hand cut off, or our right eye plucked out, but He says, "If your right eye offends you, pluck it out, and cast it from you…And if your right hand offends you, cut it off, and cast it from you." It will never do for any man to hope to be saved by putting prayer into the place of genuine repentance and immediate forsaking of sin!

The same is true *of those who put prayer into the place of believing in Christ.* "I mean to pray about the salvation of my soul," says someone. My dear Friend, the Gospel says to you, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "I have been praying for salvation, Sir, and I hope to get it if I keep on praying." No, you will not—on the contra-

ry, you will be lost forever if you pray instead of believing in Christ! As surely as you live, if you will not accept God's way of salvation, which is to believe in Jesus Christ, whether you pray or do not pray, you are a lost man. "There," says the Lord, "on yonder Cross is your only hope. Trust My Son, and you shall be saved." "Lord," you reply, "I will pray about the matter." Again the Lord says to you, "You see My well-beloved Son hanging upon that tree? There is life for a look at Him." "Lord, I will pray about the matter." The Lord says, "I have said to you, 'Hear, and your soul shall live.' 'Look unto Me, and be you saved.'" "Lord, I will pray." To put the matter very strongly, might not the man almost as well say, "Lord, I will swear"? Is there not just as much of the spirit of rebellion in the one answer as in the other? He has chosen his own way instead of accepting God's way! God's way is, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." And to this, the man replies, "Lord, I will pray." And if that is all he does, he sets his seal to his own condemnation! In such a case, the Lord asks the question in my text, "Why do you cry unto Me?" Why are you crying? For another atonement beside that of the Lord Jesus Christ? Crying for God to save you in some other way than by believing in Jesus? Crying for somebody else to believe for you? Crying to the Holy Spirit to repent for you? Is that what you want? He will not do it! Why should He repent for you? You must repent for yourself and believe for yourself, for the Holy Spirit cannot repent for you, or believe for you. If a man, instead of believing the Truth of God which is so plain and which is evidently able to save him—if, instead of simply resting upon the atoning Sacrifice of Christ, he says, "I will pray about the matter," he betrays the fatal ignorance of his heart in supposing that God will make a new way of salvation for him instead of the one which He has plainly revealed in His Word!

Perhaps another one says, "*I am in hopes that, by praying, I shall be made more fit for believing in Christ."* Fit for believing in Christ? You also are upon the wrong tack, like these others of whom I have been speaking. Your ignorance is misleading you. Fit for believing in Christ? A man is never so "fit for believing" as when, in himself, he is most unfit! It is *unfitness*, not fitness, that is required! What is fitness for being washed? Filth—and filth alone! What is fitness for receiving alms? Poverty, abject need. What is fitness for receiving pardon? Guilt—and only guilt. It comes not as an act of Grace, but as an act of Justice if there is no guilt—for the display of God's pardoning Grace, guilt is needed. If you are guilty, if you are black, if you are foul you have all the fitness that is required! So, come and find in Jesus Christ all that meets your greatest and most urgent need!

Does someone ask, "But must I not have a sense of my need?" Not as a fitness for coming to Christ, for the man who says, "I am quite fit to be saved, for I feel my need," does not really feel his need as he should and is the farthest off from Christ. O you who are most empty, most guilty, most lost, most ruined, you are the most "fit" for the great Savior to save! May the Holy Spirit enable you to realize this and drive out of you the foolish notion that your praying is to help Christ to save you and to take

you part of the way on the road to Heaven! Your prayer will not help the Divine surgery which alone can cure you! So, just as you are in all your wretchedness and sin, trust Christ to save you, for He is able to save you, from first to last, without any help of yours!

III. Now I am going to close by mentioning OTHER ANSWERS WHICH MAY BE GIVEN TO THIS QUESTION—"Why do you cry unto Me?"

I will tell you my own answer to this question. *I cry to God, principally, because I cannot help doing so.* I cry to God for the same reason that I eat when I feel hungry and for the same reason that I groan when I am in pain—it is the outward expression of the condition of my inward life. I cannot help praying. I think if anyone were to say to me, "You must not kneel down to pray," it would not make any difference to my praying. If I were not allowed to utter a word all day long, that would not affect my praying. If I could not have five minutes that I might spend in prayer by myself, I would pray all the same. Minute by minute, moment by moment, somehow or other, my heart must commune with my God. Prayer has become as essential to me as the heaving of my lungs and the beating of my pulse. I do ask God to give me power in prayer and I chide myself if I am lax in prayer. Still, almost unconsciously, one gets praying in the streets, praying while preaching to you—yes, sometimes, one almost prays in his sleep! One gets so into the spirit of prayer that, without always knowing it, there is a prayer leaping from the heart and the very glance of the eye becomes a means of communion with God. So, that is my answer to the Lord's question, "Why do you cry unto Me?" I pray because I cannot help doing so.

It is an equally good answer when anyone can say, "*I pray because I delight in it.* There is no holy exercise which is so sweet, so blessed, so delightful, so inspiring, so care-removing, as praying to my loving Heavenly Father. Nothing brings me as near to Heaven, or opens its gate so wide to me, or gives me such a foretaste of its Glory, as prayer mingled with praise."

It would also be a good answer if you should say, "*I pray because I have such great needs that I cannot help praying.* I have such a little faith that I must pray for more. I have so many troubles that I must pray to be delivered out of them. I feel that I have so many sins that I must pray to be cleansed from them. I have so many desires after better things that I must pray for those things to be given to me. I feel that not merely my happiness, but my sorrow also drives me to my knees." I do not mind how you get to the Mercy Seat as long as you get there in spirit and in Truth and do really pray. But, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I do hope that these reasons for prayer are those that you would yourselves give if the Lord were to say to each one of you, "Why do you cry unto Me?"

I think I hear another say, "*I pray because what little repentance and faith I have can express themselves best in prayer.* I tell the Lord how I hate my sin and I ask Him to help me to hate it still more. I go to Him when I fall and ask Him to hold me up for the future. I tell Him all my faults and follies and I ask Him to teach me, and sanctify me. I find that my little faith is most at home and at ease when I go to God in prayer. I

tell the Lord that I do trust Him and I ask Him to increase my faith. I tell Him that if He should refuse to listen to me, I will still cling to the hem of His garment and if I perish, I will perish at the foot of His Cross." Well, that is the right way to pray—when prayer is the expression of penitence and faith.

"Yes," says another, "but *I pray because I get more repentance and more faith by praying."* Just so. They grow while they are exercising themselves. He that weeps for sin will weep more as he prays, and he that believes in Christ will believe more strongly while he expresses that believing in prayer for yet greater faith.

All these are good reasons for praying without ceasing.

Perhaps one of the best is this. *"I pray because I am nothing, and I want to get to the great 'I AM.'* I pray because I have nothing and I know that all I can have must come from Him. I pray because my poverty would gladly draw upon His infinite wealth, because my weakness would drink in His eternal strength, because my sin would be a partaker of His perfect holiness, because my nothingness would find itself lost in the all-sufficiency of God." These are blessed reasons for praying and if these are your reasons, pray on, Brothers and Sisters. Pray on, if you can thus answer the Lord's question, "Why do you cry unto Me?"

I suppose that there may have come into this place someone who never prays. If so, I do not know where you are, Friend. I am glad I do not. I would look upon you with the greatest pity if I knew you. The very thought of such a sad case as yours makes me feel heavy of heart. A man who never speaks to his Maker! A man? Can he be a man? Let me look him up and down. A man, "fearfully and wonderfully made" by God, yet he never speaks to his Creator! O God, to what a terrible depth a man can sink if he can live without prayer! What a strange creature he is! A little chicken drinks and lifts its head each time it sips. "The ox knows his owner, and the ass"—you know how stupid the ass is, yet he knows "his master's crib." But here is a man, whom God has made, and kept in being all these years. He gave him a household and made him well-to-do among his fellow men, and kept him out of the asylum, and out of the workhouse, and out of the jail, and out of Hell, and yet he never prays? O knees that never bend before the Lord! O hearts that never yield yourselves to God, are you not accursed?

Ah, Sirs, assuredly a curse rests upon the man who never prays! He who prays not, believes not, and what says the Word of God concerning the man who does not believe? "He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." From my inmost soul, I pity even guilty men who are condemned to die because they have broken the laws of their country and have taken the lives of their fellow creatures. Yet, O you unbelievers, their condition only differs in degree from yours, for you, also, are "condemned already" because you have not believed on the only-begotten Son of God! Oh, I beseech you, turn unto Him before it is too late and you are cast into Hell, where the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched forever and ever! If you believe that what I have said is false, you will take no notice of it, but if you believe that this Book is, indeed, the Word of God, and most, if not

all of you, know that it is—then, escape for your lives—look not behind you, but lay hold on eternal life and may God the Holy Spirit enable you to do so this very moment!

It is not to prayer that I exhort you, but I urge you to obey that great Gospel command, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." And more than that, in the name of God, I command you to believe in Him whom He has sent as the only Savior of sinners. Believe on Him! Trust in Him and go your way forgiven! God grant it, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 18:1-27.

Verse 1. *And He spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.* Especially not to faint in prayer, not to become disheartened, or weary, even if their prayers should, for a long time, remain unanswered.

2, 3. *Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of my adversary.* He would not have interested himself in her case simply because she was a poor widow. He had no heart of compassion for her, nor would it have concerned him at all that her adversary had wronged her. He did not trouble to discharge the duties appertaining to his office. No fear of God and no respect for public opinion affected him at all.

4. *And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man.* He even boasted of the very thing of which he ought to have been ashamed—"'I fear not God, nor regard man.' I care for nobody and defy everyone."

5. *Yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.* He cared for nobody but himself. He was concerned about his own peace of mind. The poor woman could win through his *selfishness*, what she could not get from his sense of justice, since that had no weight with him. Her importunity won for her what nothing else could procure.

6-8. *And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge said, and shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?* God will hear the earnest, united, persistent cries of His people. His Church, today, is like a widow left forlorn. Her cries go up to God, pleading that He will vindicate her cause—and He will do so. He may wait a while, but the prayers of His people are not lost. By-and-by, He will avenge His own elect. So is it with regard to all true prayer. Though, for wise reasons, God may delay to reply, yet He files our petitions—they are registered in Heaven. Their power is accumulating, it is all adding to the great pile of supplication which is the real strength of the Church of Christ. What a question that is, "When the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?" He can find it if anybody can, for He knows what faith is, where

faith is—but will He find any? Well, He will find so little, even among the best of His people, that the question may well be put—and among a great many who profess to have faith, He will find none at all! Brothers and Sisters, we pray so feebly, we expect so little, we ask with such diffidence, we have such slight courage in prayer that if the Son of Man, Himself, came among us to search us, how little faith He would discover!

9-12. *And He spoke this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank You that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.* He could not even magnify his own excellencies without sneering at the poor publican who had said nothing against him, or about him. That is a poor kind of religion which has to look down upon all others before it can look up to itself. What, O Pharisee, if others are not, apparently, so good as you are in some things? Yet, in other things, they probably excel you and if you think yourself worthy of praise, you have never really seen yourself as you are in God's sight! A correct knowledge of your own heart would have led you to a very different conclusion. It is a good thing that the Pharisee appeared to be thankful for something, but, probably, that was merely a complimentary speech which meant very little. He did not thank God half as much as he praised himself!

13. *And the publican, standing afar off.*—Away in some distant corner.

13. *Would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.* He makes no reflection upon others, but confesses his own sin and appeals to the great Propitiation, for the word he used means, "God be propitious to me, a sinner."

14, 15. *I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for everyone that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted. And they also brought unto Him infants, that He would touch them: but when His disciples saw it, they rebuked them.* Were not these children too little and too unimportant for Christ to notice? Their understanding was not sufficiently developed to know anything that He might say—what was the use of bringing them for His blessing?

16. *But Jesus called them unto Him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God.* The Kingdom of God consists of child-like spirits, persons like these children! Instead of needing to grow bigger in order to be fit to be Christians, we need to grow smaller! It is not the supposed wisdom of manhood, but the simplicity of childhood that will fit us for the reception of Divine Truth. Alas, we are often too much like men—if we were more like children, we would receive the Kingdom of God far more readily.

17-19. *Verily I say unto you, Whoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein. And a certain ruler asked Him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why do you call Me good? None is good, save One, that is, God.* Yet the ruler was right. He knew not that he was

speaking to One who is, assuredly, God and, in the highest sense, good. But, since he had asked, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Christ answered his enquiry.

20, 21. *You know the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, honor your father and your mother. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up.* All which appears to be simple enough if you only look on the surface. But when you come to recollect that there is an inward, spiritual meaning to all this, that a licentious look breaks the command about adultery, that a covetous desire is stealing, that the utterance of a slander is bearing false witness and so on, who is he that shall enter into life upon such terms as these? Yet they cannot be lowered, for they are, spiritually, just and right.

22. *Now when Jesus heard these things, He said unto him, Yet you lack one thing.* Christ gives him a test. If he is what he thinks he is, he will be ready to obey whatever command God lays upon him. Christ is about to lay one upon him—let us see whether he will obey or not.

22. *Sell all that you have and distribute unto the poor, and you shall have treasure in Heaven: and come, follow Me.* Now, which will he love the more—the Son of God—or his wealth?

23-27. *And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, He said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God. And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved? And He said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.* Yet some men spend all their lives in the earnest endeavor to make it hard for them to be saved! They are trying, as much as they can, to block up the road to eternal life, hoarding up that which will be a grievous burden to them, even if God shall lead them in the way to Heaven. How much better is it to live wholly unto God and then, be we rich or be we poor, consecrate all to Him and live to His praise and glory!

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NO. 2852

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 18, 1877.

"He said unto them, Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?"
Matthew 8:26.

THE winds were howling, the waters were roaring and the disciples thought that the little ship must surely be engulfed in the raging sea, so they awakened their Master from His sorely-needed sleep and cried to Him, "Lord, save us! We are perishing." Note well the first words that He speaks to His frightened followers. Generally, when a man is in trouble, it is best, first, to help him out of it if we can, and then to give him any rebuke that he may deserve. Yet we may be quite sure that our Lord Jesus Christ followed the wisest order in every case. Being awakened because there was danger, He dealt first with the chief cause of danger—what was that? Not the winds or the waves, but the disciples' unbelief! There is always more peril, to a Christian, in his own unbelief than in the most adverse circumstances by which he may be surrounded. Our Lord did not first rebuke the winds and waves—and then speak to the disciples—He first dealt with the chief peril by rebuking their unbelief.

I think I may venture to say—though to Omnipotence all things are possible—that it was an easier task for Christ to calm the winds and the waves than to still the tumult raised by doubt in His disciples' minds. He could more swiftly cause a calm to fall upon the stormy surface of the Galilean lake than upon the perturbed spirits of His terrified Apostles. The mental always excels the physical—the ruling of hearts is a greater thing than the governing of winds and waves. So, Beloved, when we have to battle with trouble, let us always begin with ourselves—our own fears, mistrusts, suspicions, selfishness and self-will—for the chief danger lies there. All the trouble in the world cannot harm you as much as half a grain of unbelief! Poverty cannot make you as poor as mistrust can and sickness cannot make you as sick as unbelief can. The greatest evil to be dreaded is that of doubting your Lord. May God grant you Grace to take this estimate of unbelief and, because Christ first rebuked that—and *then* the winds and the waves—so do you first seek to have yourself under proper control, so that, afterwards, you may be able to overcome your difficulties, whatever they may be! He who is, by the Grace of God,

enabled to master his own soul, need not doubt that he shall also be master of everything that opposes him!

I am going to try, as the Spirit of God shall help me, to minister consolation to any who are suffering through fear. And I shall speak, first, *to those who are Christ's disciples* and who know that they are His. And then, secondly, I shall speak to *those who would not like to say that they are not His disciples, but who yet dare not say that they are*—the many who would gladly be His, but who hardly dare to hope that He is willing to have them as His disciples. To them I shall say, as Christ said to His Apostles, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?"

I. So, first, I shall apply the question in my text to THOSE WHO ARE REALLY THE LORD'S PEOPLE, those who are in the boat with Christ, His disciples who follow Him, and stay near to Him—"Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?"

First, *why is it that you doubt His love?* He brought you on to this stormy sea—He bade you take ship and He knew all about this storm coming on. Do you think, because of your present experience, that He does not love you? You dare not utter such a calumny! Look back at your past life and see how patiently He has borne with you. Your slowness in learning has not made your Divine Teacher angry, but He has still gone on teaching you. Do you remember when He first called you, by His Grace, and what you were when He called you? Do you recollect what you have been since He called you? Yet He has still continued to love you and has not cast you away. Look back, I pray you, upon the many times in which He has appeared for you, bringing you through very severe trials and sustaining you under very heavy burdens. After all this, do you mistrust Him? Can you do so? Will you imitate the language of the unbelieving Israelites and say, "Is it because there were no graves on shore that the Lord has brought us out upon this stormy sea?" Do you suspect that He has brought you thus far encouraging you with many hopes, allaying your fears and supplying your necessities, that He might overwhelm you with disappointment?

Has He been trifling with you in all this, exciting desires and expectations in you which, after all, are not to be fulfilled, but you are to be left to perish? Oh, no! Each Believer can confidently sing—

"Can He have taught me to trust in His name,
And thus far have brought me to put me to shame?"

It is impossible that He can have done this! It is altogether unlike He and inconsistent with all His past treatment of us, and with His well-known Character. Come, child of God, you know that He loves you! The proofs and pledges of that love rise up before your memory, so you cannot think that He will suffer you to be cast away! Will He allow your present troubles to destroy you when so many others have not been able to hurt even a hair of your head? Trust in His love and dismiss your fears!

Let me turn to another side of this Truth. *Do you doubt your Lord's power?* These disciples ought not to have done so, for they had lately been eyewitnesses of many remarkable displays of His power. Had they

not seen Him cast out devils? Had they not been with Him when a touch of His had healed the leper, when, another time, the laying of His hand upon the fevered brow had raised the sick one from her bed? Had they not come fresh from a mass of miracles where, in the crowded street, He had dealt out healing to all manner of sufferers? How could they doubt His power when, before their own eyes, they had seen it so wonderfully displayed? Is He Master of devils and not of winds? Can He cast out diseases and not lull to sleep the roaring billows? It was both absurd and wicked for them to think of setting a limit to His unbounded power!

And now, you, dear child of God, after the experience you have had of His goodness, and after what you know the Lord did for you by His redeeming love in ages past—dare you say that He has not power to deliver you now? Is anything too hard for the Lord? You say that you are poor, but can He not supply your need? Are not the cattle upon a thousand hills His own? Does He not claim the silver and gold as His treasure? He can feed the universe! He has done it these many centuries and He is still doing it. The commissariat of the whole universe has depended upon His perpetual benevolence and care—and yet, from day to day, the hosts of birds, beasts, fishes and insects are still fed! And will not He, who supplies the needs of all living creatures by simply opening His hand, find food enough for His own child? Will you doubt His power? Is your case a very peculiar and difficult one? Do you draw a line and say, "This, God can do, but that, He cannot do"? Is that right? Is it reasonable? Admit that He is Omnipotent—and He is Omnipotent whether you admit it or not—and you have done away with difficulties. O you with little faith in God's power, why do you doubt? He can—He will help you if you will but trust Him to do so!

Perhaps, however, your doubt may touch another point. *Have you any suspicion of God's wisdom?* Possibly these disciples may have thought, "It was very unwise of our Master, just at eventide, to bid us cross this lake, which, lying low in a hollow surrounded by hills, is subject to very sudden and fierce gusts of wind that can catch a ship and twist her round so that no steersman can tell how to cope with the various currents and winds which are so extraordinary in their course. It was unwise of Him to bring us here." Yet, if they did talk like that, they ought to have known better, for they had sat at His feet and listened to the wondrous wisdom which poured from His lips. They knew that He was supremely wise—how, then, could they doubt?

And do you, O child of God, think that the Lord is dealing unwisely with you? Dare you charge the All-Wise Jehovah with folly? Whatever Infinite Wisdom does, must be right. You err continually—what are you but a mass of mistakes? What is your life but a constant repetition of floundering and blundering? But He who has shown His marvelous skill in creation and His wondrous wisdom in Redemption, and also in Providence—do you think that He miscalculates, or misses the mark He aims at, or that He can in any way err? Oh, cast away this dishonoring reflec-

tion upon the Lord, as you hear Him say to you, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?"

There are some other things which might very well have smitten the consciences of these fearful followers of Christ. Among them were these considerations which I suggest to you as worthy themes for your meditation. It is true that it was a terrible storm, but, *they were in the same boat with their Lord.* Whenever a foaming billow smote the ship and agitated the hearts of the disciples, it moved their Master, also. He had to bear all the tossing of the waves, the wild leaping of the vessel from the billow's base to the billow's crown. He must have felt it just as much as they did. If the little vessel went down with them, it must go down with Him, also, for they were in the same boat. How this thought ought to have lulled their fears to rest! And, Beloved Christian, do you not know that he that believes in Jesus is sailing in the same ship with Him? Remember how Paul writes, "For you are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God." "Because I live," said Jesus, Himself, to His disciples, "you shall also live."

It was a bold saying of one that he had trusted Christ to save him, so he knew that he could not be lost. "But," asked someone, "suppose, after all, that you are lost?" "Well, then," he replied, "Christ would lose more than I would, for while I would lose my soul, He would lose His honor. If He did not save one who trusted Him, He would lose His Character as Savior! He would lose the most precious jewel in His crown and that can never be." No, he that believes in Him shall never be ashamed nor confounded, world without end! He can never be either unable to save, or unfaithful to His promise to save all who trust Him. Well does Dr. Watts write—

"His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of His sheep—
All that His Heavenly Father gave
His hands securely keep."

Another reflection is that although they were in a great storm, *the power that made the storm was the very power to which they had to trust.* There was not a single blast of the tempest but Jehovah's might had sent it, nor did a single wave leap up, in apparent wrath, but with God's permission or at His command! It was His power, outside the vessel, that was putting them into peril and they ought to have known that the same power would be exerted to deliver them. It is the same in your case—you are in great trouble, but does trouble spring out of the ground? Does it come by chance? No, God's hand is in it all! I know men talk of the laws of nature, but the laws of nature have no force in themselves—the whole force that carries out a law of nature is a Divine force. So, your difficulties are of God's sending, trials of God's making and they are all still in the hands of the All-Powerful One to restrain, or mitigate, or increase, or direct according to His own will.

You have often heard, I daresay, that pretty little story which I cannot help telling again because it drops in so appropriately here, of the woman, on board ship, who was much disturbed in a storm, while her hus-

band, the captain, was calm and restful. She asked him why he was so placid when she was so distressed. He did not answer in words, but he took down his sword and held it to her breast. She smiled. He said, "Why are you not afraid? This is a sharp sword, with which I could slay you in a minute." "Ah," she replied, "but I am not afraid of a sword when it is my husband who wields it." "So," said he, "neither am I afraid of a storm when it is my Father who sends it and who manages it." Now, since all the trials and troubles of this mortal life are as much in the hand of the great God as that sword was in the hand of the good woman's husband, we need not be afraid of them, for they are all in His power! When He rides aloft in His chariot, and the skies tremble at the sound, why should you tremble, even you timid ones?—

"The God that rules on high,
And thunders when He pleases.
That rides upon the stormy sky
And manages the seas.
This awful God is ours—
Our Father and our love."

It is only the flash of His spear when you see the vivid lightning and only the roll of His majestic voice when you hear the thunders peal! Therefore, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?"

There was another thing that ought to have kept those disciples from being afraid, and it was this. Suppose they had sunk? Still, having put to sea at His command and with Him on board—*all would have been well with them.* I have heard of a sailor who was very calm in a storm and someone asked him, "Why are you not afraid? Can you swim?" "No," he said, "I cannot swim, but if I were to sink to the bottom of the sea, I should only sink into my Heavenly Father's hands, for He holds the waters in the hollow of His hand." That is a sweet thought and if the worst comes to the worst with you, my Brother—if what we call, "the worst," should come to you, my Sisters—well, you would only die. You would go as low as the grave, but, blessed be God, you would never go any lower and, in due time, even your body will come up again from that grave and, reunited with your soul, be "forever with the Lord!" "Therefore, comfort one another with these words." But suppose you should die? Your soul will then leap away from death into eternal life in a moment! Death would end all your troubles, rid you forever of all your burdens and you would be at Home, to go no more out forever, so you may well say, with good old John Ryland—

"Come, welcome, Death!
I'll gladly go with you!"

There was one other reason why these disciples ought not to have been at all alarmed and that was *because their Master was asleep.* "Oh," you say, "I do not see what comfort that was to them." Well, let me tell you what happened to me, one night, when I was on board ship. In my sleep, I started because I thought I heard something slip. Something had slipped—it was the anchor that had been cast overboard. I called out to one who slept near me, "What is the matter?" He said, "There is some-

thing the matter, I feel sure." "Why?" I asked, and he replied, "Because the captain is up." It was in the middle of the night, but the captain was up, so I was also up very soon and saw that the captain was up and that the sailors were quietly getting out a boat. If my friend had told me that the captain was asleep, I might have slept on, for I would have said, "It is all right if he is asleep. I need not trouble myself to know what is the matter." But when I heard that he was up, I thought it was time for me to be up, too! If you were on board ship and saw the captain busy heaving the lead, and doing it very deliberately and quietly, you would say to yourself, "I do not know what is wrong, but I feel sure that there is something the matter, the captain seems so anxious."

But if, at any time, you were at sea and you said to another passenger, "Where is the captain?" and the reply was, "Oh, he is in his berth, sound asleep!" You would say, "Oh, then, it is all right!" Why did the Lord Jesus Christ go to sleep in a storm? Why, because He knew that all was right! Why should He not go to sleep? The great loving heart of Christ would not have rested if His children had been in any danger. It was because there was no danger, either to Him or to them, that He went to sleep! Perhaps you are saying to yourself, "I have not had any wonderful deliverance from this trouble. I have had, in times gone by, but now the Lord does not seem to work any great marvel for me." No, because there is not any need for it. An old version of the eighteenth Psalm says—

"On cherub and on cherubim
Full royally He rode,
And on the wings of mighty winds
Came flying all abroad.
And so delivered He my soul—
Who is a rock but He?
He lives, blessed be my Rock!
My God exalted be!"

When the Lord thus descended from above, you may depend that there was some great danger threatening one of His children—otherwise, He would not have come at such speed as that.

And you may rest assured that if He does not come thus to help you, it is because there is really not any urgent need for His interposition, as you are not in any great danger. Possibly the Lord sees that it will be best for you to bear your troubles a little longer, for you are getting good out of them. He means to leave you in the furnace for a little while because He can see that your dross is being taken away—but if the good metal in you were being injured in the slightest degree, He would lift you out of the furnace immediately! There is no serious harm happening to you and, therefore, the Lord does not intervene. I hope that you can now see that the sleep of Jesus ought to have given rest to the minds of His disciples. But it did not and He had to say to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?"

Thus I have spoken to the Lord's own people. May the Holy Spirit graciously bless the word to them!

II. Now I want your attention, for a short time, while I speak to THOSE WHO CANNOT SAY THAT THEY ARE CHRIST'S DISCIPLES.

There is a story told of Dr. John Owen who was then Mr. John Owen, that he had been for two or three years in great distress of mind. He went to London, hoping to hear a very famous Divine, but, on arriving at the Meeting House, he found that the doctor was not preaching. A man, whose name Mr. Owen never knew, preached from the text from which I am now preaching—"Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" He was a man of no great ability, but it pleased God that night, to break John Owen's fetters by means of the remarks that were made by the stranger-preacher, which were exactly suited to the condition of John Owen's mind at that time. And so, that mighty master of theology, perhaps the grandest of all English Divines with whom God has ever favored, was brought into Light and liberty through the instrumentality of that stranger-preacher. I wish that the few minutes I can now spend in addressing you, could be as fruitful as his message was on the occasion. If only one of you is brought into the Light of God, I will bless the name of the Lord—but I long for very many to be thus blessed!

You are seeking Christ, dear Friend, and longing to be saved, but, for lack of faith, you are still in trouble of soul. What is your real condition? Perhaps you say, *"I labor under a deep sense of sin, I have been exceedingly guilty."* Possibly, some one sin specially troubles you, or, more probably, a number. It may be that you know that you have sinned against Light and knowledge, and you are aware of the peculiar provocation of having sinned, as you have done, after enjoying Christian teaching from your youth up. You feel that there is some special aggravation about your transgression and you say to yourself, "I can scarcely believe that there is pardon for me."

My dear Friend, I put it to you, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Did not Jesus Christ come into the world to save sinners? Is there any sin which He is not able to forgive? It is true that there is a sin which is unto death, but you have not committed that sin, or else you would be in a state of death—and would have no desire to be saved. But if you have any spiritual life, so that you long to be saved, you have not committed that unpardonable sin—and all other sin and blasphemy can be forgiven unto men if they repent of it and trust the Lord Jesus Christ. I am afraid that you do not think enough of the greatness of the Savior, that He is God as well as Man. Consider the dignity of His Person as God over all, blessed forever, yet, nevertheless, stooping to bear human sin! Think of your sin as much as you will, but think much more of the Sin-Bearer and His vicarious sufferings. Weep at the remembrance of your guilt, but weep on Calvary, weep with the wounds of Christ before you!

And oh, I pray you, do not do my Lord the great dishonor to say that He cannot forgive you! It is you who will not believe in Him! It is certainly not with Him that the difficulty lies. He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them. It is not possible that you are beyond His ability to save!

There have been other persons saved, and many of them, who have sinned just as much as you have done—but even if there had not been any such, yet recollect that if you are a sinner beyond all others, your case presents an opportunity for Christ to exceed everything that He has ever done—and He would delight in that. He delights in mercy, so, if you are really what you suppose yourself to be, namely, something altogether extraordinary in the way of guilt, then there remains room for Christ to show in you the extraordinary power of His Grace! I pray you to believe that He can do this. Trust Him to do it and you shall find that He both can and will.

Possibly someone says, "*My difficulty is not so much concerning the power of God to pardon, as concerning the strong propensities to sin which I find dwelling in me.* How can they be conquered? I have resolved, a great many times, to overcome them, but I find my sin to be like Samson—it is not to be bound with new cords and green leather straps, for it breaks loose from all its bonds! I cannot think that I can be saved with such an impetuous temper, or such a proud spirit," or whatever form your sin happens to take. Now beloved Friend, it is well that you should see this difficulty, but is not He who is mighty to save, quite able to grapple with it? Have you forgotten that text, "Behold, I make all things new"? Do you not know that the Spirit of God has been given that He may take away the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh? Have you never read the Covenant of Grace which says, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." Is anything too hard for the Lord in this matter? I tell you, if you are near akin to a devil, He can make you into something more than an angel! And if your lusts and corruptions seem to have a strength that seems to you to be well-nigh omnipotent, yet is the power of the Holy Spirit able to cast out all this evil and to overcome the devil within you! A strong man armed may keep the house, but when a stronger than he shall come, then shall he be driven forth and be made to know who is his Master. Believe that Christ is stronger than your sin and come and trust yourself to Him, O you of little faith!

"*But*," says another, "*my trouble is that I cannot find anything in me that Christ can work upon.* I perceive in my sister, who is saved, some traits of character that I think admirable. I perceive some redeeming feature in all converted people, but I do not perceive anything of the kind in myself. I seem to be weak where I ought to be strong, and strong where I ought to be weak! I am all that I ought *not* to be, and nothing that I should be." Ah, my Friend! I want you to believe—to do my Lord Jesus the honor to believe—what He has a right to claim from you, namely, that He can deal readily enough with your case, for yours is just the typical case that He came to save! You remember God's ancient law concerning the leper who was to show himself to the priest? It was the priest's duty to examine him, from head to foot, with careful eyes. While he was

surveying him, he came upon a place, perhaps the size of the palm of his hand, where the flesh was perfectly healthy. There was no sign of leprosy in it whatever—and the priest said, "This is a fatal spot, you are unclean; you must be put away outside the camp." Then He examined another leper and, looking him all over, though he seemed covered with scales of leprosy, yet the priest found that he had a little place, perhaps the size of the top of his finger, which was quite clear of the disease. The man said, "I have always thought there was hope for me, for you see that little spot, there is no leprosy there." But the priest sorrowfully shook his head and said, "You are unclean. You must be put outside the camp."

There came another leper, who said to the priest, "It is scarcely necessary for you to examine me, for, from the crown of my head to the sole of my feet, I am covered with this loathsome disease. There is not a speck or spot in me that has not the disease everywhere." So the priest looked and he could not see one healthy place and, therefore, he said, "You are clean; you may go wherever you like." I suppose it showed that the man's constitution had been strong enough to throw the disease out. I infer that was the rationale of it, physically, but, anyhow, according to the Law of the Leper, the man was clean and, my Friend, if, on looking yourself all over, you can perceive no good whatever, or anything like good. And if the Great High Priest, even the Lord Jesus Christ, can see no good in you, He will pronounce you clean the moment you come unto Him and trust in Him! This may seem strange to you, but it is the very essence of the Gospel, even as Joseph Hart sings—

"'Tis perfect poverty alone
That sets the soul at large!
While we can call one mite our own,
We have no full discharge.
But let our debts be what they may,
However great or small—
As soon as we have naught to pay,
Our Lord forgives us all."

Well, now, you who thus condemn yourself, should see that your very condemnation of yourself gives you hope of salvation! Why, the devil himself, I should think, would hardly dispute with some of you the fact that you are sinners. On the contrary, he has often been to you, and said, "See what a great sinner you are!" For once, he spoke the truth, though he did even that with an evil intention. If he says that to you, say to him, "Yes, Satan, you have proved that I am a sinner, but that is 'my hope of salvation, for it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.'" He who condemns himself, God absolves. He who is shut up in the prison of the Law, so that he cannot escape. He who writes his own death warrant, signs it and feels that he deserves to die—he is the man for whom the Lord Jesus Christ sets open the door of mercy and says, "Come unto Me, for I have absolved you. You are a free man. Be of good comfort. I died to redeem just such souls as you are." So again I say, "O you of little faith, why do you doubt?"

Another case I would like to meet is that of one who says, "*Oh, but I have such a lack of sensibility!* I am afraid I do not feel humble enough. Some sinners weep, but I cannot. Some have upon them an awful horror of great darkness, but I have not. I wish I had." Dear Friend, do you think that would help Christ to save you? Oh, then, you do malign my Lord who needs no help from you! He can save you, stony-hearted as you are. If there is no sensibility, or anything else that is good about you, He can give you all this, or save you just as you are! Do not think that He needs your assistance. What can you do, poor fool? I cannot help calling you, "fool," if you think that you can do *anything* to help Him to save you! A righteousness like His—would you patch your rags upon it? Blood like His—would you bring some bottles full of your tears to add to the merit of His great Sacrifice? I tell you that the purest tear you have ever shed would stain His precious blood! You will need forgiveness for that tear if you *dream* that there can be any merit in it to add to the merit of His blood.

"*Ah,"* says another, "*but I have to mourn my feebleness in prayer.* I know some who have found Christ because they seemed to lay hold of Him at the Mercy Seat, but I cannot. I can hardly touch the hem of His garment." Well, then, do that—and if you do, you shall be healed! A little genuine faith ensures the death of all your sin. Do you think that Christ asks great things of you? Listen, Man—though Christ bids you look unto Him, and live, it is *He that first gives life to that eye* of yours or else it never could have looked unto Him. There is nothing good in you—it is all in Christ. From first to last, it is Grace, Grace, GRACE! And Grace, you know, takes no payments, for it would mar its glory and its freeness if it took from you anything from a thread to a shoelace. Be you only emptiness and Christ will be your fullness!

"*But I do not fret,"* you say. Well, then, be so empty that you are even empty of feeling! Your feelings cannot save you, but Christ will give you all the feeling that you need. Come unto Him just as you are and trust Him for everything. You are like a child who has done something very wrong and his father says, "My Child, I will freely forgive you." The child says, "I cannot believe it. I have been so wicked. I need to do *something*." The father says, "My dear Child, I love you so that I have freely forgiven you. I can forgive all, I can forget all and I have done so." The child says, "But I know if anyone had offended against me as I have done against you, I could not forgive and forget." "No," the father says, "but, my Child, my ways are not your ways, nor my thoughts your thoughts." The child still cannot believe that his father loves him so as to be ready to forgive him—but if he would believe that and just throw himself on his father's bosom with the cry, "Father, I have sinned," oh, what ease of mind he would at once feel! Out with your confession! Let not sin be smoldering in your bosom any longer. Tell the Lord how guilty you are! Tell Him that you deserve His utmost wrath! Tell Him that you could not complain even if He should destroy you, but tell Him that you do cling to Christ and to the promise of pardon made in His Word. Say to Him—

"You have promised to forgive
All who in Your Son believe.
Lord, I know You cannot lie—
Give me Christ, or else I die."

That is the thing to do. God help you to do it! Believe over the head of your sins. Believe over the head of your sensibility and, I charge you, do not look at anything but Christ! When you look on your sins, instead of looking at Christ, you make an antichrist of your sins. And when you look on your faith and say, "I o not think that my faith is enough," if you look at your faith instead of looking to Christ, I say, "Away with your faith!" Away with everything but what Christ has done, what Christ is and the boundless love of the great forgiving God whose heart yearns over you, and who 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…for I am God, and not man." "O you of little faith, why are you so fearful!" Trust your God and live!

But, lastly, I hear someone else say, "*My trouble is concerning the difficulties of a Christian life.* How can I, if I begin to be a Christian, hold on to the end?" Dear Friend, I will not deny that there are difficulties and that they are very great, much greater than you imagine. But your holding on is not the great matter—it is Christ who will hold you on! Your perseverance in Grace is no more to be your own act, apart from Christ, than is your first hope in Him. You are to look to Christ to be Omega as well to be Alpha, to be the Z as well as to be the A of the Christian Alphabet—and if you come and cast yourself upon Him, it is not His custom to cast away any who come to Him, neither at first nor yet afterwards. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." And He will do the same with you. He will subdue your corruptions. He will drive out your iniquities and present you, at the last, "faultless" before His Father's Throne! Oh, I can talk about this, but after all, it is only the Lord and Giver of Grace who can drive away your unbelief! May He do so now—and to His dear name shall be the praise forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 125.

Verse 1. *They that trust in the LORD shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever.* I noticed, in one of the reports of the survey of Palestine, that it is said that albeit every building upon Mount Zion has been demolished, and not one stone has been left upon another, yet the mountain, itself, is immovable and remains the same as ever. Mount Zion itself cannot be removed, but abides forever—and the child of God, by faith in Jesus, cannot be moved by fear, nor removed by sin, but abides forever! We abide in Christ and Christ abides in us—and this makes us like Mount Zion which cannot be removed, but abides forever. If any of you are tossed to and fro, or are changeable, so that you

do not know your own minds, may the Lord deliver you from such a state as that! It is faith that makes us steadfast.

2. *As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about His people from henceforth even forever.* Here is security as well as stability! The mountains stand like sentinels around the central hill of Zion, so the city is well guarded and God protects His own people against adversaries of every kind. And He will continue to do so "from henceforth even forever."

3. *For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous.* God does not completely screen His people from trial. They sometimes feel the rod of the wicked in the form of slander, oppression, opposition and persecution, but they shall not always feel it—"The rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous."

3. *Lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.* If too heavily oppressed, they might do wrong in order to escape from oppression and God will not have that. He will not let His people be tried above what they are able to bear! He knows that the tendency of poverty and suffering might be to provoke them to sin—therefore He will not let the rod of the wicked rest upon them—lest they put forth their hands unto iniquity.

4. *Do good, O LORD, unto those that are good, and to them that are upright in their hearts.* God is always good to His own people. This prayer is also a prophecy that it shall be well with those that fear the Lord—

"In time, and to eternal days
'Tis with the righteous well."

5. *As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways.* There are still such people who profess to be all right, yet they are not, for, after apparently going a little way in the straight road, they turn aside unto their crooked ways. Well, what shall happen to them?

5. *The LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity.* They chose the same way, so they shall share the same end! What a sad end for those who once stood side by side with the saints, to be led out to execution side by side with the workers of iniquity!

5. *But peace shall be upon Israel.* In the 1st and 2nd verses of the Psalm, they are said to be *like* Salem. In this last verse, they are said to *have* Salem, that is, peace—"Peace shall be upon Israel."

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

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PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 21, 1877.

"Now the men did diligently observe whether anything would come from him, and did hastily catch it."
1 Kings 20:33.

You know the circumstances to which these words refer. The boastful Syrian king had been utterly defeated and his army destroyed. He himself had fled into an inner chamber in desperate fear of his life, but, being informed that the kings of Israel were merciful, he sent certain of his attendants, in humblest fashion, with sackcloth on their loins and ropes about their necks, to beg that he might be spared. When they came in before Ahab and began to plead with him for Ben-Hadad, they watched every word that the king uttered—"The men did diligently observe whether anything would come from him." And the moment he said, "He is my brother," they caught at the expression immediately. They were in such anxiety about their king that even half a word that indicated tenderness and mercy brought joy to their hearts!

I think that this narrative contains a great deal of instruction for those who desire to be reconciled to God. If, dear Friend, you are conscious of your guilt and are afraid of being destroyed on account of it, the wisest thing that you can do is to come before the Lord in the attitude of submission. These men put sackcloth upon their loins and ropes around their necks to show that they deserved to die. And you must, spiritually, do the same. Go to God and humbly confess your transgressions—acknowledge that you are absolutely in His hands and that if He destroys you, He will be just. If He calls you to account for all your iniquities, and even casts you into Hell, you cannot impugn the justice of His decision. Yet, while you do that, imitate these messengers of Ben-Hadad when they came to Ahab. "The men did diligently observe whether anything would come from him, and did hastily catch it."

I. My first observation in turning this incident to a spiritual use, is that IT IS A PITY THAT AWAKENED SINNERS DO NOT COPY THE EXAMPLE OF THESE MEN.

For, first, *there is far too little of diligent observance of what God says in His Word.* Dear Friend, if you want to have the pardon of your sin and deliverance from its consequences, it is God alone who can do this for you! Therefore, you ought to endeavor to know all that is to be known about God in order that if there is anything encouraging and hopeful to

one in your circumstances, you may know it. Hence, every anxious enquirer ought to be a diligent searcher of his Bible. If I did not know the way of salvation, I would read that blessed Book from morning till night—and if I had read it through and yet had not found a verse that spoke peace to my soul, I would resolve to read each chapter, over and over again, with this constant prayer to God, "Lord, show me something that will meet my case, some kind assuring word from Your own Inspired Book that may remove my fears and give me peace."

How can some of you who say that you are seeking the Lord, be at all surprised if you do not find Him, as you are neglecting the diligent searching of His Word? I pray you to read it through and through, again and again, and try if you cannot find a sentence, somewhere or other, that will breathe comfort to your troubled heart. For remember that all your hope lies there—within the covers of this Book is "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God"—therefore, be you well acquainted with it and diligently observe if anything has come from the lips of the Lord which may bring deliverance to you.

The same thing ought to be done *when you are hearing the Gospel preached,* for God has been pleased, in order that His Truth may be brought home to your hearts, to choose certain of His servants to speak His Word. And, so far as they speak in accordance with His mind and will, they speak for God to you. It is a blessed thing when we have hearers who diligently observe whether there is anything in the sermon that will meet their case and remove their distress. I know some congregations where they are diligently observing whether there is fine oratory. I bless God that I hate oratory from my very soul! To speak His Truth *clearly and simply*, is all I aim at. So, if you want the beauties of rhetoric, you must seek them elsewhere. There are some preachers who are always looking out for scraps of poetry, or something quaint or curious that they can weave into their discourse, but all this is as the chaff to the wheat. The sincere seeker after the Truth of God continually prays, "Lord, give me something that I may lay hold of. Give me a safe anchorage for my storm-driven vessel. I am in sore trouble of soul, be pleased, O God, to breathe peace to my heart through something that the preacher shall say under the gracious guidance of Your Holy Spirit!" I do not think there will be much preaching in vain when hearers diligently observe what comes from the preacher's lips in the hope that, by God's Grace, it may be blessed to them!

Then, again, dear Friends, while there is too little of diligent observation of what God has said, *there is also far too little of hastily catching at the Word.* These messengers of Ben-Hadad were intently listening to all that Ahab said, so that, as soon as he uttered the one word that gave them a ray of hope, they "did hastily catch it." Oh, how I long that poor troubled hearts may hastily catch at any word of encouragement that is either recorded in the Bible, or spoken by God's sent servant! How many encouragements some of you have missed through inattention! Sweet promises have been as near to you as the key was to Christian when he was in Doubting Castle, yet you have not perceived them. You have been hungering while the bread was waiting for you upon the table. Some of

you have been thirsting, as Hagar did in the wilderness, when there was a well of water close beside her, but she did not know it. There are sweet words that have set other souls at liberty and, I trust, will yet bring you liberty—they have been sounding in your ears again and again, yet, for lack of hastily catching at them, you have missed the comfort they are intended to convey to you.

I know some who, instead of hastily catching at comforts, are always catching at difficulties. They seem to spend a great part of their time trying to find out why they should *not* be saved—and they have discovered quite a number of arguments to prove that there is no hope of salvation for them! How do I know that they act thus? Why, because I have had plenty of practical experience of it when trying to guide them to the Lord Jesus Christ! They will argue this way, and that way, and 50 other ways—and when you have answered all their 50 arguments, they just go and discover 50 more! There seems to be no end to their ingenuity in finding stern sentences, threatening passages and doctrines that appear to look black upon them. Well, dear Friend, if this is what you have been doing, will you not turn your ingenuity into another direction and, as you read a chapter, will you not say, "If there is anything here that I can catch at, I will do so"? And when you are listening to a sermon, say, "If there is anything that I can lay hold of, I will do so." Say, especially, "Lord Jesus, if there is anything in Your revealed Word. If there is one text, or half a text, that would suit a poor sinner like me, I will not lose it for need of grasping it, but, right or wrong, I will have it! I will catch at it, if, perhaps, it may bring me peace and pardon."

It is a great pity that those who are in trouble of soul do not imitate these messengers of Ben-Hadad, but they do not. They neither diligently observe what God says, nor do they readily catch at it. I wonder why this is? Is it because they are not so much in need as these poor men with sackcloth on their loins and ropes around their necks? That is not the case, but it may be that they have not so clear a sense of their need! I have noticed that really hungry people will eat almost anything—and when a man gets driven to self-despair, he eagerly watches for any word that falls from God's mouth that is at all likely to meet his case. Why is it that those in soul-trouble are not as believing as these Syrians were? Whatever Ahab said, they caught at it at once and believed it was true—yet he was a sorry specimen of humanity. I do not know anything to his credit. There was only one person who was worse than he—that was his wife, Jezebel! But, with that exception, he was about as bad a character as could be found anywhere—yet these men believed him. It is a sad pity that they believed Ahab, but that some of us will not believe the Lord who cannot lie!

God grant us Grace to watch carefully for any hopeful word that comes from His lips and to catch it hastily, for our own comfort and for His Glory!

II. My second observation is this—IT IS VERY STRANGE THAT SINNERS ACT THUS, FOR IT IS NOT CONSISTENT WITH THE USUAL WAYS OF MANKIND.

We have a proverb which says that "drowning men catch at straws." So they do. And when a man is in peril, he will usually grasp at anything that seems to offer him a hope of escape! How is it, then, that with a Bible full of promises and a Gospel full of encouragements, the mass of people with troubled consciences do not at once catch at what God says?

There is another proverb of ours which says that "the wish is father to the thought." Sometimes a man wishes for a thing so long that, at last, he believes it is really his—but how strange it is that, in spiritual things, men wish, and wish, and wish—or say that they do—and yet they do not believe that it is as they wish! The more they wish, the further they seem to be from the blessing they desire to possess. Alas, how many of you there are who torture yourselves needlessly, who seem to prefer to be troubled rather than be at peace, who see the Table of Mercy spread before you, yet choose to remain hungry, who behold the rippling rills of the Water of Life leaping at your feet, yet will not stoop and drink! How odd it is that in other things, men should, in their time of trouble, snatch at anything that seems likely to help them, that they should be ready enough to lay hold on any sort of comfort that is dangled before them and so are often deceived, and yet, when their trouble arises from things that concern their *soul*, they do not catch at the real consolation which God offers them!

I have often noticed, when a person is pleading with me for something he wants, it is but a very simple illustration of something far greater—how ready he is to lay hold of even half a promise. A man asks me to preach in the country and I say, "I really cannot. It is quite impossible." But he keeps on begging me to go and gets me to say that I would if I could—and then he interprets that to mean that I shall go, yet I never said anything of the kind! And then, some time afterwards, he writes to say that I promised to preach for him, which I never did, but he tries to make it out somehow that I did. And I expect that you find it the same when people are begging of you—they will, if they can, get a word of hope from you and then they lay hold upon it and tell you that you said, such-and-such. Yet, when we come to deal with God, we will not believe the promises which He has really made to us! Some of us seem to be always ready to believe anything against ourselves even though it is not true. It is strange that if we want favors from *men*, we will plead with them, and twist their words in our own favor, yet, when we come to deal with *God*, and everything is clearly in favor of the coming, seeking, believing sinner, we so often twist it around the other way, instead of catching at what God has really said!

This is the more strange, too, because *you can continually see how sinners catch at everything else.* See how they cling to their own righteousness! A thousand tons of it are not worth a farthing—it is neither fit for the land nor yet for the dunghill! Yet they prize it as if it were a heap of diamonds. See what confidence many put in utterly worthless forms and ceremonies. And that so-called "priest" with the cross on his back—they are foolish enough to trust in him and believe that he can do something or other for their soul's salvation! Anybody who chooses to deceive them will find them ready to become his dupes. Yet, when GOD comes to

them with His exceedingly great and precious promises, they do not catch at them, but rather turn aside from them! Many, as it were, take the pope up in their arms, triple crown and all, yet, when the Lord Jesus Christ passes by, they hardly put out their little finger to touch the hem of His garment! They seem as if they could trust even the devil sooner than they could trust their God, for they hope to find pleasure in sin, which is trusting the deceitfulness of Satan. Yet, when God Himself promises them eternal life through believing in His own dear Son, they turn their backs on Him, and say, "It is too good to be true! It cannot be possible!" Or they find some other pretext for not catching hold of the gracious promise of God.

There was once a man, an honest man, who verily believed that Christ was an impostor and, therefore, he devoted all his powers to the putting down of Christ's teaching and His disciples. He was a man with a large heart and, therefore, when this prejudice had taken full possession of him, he foamed at the mouth and breathed out threats and slaughter against the Church of Christ. He hunted down the disciples of Jesus in Jerusalem and when they fled from him there, he followed them to strange cities—all the while, as a truthful man—carrying out what he believed to be pleasing to God. It needed only a very few words from Heaven to let him know that this Christ, whom he was persecuting in the person of His followers, was, indeed, the Son of God—and that man, as soon as he had learned that Truth of God, resolved thenceforth to live and die for Him whose servants he had persecuted so ruthlessly. I believe I am addressing some who only need to know that Jesus Christ is, indeed, the Son of God, and all their jests and mocking at true religion will be turned into holy penitence and devoted adherence to the cause which hitherto they have defied. O Lord, send that dash of light to them this very hour! Let them believe in Him who is not only the faithful Witness to the Truth, but who is, Himself, the Truth, for, the moment they believe in Him, they shall be saved.

III. My third observation is that WHEN WE ARE DEALING WITH GOD, THERE IS VERY MUCH TO CATCH AT. Many years ago, when I was in great distress of soul and could not find Christ for a long while, I would have been glad if I had heard anybody speak about how much there is for a troubled soul to catch at. Perhaps I did hear something about it, but, if so, I did not catch at it, though I think I would have done so if it had really been made plain and clear to me. Until God the Holy Spirit enlightens the soul, the Truth may be put very plainly, but we do not see it. I will try, now, to set it before anyone here who is willing to catch at it.

Now, poor troubled Soul, if it had been God's purpose to destroy you. If He never intended to hear your prayers. If He never meant to save you, let me ask you, very earnestly, *Why did He give you the Bible?* I want you to catch at this thought. That blessed Book is all about salvation—the good news is fully and freely published there. But if God had resolved never to accept your faith, or to answer your prayers, why did He give you the Bible? Did He do this merely to tantalize you? What other use can it be to you except to increase your condemnation? What is the good of giving a hungry man the description of a grand dinner if he may not

eat it? What is the use of telling a poor beggar, who is shivering in the cold, all about garments that he will be glad to wear, when you know, all the while, that he will never be clad in them? That is not God's way of dealing with sinners. The very existence of the Word of God in your hand ought to be looked upon by you as a token of mercy to your soul—so, catch at it.

Again, *why has God raised up a ministry and given you the opportunity of listening to it?* Why are you continually being warned to flee from the wrath to come? Why are you constantly being instructed in the Truths of the Gospel? Why are you invited to come to Christ if He will reject you when you do come? If there is no hope for you who trust in Jesus, why has God sent me to preach to those whom He never intends to bless? I do not believe that it is so and I pray you not to believe it yourselves! The very fact that the Gospel is still sounding in your ears is the thing you ought to catch at. Therefore, go at once to God in prayer and say to Him, "Lord, You have sent me this precious message of hope both in the Bible and by Your servant—will you not accept me, now that I seek Your face and ask forgiveness at Your hands, in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ, Your well-beloved Son?"

I remind you also that *you are still on praying ground.* There are still many precious promises that you can claim, such as this, "He that seeks, finds; and to Him that knocks, it shall be opened." Your Lord has told you to pray and not to faint—surely, God has not set up His Mercy Seat in order that you may come to it and yet be refused? Do you believe that He bids you pray, all the while knowing in His heart that He never means to hear you? Do you think you would, over and over again in God's Word, be encouraged to seek His face if He had determined that He would never show that face to you? I cannot believe such a thing! On the contrary, I think that your poor troubled heart ought to say, "As the Lord bids me pray, He must mean to hear me." It seems clear enough to my mind that it must be so! I trust it will be equally clear to you. Go and use the Throne of Grace and I feel sure that you will not use it in vain.

See, next, if you cannot catch at this great Truth—*God has given Jesus Christ to die for sinners.* You are a sinner, so catch at this glorious fact! "He gave Himself for our sins." If it had said that He gave Himself for our righteousness, it would not have helped us, but it is most cheering for us to learn that He gave Himself for our sins. Did Jesus really die for sinful men and because of their sins? Then there is hope for me, a guilty man in whom sins abound, for it is "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." If the Lord had meant to destroy you, He would never have sent His Son to die, or sent to you an invitation to come to Him, for God takes no delight in tantalizing His creatures by setting before them that which encourages their hope only to plunge them afterwards into deeper despair! Are you even now despairing of salvation? Then, I urge you to say, with Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." If not a single ray of hope comes to you, yet grasp the Cross—and if you perish, perish there! But if you, by faith, grasp Christ, you shall never perish, for His own declaration is, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out"!

There is another Truth that I think some of you might catch at. It is this one—"*God now commands all men everywhere to repent."* This was the message that our Lord Jesus Christ Himself preached, "Repent you, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." You know that there is such a thing as saying that which is false by an indirect action as well as by direct speech. Suppose, for instance, that someone had offended you and that you should propose to him that he should confess the wrong that he did to you? If you were earnestly to exhort him to come and be at peace with you, suppose that, when he had done so, you were to say to him, "Now you have humbled yourself, and confessed the wrong that you did to me, but I will never forgive you"? You would have grossly deceived him and acted a lie even if you had not actually uttered it, because, in the very fact of your asking him to acknowledge the wrong, there was, by implication, an assurance from you that you meant to forgive him. In like manner, I look upon the preaching of the duty of repentance and the command to repent as containing within themselves the assurance that whoever repents shall find free forgiveness at the hand of God!

Then, again, what can be the meaning of that other command, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved,"* except that if, as a guilty sinner, I come and trust in Christ, I shall be saved? It is even so, indeed—I am saved as soon as I believe in Jesus. "But," says someone, "suppose that I have no right to do that." That cannot be! It has never happened yet and it never shall. At any rate, if I were in your place, I would not ask any question about the matter, but I would come to Christ because He *commands* me to come to Him and threatens me with terrible punishment if I do not come! Can you not catch at that?

I do not know where you poor troubled, conscience-smitten souls are sitting. I feel sure that there are some of you here, but, wherever you are, it seems to me that I cannot do better than say to you that *the whole Bible is full of promises for you to catch at.* I pray you lay hold of them. Do not read the Bible through those dark spectacles that you are so fond of wearing, trying to find all the threats there are in it, but read it in a very humble spirit, yet resolving, "If there is any encouragement for such a poor seeking soul as I am, I will find it. O God the Holy Spirit, help me to find it! If the Lord has spoken any word that can cheer me, I will not miss it for lack of believing it, for I will believe everything that He has said, since I know that He cannot lie! If I perish, I will perish with my finger on His promise and I will say to Him, 'You have said this, O Lord. Now fulfill Your promise to me, for I trust You to save even me according to Your Word!'" Gracious Spirit, lead many to come to this resolution and You shall have the praise!

IV. Now, lastly, THERE IS MUCH GREATER ENCOURAGEMENT FOR YOU AND FOR ME THAN THERE WAS FOR THOSE MESSENGERS FROM BEN-HADAD.

For, first, suppose Ahab did utter a hopeful word—*He was very deceitful.* Most kings, in those days, were as deceitful as they well could be. One could never believe a word that they spoke. So what if Ahab did say, "Ben-Hadad is my brother"? It might mean that he wanted to allure him into his power that he might destroy him. The men did not think of that,

but they hastily caught at Ahab's favorable word. Now, when God speaks, there is no deceit in what He says. He is not treacherous. He has never spoken falsely to any man. Every word of His is as true as the fact of your existence. I wish, sometimes, that I could induce sinners to treat God as they treat those with whom they do business. I wish they would believe His promise as readily as they believe a man's promise and say to Him, "That is what You have said, and I believe it. Lord, You cannot lie, therefore, fulfill Your promise to me." There would never be a single instance in which your hope would be disappointed! There never has been and there never shall be, so long as the race of man exists.

Then, again, when those men listened to Ahab, *he might have uttered a friendly word without meaning it.* It might have been quite an idle word and he might have said to the messengers, afterwards, "You must not lay any stress upon that expression. I merely used a courtly phrase—there is nothing in it." But God never speaks in a trifling or meaningless manner. There is not one idle word of His in the whole of the Scriptures. There is not a promise which has the slightest falseness or exaggeration in it. If God has promised to do a great thing, He will do a great thing. If He has promised a marvelous mercy, it was not a slip of the tongue or a slip of the pen, but He has bound Himself to fulfill it and He will surely do even as He has said! It is a great mercy for you, and for me, dear Friends, that the Bible is so full of solemn "shalls" and "wills" which God will certainly verify. They are all such massive pillars that a soul may well rest its whole weight upon them, or upon any one of them—and rest there for all eternity without fear of falling! I wish, with all my heart, that every poor troubled soul would just lay hold of the promises and say to the Lord, "These are no idle words—fulfill them unto me, I pray You, for Your dear Son's sake!"

There is another lesson to be learned from this incident. These messengers from Ben-Hadad said that the kings of Israel were merciful kings, but we know that *God is much more merciful than they were*, for "His mercy endures forever." It is no delight to God to see the wicked perish. He would infinitely rather that they should turn unto Him and live. He has no satisfaction in seeing you hopeless and despairing, young man—and it will bring joy to His heart if you will come and cast yourself at His feet, confessing your sin and believing that He has forgiven it. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents"—and no one will rejoice more than God Himself will if you do but come unto Him!

I close with this last remark. Those messengers from Ben-Hadad might have believed better of Ahab than would have been true, but *you cannot believe better of God than will be true.* I will give you a challenge. There is no saint here who can out-believe God! You know that God never out-promised Himself yet. Some people do—they say they will do wonderful things, but they promise what they cannot perform, or they find it inconvenient to fulfill their pledged word. That never yet happened to the God of Heaven and earth! He has never out-promised Himself. There have been some men who have believed great things of God and have gone a long way in believing, but there has never lived any man who has

yet out-believed God! Come, now, and put Him to the test—believe that He can blot out your sin before you leave this place! Trust His Son to do it and it shall be done. Believe that He will make a new man of you, creating you anew in Christ Jesus, and it shall be done. Believe that He will fill your heart with abounding comfort and overflowing joy, whereas, aforetime, you have been desponding and well-nigh despairing—and it shall be done. Believe that He will keep you from falling all your life and present you faultless before His Presence with exceeding joy—and it shall be done! Believe that He will be with you in life, with you in death, with you at the Judgment Seat and with you to all eternity—and it shall be done! You may open your mouth wide, but He will fill it and when He has filled it, there will be as much more left for others as they will be able to receive. In the name of God. I challenge you to out-believe Him if you can!

"Oh," says one, "if what you have said is true, I will believe that Jesus can save me, and that He can save me now—

"'I'll go to Jesus, though my sin
Has like a mountain rose.
I know His courts, I'll enter in,
Whatever may oppose!
I'll to the gracious King approach,
Whose scepter pardon gives.
Perhaps He may command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives."

He does command your touch! So stretch out your hand! Trust Him and you are saved! Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you because you have believed on the name of the only-begotten Son of God! Go in peace, for Jesus Christ has made you whole! The Lord be with you! Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 KINGS 20:1-34.

Verses 1-4. *And Ben-Hadad the king of Syria gathered all his host together: and there were thirty-two kings with him, and horses, and chariots: and he went up and besieged Samaria, and warred against it. And he sent messengers to Ahab, king of Israel, into the city, and said unto him, Thus said Ben-Hadad, Your silver and your gold is mine, your wives also and your children, even the goodliest, are mine. And the king of Israel answered and said, My lord, O king, according to your saying, I am yours, and all that I have.* This was a king of Israel, meanly crouching before the idolatrous king of Syria! Not after this fashion would David have spoken, or any of those kings who followed the Lord of Hosts. But when men forsake God, they soon become cowards. What Kingdom or nation shall prosper that casts off the yoke of the Most High?

5, 6. *And the messengers came again, and said, Thus speaks Ben-Hadad, saying, though I have sent unto you, saying, You shall deliver me your silver, and your gold, and your wives, and your children; yet I will send my servants unto you tomorrow about this time, and they shall search your house, and the houses of your servants; and it shall be that*

whatever is pleasant in your eyes, they shall put it in their hands, and take it away. That is always the way with such people—give them an inch, and they take a mile. Ahab had agreed to all that the Syrian king claimed, so now Ben-Hadad pushes his advantage. If you ever yield to Satan, you will find him to be a hard taskmaster. You can never yield enough to satisfy him and if you yield to any sin, whatever it may be, you will find it to be a cruel tyrant to you. If you allow it once to have power over your soul, it will push its advantage further and further, and make your yoke to be exceedingly heavy.

7-9. *Then the king of Israel called all the elders of the land, and said, Mark, I pray you, and see how this man seeks mischief: for he sent unto me for my wives, and for my children, and for my silver, and for my gold, and I denied him not. And all the elders and all the people said unto him, Hearken not unto him, nor consent. Therefore he said unto the messengers of Ben-Hadad, Tell my lord, the king. All that you did send for to your servant at the first I will do: but this thing I may not do. And the messengers departed, and brought him word again.* Driven to extremity, Ahab showed that he had a little courage left, but when he was supported by his people and, possibly, urged on by them, he put his foot down and would not altogether submit to Ben-Hadad. Oh, that men had the moral courage to revolt against sin! Would that, when they felt its cruel bondage, they would resist it! God grant them Grace to do so, and strengthen them in their resistance!

10. *And Ben-Hadad sent unto him, and said, The gods do so unto me, and more also, if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls for all the people that follow me.* As much as to say, "I will bring so many against you that all the dust of the city would not be enough to furnish a handful each."

11. *And the king of Israel answered and said, Tell him, Let not him that girds on his harness boast himself as he that takes it off.* That was a sharp shrewd check to the boasting of the Syrian king.

12-15. *And it came to pass, when Ben-Hadad heard this message, as he was drinking, he and the kings in the pavilions, that he said unto his servants, Set yourselves in array. And they set themselves in array against the city. And, behold, there came a Prophet unto Ahab, king of Israel, saying, Thus says the LORD, Have you seen all this great multitude? Behold, I will deliver it into your hand this day, and you shall know that I am the LORD. And Ahab said, By whom? And he said, Thus says the LORD, Even by the young men of the princes of the provinces. Then he said, Who shall order the battle? And he answered, You. Then he numbered the young men of the princes of the provinces, and they were two hundred and thirty two: and after them he numbered all the people, even all the children of Israel, being seven thousand.* All the volunteers that were ready for the war—they were only seven thousand.

16-18. *And they went out at noon. But Ben-Hadad was drinking himself drunk in the pavilions, he and the kings, the thirty-two kings that helped him. And the young men of the princes of the provinces went out first. And Ben-Hadad sent out, and they told him, saying, There are men come out of Samaria. And he said.* In his drunken fury, "he said"—

18. *Whether they are come out for peace, take them alive; or whether they are come out for war, take them alive.* They were not to be so easily taken as Ben-Hadad imagined.

19-21. *So these young men of the princes of the providences came out of the city, and the army which followed them. And they slew, everyone, his man: and the Syrians fled, and Israel pursued them: and Ben-Hadad the King of Syria escaped on a horse with the horsemen. And the king of Israel went out and smote the horses and chariots, and slew the Syrians with a great slaughter.* God has ways and means of delivering His people in His own time. I wish all the young men of our churches had the high ambition to be serviceable to the Lord of Hosts. These young princes were a very small band of soldiers, but they led the way and smote the drunken monarch and his troops—and if our young men, full of holy zeal and ardor, had confidence in God and went forth, everyone to slay his man, by which I mean, each one to win a soul to Christ, what glorious victories would be won for the Truth as it is in Jesus!

22. *And the Prophet came to the king of Israel, and said unto him, Go, strengthen yourself, and mark, and see what you should do: for at the return of the year the king of Syria will come up against you.* Another year would bring another war, so they must be prepared.

23. *And the servants of the king of Syria said unto him, Their gods are god of the hills; therefore they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they.* It was a current heathen idea that there was one god for a mountain, another for a stream, another for a plain—and these men imagined that the glorious Jehovah was a local deity like their images were supposed to be!

24. *And do this thing, Take the kings away, every man out of his place, and put captains in their places.* "Do not let the kings, who have their own armies, govern them, for that creates divisions in the camp—but appoint captains in their places."

25-27. *And number you an army, like the army that you have lost, horse for horse, and chariot for chariot: and we will fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they. And he hearkened unto their voice, and did so. And it came to pass at the return of the year, that Ben-Hadad numbered the Syrians, and went up to Aphek, to fight against Israel. And the children of Israel were numbered, and were all present.* That is a grand record. It shows the kind of men they were. I wish that all our church-members were present at all our Prayer Meetings and on all occasions when work is to be done for Christ. What a healthy condition the Church would be in if it could be said, "The children of Israel were numbered, and were all present."

27. *And went against them: and the children of Israel pitched before them like two little flocks of kids.* A herd of goats was seldom very large, and the whole of the Israelites put together seemed only "like two little flocks of kids."

27, 28. *But the Syrians filled the country. And there came a man of God, and spoke unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus says the LORD, Because the Syrians have said, The LORD is God of the hills, but He is not*

God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am the LORD. See how good came to Israel through the blasphemy of the Syrians? Whenever there is a rather worse book than usual brought out against the religion of Jesus Christ, or a more than ordinary villainous blasphemy is invented against the Grace of God, you may almost clap your hands, and say, "Now will God bestir Himself for His Truth and for righteousness' sake. These men will provoke Him so that He will arise and defend His own cause."

29-32. *And they pitched one over against the other seven days, and so it was, that in the seventh day the battle was joined: and the children of Israel slew of the Syrians an hundred thousand footmen in one day. But the rest fled to Aphek, into the city; and there a wall fell upon twenty and seven thousand of the men that were left. And Ben-Hadad fled, and came into the city, into an inner chamber. And his servants said unto him, Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings: let us, I pray you, put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the king of Israel: perhaps he will save your life. So they girded sackcloth on their loins, and put ropes on their heads, and came to the king of Israel, and said, Your servant Ben-Hadad.* There is a wonderful difference between this language and the way in which he had previously spoken! "Your servant Ben-Hadad."

32. *Says, I pray you, let me live. And he said, Is he yet alive? He is my brother.* When a man leaves his God, he cannot distinguish between his foes and his friends, so that, oftentimes, those who would do him the direst mischief he reckons to be his brothers.

33, 34. *Now the men did diligently observe whether anything would come from him, and did hastily catch it: and they said, Your brother Ben-Hadad. Then he said, Go you, bring him. Then Ben-Hadad came forth to him, and he caused him to come up into the chariot. And Ben-Hadad said unto him, The cities which my father took from your father, I will restore; and you shall make streets for you in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria. Then said Ahab, I will send you away with this covenant. So he made a covenant with him, and sent him away.* Ahab actually made a treaty of peace with him, and let him live to plot incalculable mischief against the nation.

—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.

LAME SHEEP
NO. 2854

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed."
Hebrews 12:13.

THERE are some Believers with strong and vigorous faith. Soaring high, they can mount up with wings as eagles. Fleet of foot, they can run and not be weary, or, with steady progress, they can walk and not faint. But all are not so highly privileged. I suppose there is seldom a family which has no sickly member. However hale and hearty most of the sons and daughters may be, there is likely to be some weak one among them. So it certainly is in the spiritual household and it will be, therefore, my business, just now, to look after the weak ones. I trust that the word which I shall be enabled to speak may lead their companions to look after them and may God grant that by these means, many troubled ones may be conducted into peace and safety!

I. IN GOD'S FLOCK, THERE ARE ALWAYS SOME LAME SHEEP. Some of these people of God, who are compared to lame sheep, *seem to have been so from their birth.* Their lameness is in their constitution. Do you not know some friends of yours who naturally incline to despondency? They always look at the dark side of everything and if there is no dark side at all, they have a very fine imagination—so they very soon conjure up some difficulty or trouble. They appear to have been born with a propensity to read black-letter literature and nothing else. Illuminated writings are not for them—they cannot bear the fine colors which delight our eyes—they like the dark points. If they turn to the Bible, they seem naturally to fall upon the threats, or if they read the promises, they shake their heads and say, "Ah, these are not for us!" They make heavy troubles out of the common cares of life and it is only carrying out the same spirit which causes them to grieve and fret over the whole course of their Christian pilgrimage. For them, the road is always rugged, the pastures unsavory and the waters turbid. You will find such unhappy souls in all our Churches—people who seem from their very conformation to be lame as to their faith—timorous, trembling and full of doubts and fears.

Besides, have you never noticed *a constitutional tendency in some professors to stumble and get lame?* If there is a slough, they will fall into it. If there is a thicket, they will get entangled by it. If there is an error, they will run into it. We trust they are good people and they do believe in Je-

sus, but, somehow or other, they do not see things clearly. Men to them are like walking trees. Such persons go off at a tangent if anybody makes noise enough to attract their attention. "Lo, here!" and "lo, there!" are cries at the sound of which they go off directly. Let some Divine discover a novel doctrine and they are on the new track at once, never thinking where it will lead them. Let a would-be philosopher suggest some fresh theory which clashes with the Word of God and the things of the Spirit—and their eager appetite is whetted and they will leave the old fields of Truth to wander in the barren wastes of science falsely so-called!

When you go to market, if you are a sensible person, you do not turn aside from all the good wares and fair merchandise to waste your time and your money over the quack vendor of nostrums that he advertises with large pictures and loud talk. Your common sense directs you to seek wholesome food and useful articles, but there are credulous people ready to be caught with any bait. So, too, there are no lack of simpletons in all our congregations—good, thoughtless people, lame and limping in all their walk, troubled with skepticism and plagued with curiosity—unstable as water, they shall not excel.

Can you not detect, too, *some who are lame in point of character?* They seem to have been so from their very birth. There is a something about their gait that is unsteady. As you look at them, you are ready to say, "Yes, good people they may be but they are of a strange sort." We hope they are sincere, but they are like Mephibosheth, who was dropped by his nurse, and was lame in both his feet. If they walk at all, it is a dreadful hobble. They do their best and we cannot condemn them, but there is an awkwardness about their whole deportment. They are lame sheep at the best. With some, it is a cross temper. With others, it is a general moroseness which it does not seem as if the Grace of God itself would ever cure in them, or it may be a natural indolence oppresses them. Or it is quite possible that habitual impatience harasses them. Now, the Grace of God should eradicate these vices—it can and will if you yield to its influence, for the Grace of God, which brings salvation, teaches us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts. With some of us, the conquest over such evil propensities has been already gained. Still, there are among us those sheep that are lame in this particular respect—they are, if I may say so, constitutionally unsound from their very first entrance into the fold!

Moreover, *they betray their lameness when there is anything you give them to do.* If they are Sunday school teachers, they cannot walk regularly or keep step with their fellows, or they fail to help the young scholar on. Ask them to visit in any district—the steps they take are marked by indiscretion. Appoint them to preach at any of your stations—their speech is not straightforward—they go over the most plain ground of Gospel statement with a lack of consistency, like the walk of a man whose legs are not equal. Whatever they attempt, they do it just as a lame man would go on an errand. They are slow in their movements and slovenly in their performances. Aptly are they compared to lame sheep. Well, you know such people. I wonder whether you are one yourself? At least there are some such about, lame from their birth.

Other sheep of Christ's flock are *halt and lame because they have been ill fed.* Bad food is the cause of a thousand disorders. Many a sickly man, instead of being dosed with drugs, needs to be nourished with wholesome meat. Had he something better to feed upon, he might conquer his diseases. Sheep cannot thrive well on bad food. It is true that many really good Christians have been badly fed. The preaching they have heard has, perhaps, been altogether false doctrine. The poor souls have sat and listened to moral essays, maudlin sentiments, or manifold subtleties that could not nourish their faith, or invigorate their spiritual constitution. If they sometimes suspected that it was not all right, they did not like to desert the place they had long been known to attend, or to forsake the minister they had long been known to hear. They are afraid of being thought too critical, so they have gone on with ill fare to the prejudice of their health and strength, their comfort and usefulness. It is more than probable that poisonous doctrine has got into their constitution and done them real mischief, hence they are lame.

In hundreds, not to say thousands, of cases that I know, Christians are lame through a kind of hazy teaching in which if there is not anything positively bad, there is nothing positively good. I have read the remark that if you were to hear 13 lectures on geology from any decent lecturer, you would probably get a pretty clear idea of his system, but that you might hear 1,300 sermons from many a minister without knowing what he believes! There is a systematic habit, nowadays, of keeping back the positive doctrines and the essential Truths of the Gospel—or of referring to them so vaguely that the sound of words gives no clue to the sense. The whole atmosphere is so full of fog that people cannot see where they are! The preacher may appear to be profoundly deep, but he is not clear. He stirs the mud and makes himself and his subject, alike, obscure. Or, perhaps, he is so superficial that he does not touch upon those Truths which lie at the foundation of the blessed hope of eternal life. Those that sit under such a ministry need not wonder how it is that they do not grow in Grace!

Yes, and how much ministry there is that has nothing but chaff in it! What else can we say of those exquisite preparations for the pulpit in which cuttings from the reviewers, tidbits from the poets and choice scraps from Scripture writers are woven together with a fine overture to begin and a flowing peroration to finish? What can we say of it but chaff, chaff, without a grain of pure wheat from first to last? I would like to chain eloquence down to a post—there let it be bound forever in the land of forgetfulness, never again let it lift its brazen face in this world! Aiming at oratory, cultivating rhetoric, the Gospel, which eschews the words of man's wisdom and demands great plainness of speech, has been disparaged and displaced. We shall not get back a strong race of Christians till we get back such a sturdy band of outspoken men as dare their reputation, if not their lives, upon the unvarnished testimony they give to the Truth they know, the Truth as it is in Jesus, the Truth as it burns in their own hearts and fires their tongues, the Truth as it commends itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God! But, undoubtedly, there

are thousands of Christians at this good hour who are lame for life through unqualified, unhallowed teaching!

God save us from its hateful witcheries and its baneful influences! If we are called to preach, let us preach, but let us know what we have to say and let us say it as though we meant it—or forever hold our tongues! There are some preachers who seem to speak as if they meant to say nothing and they succeed to their heart's content, if that is their intention! Nothing comes of it. The children of God, trained under their auspices, do not know whether God has an elect people or not, whether the saints will persevere, or whether they will fall away and perish. They do not know whether Christ redeemed everybody, or somebody. They have no clear notion whatever of the things which make for their peace. May we be preserved from all willful ignorance and woeful infatuation! May God supply us constantly with strong meat and sound health to digest it!

Full many of the Lord's sheep are lame *because they have been worried.* Sheep often get worried by a dog and so they get lamed. It may be that I am addressing some poor child of God who has been beset and frightfully tormented by Satan, the accuser of the brethren. Oh, what trouble and what terror he can inflict upon us! He can suggest the most infernal insinuations. He can inject into our minds such blasphemous thoughts as make us stagger and reel. He can make us breathe, as it were, the very atmosphere of the infernal Lake of Fire! Those who have passed through this bitter experience will know how they carry the marks of a conflict with Satan upon them, after they have once been assailed by him—wounds and scars that they will bear upon them to their grave. He is such a cruel adversary that even when we overcome him, our strength is impaired by the battle. The fatigues and perils of our pilgrimage are light in comparison with our temptations. We had better go a thousand miles over hedge and ditch than have to stand foot to foot with that dread adversary of souls for an hour! Full many a child of God has been lamed in that fray.

Others, too, have been harassed by persecutors. Many a poor woman has lost her cheerful spirits through a harsh, ungodly husband who has excited her fears, or vexed her with sneers. And not a few dear young children have been broken down for life through the hard treatment they have had, for conscience' sake, to endure at home. True, there may be instances in which sufferers of this sort, out of weakness have been made strong, but, for the most part, when from day to day, from hour to hour, one is insulted and assaulted, the trial is heavier than any ordinary fortitude can bear, insomuch that those who have encountered it have gone halting like lame sheep all their days.

Some precious saints I have known have grown lame *through a rough and weary way*, just as sheep can be lamed if they are driven too fast, or too far, or over too stony a ground. To what an excess of trouble some children of God have been exposed! The Lord has graciously helped them through all their adversities. Still, the trouble they have had to endure has told upon their hearts. They seem as if they never could quite recover from the sudden shock, or the protracted anxiety that has once impaired

their strength, wrinkled their face and dried up their moisture. If they had more Grace, no doubt they would recover their health and renew their youth, but there are some gentle spirits which, when once crushed, are unable to rally and, therefore, they remain lame.

Perhaps still more are lamed *through the rough road of controversy*. If you are a child of God and you know your bearings, always keep as much as you can out of the jingle-jangle of controversy. Little good ever comes of your subtle disputes, but they do gender much strife. Do you tell me that we are told to "prove all things"? Yes, so we are—and it is well to give heed to the admonition—but we are also told to "hold fast that which is good," and we must not forget the latter half of the precept. Some people seem to think that in order to prove all things, they have to analyze and define every particular and every particle with scrupulous nicety. To prove the quality of the meat that is brought to your table, there is no occasion for you to eat the whole roast. A small sample will enable you to pronounce a sound opinion. Apply the same rule to books and it will save you a world of trouble. They may dish up old dogmas, or they may throw off new theories. They may contain the reveries of the thoughtful, or the ramblings of the idler. They may be conceived with a purpose, or composed for a price. In any case, you must have a voracious appetite if you would read them all through!

But it is quite unnecessary. Take the paper knife and just cut open a page in the center. One tasting will generally suffice for a fair testing. You can see, within a little, what tack their authors take. If they accord not with the Word of God, away with them! You have proved them quite enough. You will get little reward for your pains if you worry your poor mind to solve afresh the points which are settled among us. We have believed and rejoiced in the Truth of God these many years. Yes, believed on conclusive evidence where we once stood in doubt! Rejoiced with unspeakable joy where we once looked with dreary misgiving! What more can you require? But many have been lamed through choosing rough places, adventuring among thorns and briers and leaving the beaten tracks without experience enough to avoid injury to themselves, or skill enough to clear a path in which others may safely follow.

Full many of the Lord's sheep have become lame *through negligence, faintness and the gradual declension of spiritual health.* They have backslidden. They have been remiss in prayer, omitted reading the Word and forsaken communion with God—so it is no marvel that their walk betrays their weakness. A bad cold is the parent of many ailments. Beware of catching a chill in religion! Lameness is not infrequently the result of a fall. A broken bone, or a compound fracture, or a serious dislocation of the joints is not easily healed. Those who have such injuries can tell you how helpless it makes them—how long it is before they can walk without crutches and how often a change of weather will remind them, by ache and twinge—that cures leave scars behind! Certainly it is so with any man who has fallen into gross sin after making a profession of faith in Christ. However fully he may be restored by Divine Grace, he will *feel its effects as long as he lives*.

II. There are, and I suppose we may expect there always will be, lame ones in God's flock, so I proceed to show that THE REST OF THE FLOCK SHOULD SEEK THEIR HEALING. "Make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed."

Some Christian people seem to be so inconsiderate, and unsympathetic that they treat all the lame of the flock with harshness. You may be strong and vigorous in your physical constitution, strangers to nervousness and depression of spirits. Be thankful, then, but do not be presumptuous! Despise not those who suffer from infirmities that have never come upon you! Your turn may come before long. You are yet in the body and exempt from no ailment to which your fellow creatures are prone. I have known hectoring spirits whose contumely it was hard to quiet, so did they jeer at the weaklings and, presently, their own complaints have been hard to pacify, so they did moan over their own grievances. The more arrogant they have been when all was well with them, the more crestfallen and desponding have they been in their gloom when things have gone ill with them. Those often who crow most, croak worst! There is a passage in the 34th Chapter of Ezekiel which I should recommend every strong, rough man to read and diligently consider—"Thus said the Lord God unto them: Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle. Because you have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns till you have scattered them abroad; therefore will I save My flock and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle."

Jehovah is our Shepherd, and He is very tender of His little lambs and His weak sheep—and if we are not tender of them, too, we shall soon be made to smart for our hard-heartedness! It sometimes happens that those persons who have seldom or never had an illness in their lives, feel little sympathy for those who have to bear much pain and sickness. Others, who have never suffered from poverty, themselves, will sometimes shut up their heart of compassion against those who are in dire circumstances. Or if they dole out a charity, they will too often spoil a good deed with a harsh word. "You that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak." And if that is too much to expect of you, the least that I can ask is that you will bear with them! I do beseech you, by the gentleness of Christ, that you tread lightly in the sick chamber and speak softly to such as are crushed by adversity. There are diseases that provoke irritability. Peevishness, or despondency may be a symptom of the particular ailment that prostrates one's energies and weakens one's entire being.

Do not be censorious—that would be cruel. Let those of you who are blessed with health and walk in the sunshine, be considerate of your Brothers and Sisters who are blighted with a malady they cannot shake off, or enveloped in a cloud that darkens all their prospects. Do learn to make another's case your own. Be kind. Let every tone of your voice, every gesture of your limbs, every look of your face show the kindness of your heart. God will surely requite it. He watches His children in the furnace. If you grieve them in their trouble, He will vex you in His sore displeasure. And there are spiritual ailments which, like bodily ones, re-

quire tender care and gentle treatment. Do not aggravate the sorrows of those who are harassed with doubts, tempted with evils and distracted with anxious cares. Their tale may appear simple enough to you, but it is very serious to them. What troubles them might not give you an instant's concern. Pass it not over, therefore, as nonsense. Your Lord and Master knew how to condescend to men of low estate and His condescension was always pure, never arrogant. He is far more gentle than the most tender among us. Oh, how desirable to learn His way!

Do you ask, then, what He says we are to do for these lame ones?

Evidently, *we ought to comfort them.* "Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees." Cheer the heart when the limbs are weak. Tell the doubting that God is faithful. Tell those that feel the burden of sin that it was for sinners Christ died. Tell the backsliders that God never does cast away His people. Tell the desponding that the Lord delights in mercy. Tell the distracted that the Lord does devise means to bring back His banished. Covet the character of Barnabas. He was a son of consolation. Study the sacred art of speaking a word in season. Apprentice yourself to the Comforter. Acquaint yourself with the sacred art of comforting the sad. Let your own troubles and trials qualify you to sympathize and succor. You will be of great value in the Church of God if you acquire the art of compassion and are able to help those that are bowed down.

But will you please give heed to the special instruction? *We are to make straight paths because of lame people.* You cannot heal the man's bad foot, but you can pick up all the stones from the path that he has to pass over! You cannot give him a new leg, but you can make the road as smooth as possible. Let there be no unnecessary stumbling-blocks to cause him pain. Do you ask me how you can observe this precept? If you have to preach the Gospel, preach it plainly. Poor sinners are dull enough of understanding—they can puzzle themselves without your puzzling them. Had you to feed a child, it would be folly to put a quarter-loaf down before it and account your duty done. Nor will it profit the mass of the people to preach the Gospel to them in the abstract, giving them a great lump of Truth to digest as best they can. No, but you should divide a child's bread into small pieces—crumble it up and then pour the milk on it, that he may be able to feed on it. So must we cater for God's tried and troubled people. We must speak simply, use homely illustrations and quote precious promises. What though somebody may be offended? Well, let him take offense! We need not be particular to pacify any of those critical people and God forbid that we should offend any of His little ones, for He is jealous of them! If one feeble soul gets a hold of the Truth through its being made plain to him, he will be grateful to you and nor is "God unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love."

Would you make straight paths? Then, *take care that your teaching is always according to the Bible.* Many lame people have been injured by a mixture of heathen philosophy and Christian doctrine. What is it that leads to the spread of Popery in this country? Where does this dogma of baptismal regeneration come from? Had every minister preached that Be-

lievers, only, ought to be baptized, there would have been no pretext for infant sprinkling and certainly no baptismal regeneration! If you go a little to the right, or a little to the left and so diverge from the high road, you do not know where it will take you. Have you ever tried that in a Surrey lane? Perhaps you have been beguiled by some pleasant-looking path to leave the main road, fully expecting to come back into it again a little further on, not for a moment supposing that you had changed your course altogether till you have found yourself two or three miles off the place that you wanted to get to! It is better for you always to keep to the Scriptures, Friends, for if you go a little away from them, you do not know where you may wander and, in teaching others, you may lead them astray! Errors that seem slight and frivolous at first, become sad and serious in a little while. A little deviation from the Word of God will presently lead to a total dissent from its teaching! Heaven only knows how far you may go astray when you once begin to turn your feet aside. Make straight paths for your feet, then, because there are lame ones that otherwise may not be healed.

And in all our walk and conversation, let us make straight paths for our feet as those who aim at holiness of life. Unholy Christians are the plague of the Church. They are spots in our feasts of charity. Like hidden rocks, they are the terror of navigators. It is hard to steer clear of them and there is no telling what wrecks they may cause. The inconsistencies of professors spread dismay among weak, desponding Believers. It is not merely the mischief you will do to yourself, Church member, if you grow wanton and worldly, or the grief you will bring to the stronger Brothers and Sisters, but it is the pain and peril to which you will expose the young, the weak—the tender ones of the flock! That poor little girl in yonder cottage will have your character thrown in her teeth! That poor struggling woman, whose godless husband she has sought to reclaim, will be sure to hear his cruel taunt, "Ah, there is one of your crew! That is how they live!"

The unclean life of anyone who happens to stand in an eminent place does damage which is impossible for us to estimate. The jeer does not alight only upon the transgressor, but upon the whole company of God's people with whom he was associated! They all have to bear the taunt and feel the smart. Many a lame one is thus staggered. Were he a strong Christian, of course he would say to himself, "Well, there was a Judas among the Apostles and there will be false professors among ourselves, so we must not pin our creed to any creature in the world." The less confidence he could repose in the disciples, the more closely he would cleave to the Lord. But timid, trembling Christians are put out of countenance, and out of heart, too, by the delinquencies of those they were known to look up to! They say, "If a Christian acts like *this*, can there be anything in Christianity worth seeking for and living for, after all?" So that what is lame is dislocated. Oh, do walk carefully! When you try to teach others, do make your walk an example to those you wish to teach. I would say especially this to myself. Let your life be so pure that it excites no suspicion! Let your conduct be so upright that it needs no explanation or

apology! Let your character speak for itself, a light that shines, an example that you need not be ashamed of, yourself, and such as others may wish to emulate! And beware, I pray you, of any secret sin, of any evil habits such as you would only tolerate when screened from observation, for, as sure as you live, if you are a child of God, it will come out, one of these days, to your shame.

The openly profane may enjoy a measure of impunity, but the professed follower of Christ can never play the hypocrite without provoking speedy retribution. Ah, David thought he had hidden his sin with Bathsheba, did he not? When he had arranged Uriah's death, he seemed to have imagined that nobody would ever know anything about it. But how soon it was discovered and that, too, without its being divulged by anyone who connived at his guilt! The Lord saw it, and He would not hide it. Never let a child of God think that his Heavenly Father will overlook his willful misdeeds. There is no special Providence to shield you from eating the fruit of your own ways. "Be sure your sin will find you out." "Make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated."

Once more let me admonish you. Do not be negligent when your Lord is so vigilant. Do not even be careless when you see Him so cautious. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Great Shepherd of the sheep, evidently cares for the lame ones. The charge He gives is a proof of the concern He feels. He bids us to be considerate of them, because He, Himself, takes a warm interest in their welfare.

III. WHAT SHALL I NOW SAY TO YOU WHO FEEL YOUR OWN WEAKNESS AND INFIRMITY?

You lame ones who cannot walk without limping, I know how you complain. "Ah," you say, "I am no credit to Christianity. Though, in all sincerity, I do believe in Jesus, yet, alas, I can scarcely think I am one of His true disciples, called, and chosen, and faithful! I fear that, after all, He will disown me." Ah, Beloved, He never will! If you really are trusting to Him and hanging upon Him, or even touching the hem of His garment, He *cannot* and He *will not* leave or forsake you! True, it would be likely enough if His ways were like our ways, and it will cause Him no little care to get you safely home. When Mr. Great-Heart went with Miss Much-Afraid and Mr. Feeble-Mind on the road to the Celestial City, he had his hands full. He says of poor Mr. Feeble-Mind, that when he came to the lions, he said, "Oh, the lions will have me!" And he was afraid of the giants and afraid of everything on the road. It caused Great-Heart much trouble to get him on the road. It is so with you. Well, you must know that you are very troublesome and hard to manage. But then, our Lord Jesus is very patient. He does not mind taking trouble. He has laid down His life for you and He is prepared to exercise all His Divine power and wisdom to bring you home to His Father's House. If He were to desert you, there would be no eye to pity, no hand to lead you—but there is no fear of His changing the purpose of His heart. Having loved His own, He loves them to the end. I have heard say—I do not know how true it is—that when one of her family is a little weak-headed, the mother is sure to love that one best and show it the most attention. Her most ten-

der thoughts will always turn towards her helpless babe. And her keenest anxieties will hover over the child who is ill. She may forget, for a while, the strong and the hale, but those who need her succor most are quite certain to be never out of her mind. Be of good cheer, then—"As one whom his mother comforts," so will the Lord comfort you! "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him."

You may say, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." You may gratefully sing, "He shall gather the lambs with His arms and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." In the Divine economy, the more care you require, the more care you shall have. Besides, you know somewhat of our blessed Redeemer's Covenant engagements. Did our Lord Jesus Christ fail to bring His weak ones home, it would be much to His dishonor. "Those that You gave Me I have kept," He says, "and none of them is lost but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled." So Satan only had his own. How the wolf would howl over one sheep branded with the Savior's name were he to fall a prey to his teeth! What malignant hilarity and derision there would be among the infernal spirits if the Good Shepherd failed to bring home one lost sheep whom He had rescued! The joy among the angels of God, they would say, was premature. The Son of Man, they would say, had sought, found, but failed to save the lost. Then the weaker the victim, the keener would the satire be. Ribald lips might shout forth the taunt, "He saved the healthy—the lame He could not save."

It would thus be more discredit to Christ to lose a weak one than a strong one, or for one lame sheep to be lost than if some of the healthier of them should perish—but there is no danger of such a calamity! The oversight of the Shepherd secures the safety of all the flock. They are all numbered and each one in particular is known to Him. Our Lord is a Shepherd who loves His sheep so well that were one of them taken and held between the jaws of a lion, He would run to the rescue and kill the lion as David did of old. He would slay the lion and the bear to get His poor little one saved from the teeth of the devourer. You shall not die, but live! "Oh," you say, "but I cannot preserve myself." No, you cannot! And in your weakness lies your great strength! Jesus Christ will be sure to cover you with His power, so that when you are utterly defenseless, you shall be most efficiently defended. "Ah," says another, "I have had a weary life of it to now." Yes, but you have brighter days to come! Some of God's children, after living in the joyous sunlight all their lives, as they draw near the closing scene, have felt much darkness and depression of spirits. This in no degree imperils their security—they will wake up all right in the morning. But, then, others of God's children have passed most of their days under a cloud till the gloom seemed to settle on their visage and obscure even the radiance of their hope. And yet, when the hour of their departure was at hand, the mists and fogs have all dispersed, light has streamed into their souls and their sweet peace and sacred joy have been like an overflowing tide! The very ones that went limping and mourning, while they were on their pilgrimage, have played the man and displayed the faith of Christians most wondrously when the tri-

al that they dreaded all their life overtook them! Just as Ready-to-Halt left his crutches behind, they have begun to sing and rejoice when they were departing! Like clear shining after rain, like a brilliant sunset after a stormy day, at eventide it was light with them and, I think, it will be so with many of you.

There are some flowers that must be grown in the shade. I believe God made and adapted them to flourish most in shady spots. Some ferns never thrive so well as in some little corner of the brook where the damp continually washes them. Perhaps you are one of those flowers or ferns, planted in a soil that suits your growth. Well, if it is so, murmur not at your lot! The gloom that hovers over you may help the peace of your heart. I have known women, pure and pious, for whom the sunny scenes of life have had no charms. But their bright faces, their beaming eyes and their benevolent hearts have shone with a beautiful brilliance as they have flitted about like angels in the chambers of the sick in the wards of the hospital, or among the couches of the wounded and the dying. Consider Him who was the Man of Sorrows, but whose spirit was not crushed. In the midst of dire distress, He said to His disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." And, Beloved, do not be unmindful of the comfort you may derive under any affliction when you trace it to the will of God. If you suffer as an evil-doer—if it is your own fault—the scourge that chastens you will invite no pity and the conscience that reproaches you will aggravate your pain. If, on the other hand, you can trace the hand of the Lord in a cross or a calamity, your course is soon clear. It would be folly to repine—your wisdom is to resign yourself entirely to His will. Bear it patiently and God will reward you plenteously. When you would rather glorify the Lord than gratify yourself, your prayer shall come up before Him acceptably and the answer shall come down speedily.

It is not for me to say what particular purpose there may be in the personal afflictions that any of the sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father are called to bear, but I cannot help observing that the peaceable fruits of righteousness, which these tried ones put forth, are very sweet and luscious. Let me appeal to your own selves. Have you not often proved the Truth of those words of the Psalmist, "You have known my soul in adversities"? And is it not so that the notice which the Lord has taken of you, and the care He has exercised over you, have made you love Him more tenderly than you ever did before? You could say with David, "Your right hand has held me up and Your gentleness has made me great." Oh, what prayer you have poured out when His chastening was upon you! Such prayer is sweet to the Lord Jesus Christ. I marvel not that He lets you suffer so much when your suffering yields such rich perfume! Well, dear Friends, when we get so choice a compensation, *now*—what shall we receive hereafter? Surely, in the ages to come, the lowliest of worshippers shall sing the loudest—

"While Heaven's resounding mansions ring
With shouts of Sovereign Grace."

Their soprano notes shall rise above the angels' harps and the full tide of human voices with a distinctness like this, "MY soul does magnify the Lord, and MY spirit does rejoice in God my Savior!" The personal tribute of extraordinary love and gratitude shall thrill out its solo and then blend with the general chorus!

And now, to close, let us read our text again. "Therefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; *and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.*" See to it that you are not negligent of this ministry of love! Remember how high a reputation Job got in his day for the care he bestowed on those who were frail and infirm? Eliphaz the Temanite said of him, "Behold, you have instructed many, and you have strengthened the weak hands. Your words have upheld him that was falling, and you have strengthened the feeble hands." And do not forget the reproof which the Lord gave to the shepherds of Israel—"The diseased have you not strengthened, neither have you healed that which was sick, neither have you bound up that which was broken, neither have you brought again that which was driven away, neither have you sought that which was lost." Above all, consider the example of our Lord Jesus. His eyes were always quick to spy out the lame, the blind, the crippled—and His hands were always stretched out immediately for their relief. "He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him." And if you and I, Beloved, walk with God, and God is with us, our godliness will show itself in the pity we feel and the kindness we show to the feeble and the faulty, the cross-grained and the crippled.

The Lord bless these counsels to the strong and these cordials to the weak—and may we all come to that blessed land where "the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick. The people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity"! 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 LESSON OF UZZA
NO. 2855

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 29, 1903.

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

"And David and all Israel played before God with all their might,
and with singing and with harps and with psalteries,
and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets."
1 Chronicles 13:8.

"And David was afraid of God that day, saying,
How shall I bring the Ark of God home to me?"
1 Chronicles 13:12.

"So David, and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands,
went to bring up the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord
out of the house of Obed-Edom with joy."
1 Chronicles 15:25.

DAVID had, in his heart, an intense love to God. During Saul's reign, God had been well-nigh forgotten in the land. The ordinances of His house had been almost, if not entirely, neglected, and when David found himself firmly seated upon his throne, one of his first thoughts was concerning the revival of religion, the reestablishment of that form of worship which God had ordained in the wilderness by the mouth of His servant Moses. So he looked about him to see where the Ark of the Covenant, that most sacred of all the ancient symbols, was, and he wrote, "We heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the wood." Out of pure love and reverence to God, he called the people together, consulting with them so that the thing might not be done by himself, but by the nation. It was agreed that the Ark should be brought up and placed upon Mount Zion, near the palace of the king, in a conspicuous position where it should be the center of religious worship for the entire nation. It was to be placed near that sacred spot where Abraham had, of old, offered up his son, Isaac, that, in the great days of assembly, the Israelites might wend their way there and worship God as He had commanded them.

David's intention was right enough, no fault can be found with that. But right things must be done in a right way. We serve a jealous God, who, though He overlooks many faults in His people, yet, nevertheless, will have His Word reverenced and His commands obeyed. "Be you clean," He says, "that bear the vessels of the Lord." He will be honored by

those that attempt to draw near to Him. So it came to pass that, though David had a good intention and was about to do a right thing, yet, at the first, he had *a great failure*. When we have considered the cause of that failure, we shall note that this failure worked in David *a great fear.* And when we have meditated for a while upon that fear, we shall see that when David set to work to honor his God after the due order, he did it with such a great joy that, perhaps, we have scarcely another instance of such exuberance of spirit in the worship of God as we have in the case of David who leaped and danced before the Ark of the Lord with all his might!

I. First, then, we are to consider DAVID'S GREAT FAILURE. It followed almost immediately after "David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets." This was David's first attempt to bring up the Ark of the Covenant into the place appointed for it.

Observe, dear Friends, that *there was no failure through lack of multitudes.* It is, to my mind very delightful to worship God with the multitude that keep holy day. I know some people who think themselves the only saints in the whole world. They do not imagine that any can be the elect of God if there are more than seven or eight, "because," they say, "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads unto life, and few there are that find it." And, therefore, simply because they are few in number, they straightway conclude that they have passed through the strait gate into the narrow way. It needs far better evidence than *that* to prove that they are on the right road and, for my part, I love, as David did, to go with the multitude to the House of God—to keep time and tune with many hearts and many voices all on fire with holy devotion as they lift up the sacred song in a great chorus of praise unto the Most High! There was no failure, in that respect, on this occasion, for, "David gathered all Israel together, from Shihor of Egypt even unto the entering of Hemath, to bring the Ark of God from Kirjath-Jearim." Thus they came, from all parts of the land, in their hundreds and their thousands—an exceedingly great multitude—yet their attempt to bring up the Ark proved a sad failure. So, you see that it is of little value merely to gather crowds of people together! However great the multitude of nominal worshippers may be, it is quite possible that they may offer no worship that is acceptable to God. We, ourselves may come and go in our thousands, yet that alone will not guarantee that the Presence of God is among us. It would be far better to be with a few, if God were in the midst of them, than to be with the multitude and yet to miss the Divine blessing.

Neither was there *any failure so far as pomp and show were concerned.* It seems that these people paid very great honor, in their own way, to this Ark—putting it on a new carriage and surrounding it with the princes, the captains and the mighty men of the Kingdom, together with the multitudes of the common people of the land. I doubt not that it

was a very imposing array that day and, truly, the solemn worship of God should be attended to with due decency and order—yet it may be a failure for all that. Sweet may be the strain of the sacred song, yet God may not accept it because it is sound and nothing more. The prayer may be most appropriate so far as the language of it is concerned, yet it may fail to reach the ear of the Lord God of Sabaoth. Something more is needed beside mere outward show. Something beyond even the decent simplicities of worship in which we delight.

Neither was there any failure, apparently, *so far as the musical accompaniment was concerned.* We are told in our text that, "David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets." I like that expression, "with all their might." I cannot bear to hear God's praises uttered by those who simply whisper, as though they were afraid of making too much noise. No, but—

"Loud as His thunder, sound His praise!
And speak it lofty as His Throne,"

for He well deserves it. Let the sea roar and the fullness thereof in praise of its great Creator! Let all the winds and the waves join in the concert! There cannot be any sound too jubilant for Him who is worthy of the highest praise of Heaven and earth! It is right to sing unto the Lord with all your might, yet there may be a certain kind of heartiness which is not acceptable to God because it is natural, not *spiritual*. There may be a great deal of outward expression, yet no inward life. It may be only dead worship, after all, despite the noise that may be made. I do not say that it was altogether so in David's case, but, certainly, all the multitude, all the pomp and all the sound did not prevent its becoming an entire failure! What was the reason for that failure?

If I read the story aright, it seems to me, first, that *there was too little thought as to God's mind upon the matter.* David consulted the people, but he would have done better if he had consulted *God*. The co-operation of the people was desirable, but much more the benediction of the Most High! There ought to have been much prayer preceding this great undertaking of bringing up the Ark of the Lord, but it seems to have been entered upon with very much heartiness and enthusiasm, but not with any preparatory supplication or spiritual consideration. If you read the story through, you will see that it appears to be an affair of singing, harps, psalteries, timbrels, cymbals, trumpets and of a new cart and cattle—that is about all there is in it. There is not even a mention of humiliation of heart, or of solemn awe in the Presence of that God of whom the Ark was but the outward symbol. I am afraid that this first attempt was too much after the will of the flesh and the energy of nature—and too little according to that rule of which Christ said to the woman at Sychar, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

Yes, Beloved, all worship fails if that is not the first consideration in it. Let the singing be hearty and melodious, let everything in our services be in proper order, but, as the first and most important thing, let the Holy Spirit be there, so that we may draw near to God in our heart and have real spiritual communion with Him! The outward form of worship is a very secondary matter—the inward spirit of it is the all-important thing. There appears, to me, to have been too little attention paid to that in the first attempt that David made to bring up the Ark and, therefore, it was a failure.

One very important omission was that *the priests were not in their proper places.* They appear to have been there, but they were, evidently, not treated as their position entitled them to be. The men of war were brought to the front and the men of worship were pushed aside. Now, in all true worship, the priest is of the first importance. "What," you ask, "do you believe in a priest?" Yes, in the Great High Priest of whom the Aaronic priesthood was the type—all my hopes for time and eternity are centered in Him who is "a Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec." If you do not put Him into the first place, I care little what sort of worship you render—you may be very intense and very devout, after your own fashion—but it is all in vain. There is no way of coming unto God except through the "one Mediator between God and men, the Man, Christ Jesus." There is no way of approaching God except through the one Great High Priest, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! You may cry unto God, but your prayers cannot reach His ears until Christ presents them to His Father. You may bring your sweet spices, but they will never have any fragrance before the Lord until the Great High Priest puts them into the golden censer and mingles with them the precious incense of His own merits and so makes them acceptable before the Lord. A prayer without Christ in it will never reach Heaven! Praise which is not presented through the merits of Christ, is but a meaningless noise which can never be well-pleasing unto God.

These people not only had not the priests in their proper places, but *they also had a cart, instead of Levites, to carry the sacred Ark.* The laboring oxen took the place of the willing men who were appointed by God for this service. David and all the people appear to have forgotten the appointments which God made concerning the Ark, so they fell into trouble—and all their efforts proved to be a failure.

Next, I notice that, the first time, *there were no sacrifices.* They put the Ark upon the cart and went before it, and behind it, and around it with their instruments of music, but there was no sacrificial bloodshed. They had been so long out of the habit of worshipping God in His appointed way that they had forgotten very much. I wonder that David did not notice this fatal omission and I am not surprised that Uzza died as there is no mention of the sprinkling of blood upon the Mercy Seat that day. And, Beloved, if we leave the blood of Atonement out of our worship, we leave out that which is the very life of it, for the blood is the life thereof! If you

have no respect unto the atoning Sacrifice of Christ, God will have no respect unto you. If you have no regard for the great Propitiation which Christ has made for sin, the Lord will not accept either prayers or praises at your hands. Without the shedding of Christ's blood, there is no remission of sin!

All through this incident we see that there was no taking heed to the commands of God and to the rules which He had laid down. *The people brought will-worship to God* instead of that which He had ordained! What do I mean by will-worship? I mean any kind of worship which is not prescribed in God's own Word. It has sometimes been pleaded, as an excuse for the observance of some rite or ceremony which is not commanded in the Scriptures, that it is very instructive, or very impressive. That is no excuse or justification for disobedience! The First Commandment may be broken, not only by worshipping a false god, but by worshipping the true God in another way than that which He has ordained. If you set up a mode of worship not warranted by His Word, whatever you may plead for it, it is idolatrous and the Lord may well say to you, "Who has required this at your hands?" Mark this, if it is not of His appointment, neither will it meet with His acceptance. Inasmuch, therefore, as these people did not show any reverence for God by consulting His record of the rules which He had laid down for their guidance—seeming to think that whatever pleased them must please Him, whatever kind of worship they chose to make up would be quite sufficient for the Lord God of Israel—it therefore ended in failure.

Beloved, take care how you worship God! If you are to take heed how you hear, you are also to take heed how you pray, and to take heed how you praise, and to take heed how you come to the Communion Table. Take heed how, in any way you seek to draw near unto the living God, for He is not to be approached in any slipshod fashion that you may choose to invent! He has His own way by which alone He can be approached. His august court has rules, even as the courts of earthly kings have their regulations and laws—and if you transgress the King's command, it may be that He will smite you as He slew Uzza, or, at the least, your worship will be unacceptable to Him.

II. Now we turn to our second text, to the second head of our discourse, namely, DAVID'S GREAT FEAR. "And David was afraid of God that day, saying, How shall I bring the Ark of God home to me?"

What changeable creatures we are! From a careless, and almost criminal lack of thought, David's mind speedily travels to great seriousness of thought, attended with a very terrible dread. Do you wonder that *the death of Uzza caused David to fear greatly?* The procession is going along and the harps, psalteries, timbrels, cymbals and trumpets are sounding the high praises of God when, on a sudden, the oxen come to the threshing floor of Chidon and, perhaps, tempted by the sight of the grain, they turn aside, or, at least, they stumble and the Ark is likely to be upset. One mistake usually leads to another. If they had not put the Ark on that

cart, this trouble would not have happened. And now young Uzza, who had been living in the house where the Ark had been kept so long, perhaps not thinking he is doing wrong, puts out his hand to steady the Ark and instantly falls dead! A thrill of horror goes through the crowd. The music stops and David stands aghast. At first sight, it does appear to be a very severe punishment, yet we must remember that this is not the only time that God acted thus toward those who profaned the service in which they were engaged. Nadab and Abihu, instead of taking the proper fire to light their censers, took strange fire. There did not seem much difference—is not one kind of fire very much like another? Those two young men went in before the Lord with their censers kindled by strange fire and they fell dead in a moment before God! They had only broken the law in a small matter, as it seemed, but God has His ways of measuring things and His method is very different from ours.

David ought also to have remembered how more than *fifty thousand* of the men of Beth-Shemesh were slain when the Philistines brought back the Ark and the men of Beth-Shemesh looked into it. Truly "our God is a consuming fire." He will not be trifled with! This was His Ark and He would make them know that it was His! And albeit that with good intentions they had surrounded it, yet since they had not reverently obeyed His commands, He would let them see that He was not to be trifled with, nor that His Ark could be touched with impunity! Do you wonder that, in the presence of that corpse, David was afraid of God that day?

He was also afraid of God for another reason, namely, that *he himself had been in a wrong frame of mind*, for we read in the 11th verse, that "David was displeased because the Lord had made a breach upon Uzza." He does not seem to have been displeased with Uzza, but he was displeased with God. It seemed to him a hard thing that he had gathered all that crowd of people together and that they had been doing their best as he thought, for the honor of God, and now the whole proceedings were spoilt by the outstretched hand of an angry God in their midst! So David was angry. And when he remembered that such wicked thoughts had crossed his mind, he began to feel afraid of God for his own sake.

Then, I daresay, *his own sense of worthlessness for such a holy work* made him cry, "How shall I bring the Ark of God home to me?" He feared lest, in some unguarded moment, he might be guilty of irreverence and so perish as Uzza had done. I have often had, in a measure, that kind of fear upon me which came over David that day. To be a child of God is the most blessed experience in the world, but it also involves stern discipline. When God makes you His child, you are sure to feel His rod. Others may escape it, but you will not, "for whom the Lord loves, He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." If you live very near to God and you get many tokens of His favor, you will find that you must watch every step you take and every thought you think, for the Lord is a jealous God—and where He gives the most love, there will be the most jealousy.

He may leave a sinner to go to great lengths in sin, but not His saints. He may let ordinary Christians do a great deal without chastening them, but if you are privileged to lie in His bosom, if you have high fellowship with Him, you will soon know how jealous He is. I have often heard men, while praying, quote as if it were a text of Scripture, "God, out of Christ, is a consuming fire." The Bible does not say anything of the kind—it says, "Our God is a consuming fire." So, the Prophet Isaiah asks, "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" And what is his answer? "He that walks righteously, and speaks uprightly." He is the only man who can live amid such burnings—the sacred salamander from whom the fire only burns out any remaining sin. When you ask to live near to God, see in what a terrible place and in what a supremely blessed place, you ask to live! You want to live in the fire of His Presence, even though you know that it will consume your sin and that you will often have to suffer much while that sin is being consumed! I have said, again and again, "My Lord, burn as fiercely as it may, I do aspire to dwell in this sacred spot. Let the fire go through me till it has burned up all my dross, but, oh, do let me dwell with You!"

Yet I am not surprised if someone starts back and says, "I can hardly ask for such a trial as that." Like James and John we want to sit on the right and left hand of our Master in His Glory, but when He asks, "Can you drink of the cup that I drink of? And be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" It will need much more Grace than they had if we are able to say, from our hearts, "'We can.' By Your Grace, we shall be able and willing to endure anything if we may but dwell with You." For, Beloved, if you have ever had even a glimpse of God in His innermost tabernacle, if He has made His Glory to shine upon you, you have felt willing to die—have been almost *eager* to die—that you might have yet more of that beatific vision and never have it clouded again! One of the good old saints said, when he had very much of the love of Christ poured into his soul, "Hold, Lord, hold! It is enough! Remember that I am but an earthen vessel. If I have more, I shall die." If I had been in such a case, I think I would have said, "Do not hold, Lord! I am but an earthen vessel, so I shall die in the process and glad enough shall I be to die if I may but see Your face, and never, never, lose the vision anymore."

We need not wonder that David was afraid after such a manifestation of the Divine displeasure. He did the best thing he could do under the circumstances, He left the Ark with Obed-Edom for a while, determined to set about its removal in a different fashion another time.

III. Now we come to our third subject, that is, DAVID'S SACRED JOY. "So David, and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord out of the house of Obed-Edom with joy." Obed-Edom took the Ark into his house and *God blessed him*. Then it occurred to David that there was not much, after all, to be afraid of in the Ark. That awful thing that had smitten Uzza had

been in this other man's house and been a blessing to him. That fact has often made my heart rejoice. I have said, "Well, I know that it is a solemn thing to live near to God, but I have seen a poor, bed-ridden woman live in the Light of God's Countenance, year after year, as happy as all the birds of the air—then why should not I do the same? I have seen a plain, humble, Christian man walking with God, as Enoch did, and happy from the first day of January to the last day of December, and God blessing him in everything, so, come, my Soul, though your God is a consuming fire, there is nothing for His children to dread." So, after David had seen that God blessed Obed-Edom for three months, he thought to himself, "Well, now, Obed-Edom has had his turn, and I may have mine. I will set to work to see if I cannot worship God rightly, this time, and bring up the Ark unto my house in the right way."

So he began thus. *He prepared a tent for the Ark.* I do not read that he did that before, but, in the 1st verse of the 15th Chapter we read, "David made him houses in the city of David and prepared a place for the Ark of God, and pitched for it a tent." Now you see that he is thoughtful and careful in preparing a place for the Ark of God. And if I want God's Presence, I must prepare my mind and heart to receive it. If I want to enjoy communion with my Lord at His Table, I must obey that injunction, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." I must not observe the ordinances of the Lord's House without proper thought and solemnity. As the priests washed themselves before they ministered at the altar, so would I come, cleansed and sanctified by the purifying Word, that I may acceptably appear before God.

Then, next, *the mind of the Lord was considered.* In the 2nd verse of this 15th Chapter, David says, "None ought to carry the Ark of the Lord but the Levites: for them has the Lord chosen to carry the Ark of God." And he asserts that the breach upon them had been made because they "sought Him not after the due order." Now is David anxious to obey God! He will not do what he thinks proper, but what *God* thinks proper—and that is the right way for us to worship the Lord! How I wish that all professing Christians would revise their creed by the Word of God! How I wish that all religious denominations would bring their ordinances and forms of worship to the supreme test of the New Testament! "To the Law and to the Testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them." But, alas, they know that so much would have to be put away that is now delightful to the flesh, that, I fear, we shall be long before we bring all to worship God after His own order! But, my Soul, if you are to be accepted of God, you must see to it that in all your approaches to the great King, you strictly observe the etiquette of His court. What is the rule for courtiers who come into the Presence of the King of kings? What dress are they to wear? With what words can they approach the Throne? In what spirit are they to draw near to God? Answer all these questions and see that you ask the Lord to make you obedient in all things to His gracious commands.

Further, you see that this time *the priests were put into their proper places.* David said, "Because you did it not at the first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought Him not after the due order." Now they are where they should have been at the first—in the front of the procession and, Brothers and Sisters, when God accepts us, Christ will take the first place! Our Great High Priest will be in the front and we shall do nothing except through His name and in the power of His precious blood!

Then, on this second occasion, *sacrifices were presented unto the Lord.* Scarcely had the Ark rested upon the shoulders of the Levites than they offered seven bullocks and seven rams as a sacrifice unto God. So, we should never think of doing anything in the worship of our God without the seven bullocks and seven rams which are all summed up in the one perfect offering of our ever-adorable Lord. O Brothers and Sisters, keep Christ always before you! Let all your good deeds be done through the strength you receive from Him, for, "of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things." Nothing can be right that is apart from Him. But if He is our Alpha and Omega, and all the letters between, there is no fear that we shall not bring up the Ark of the Lord aright. In this spirit of loving obedience and holy awe, relying upon the sacrifice which they had presented, they seemed like hinds let loose and David, especially, who I suppose was a representative of the whole of them, seemed as if he did not know how he could adequately express the joy that he felt. He had his harp, of which he was a master-player, so, with his skillful fingers moving among the familiar strings, he began to sing. And as he sang, he leaped like some of our Methodist friends do when they get so excited that they must begin to jump and to dance! I suppose that all the crowd cried, "Amen!" as David sang some of his most joyous songs of praise unto the Lord, and that a great shout went up to Heaven, for everyone was glad that day, and especially David, as he danced before the Lord with all his might!

We must not forget that this carrying up of the Ark was a type of the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. If there is anything that should make a Christian's heart leap for joy, it is the fact of His Lord's return to Heaven. Look! He has risen from the dead and now He is rising from the midst of His disciples. He continues to ascend till a cloud receives Him out of their sight and angels fly to meet Him as He nears the pearly gates. Squadron after squadron salutes the conquering Prince and bids Him welcome Home! And who, I pray you, is this Lord of Hosts who now ascends His Father's Throne and sits down at His Father's right hand forever, as the acknowledged King of kings and Lord of lords? It is the man that died on Calvary, the great representative Man who is also God! Lo, at His chariot wheels He drags sin, Satan, death and Hell! He leads captivity captive, and gives gifts unto men—

"Sing, O heavens! O earth, rejoice!
Angel harp and human voice,

Round Him, as He rises, raise
Your ascending Savior's praise."

Now may you who love Him dance with all your might! Now may you let your souls revel in intense delight and plunge themselves in the bottomless sea of ineffable bliss! God grant you to do so for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 CHRONICLES 13, 15:1-4, 11-16, 25-29.

1 Chronicles 13:1-3. *And David consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, and with every leader. And David said unto all the congregation of Israel, If it seems good unto you, and that it is of the LORD our God, let us send abroad unto our brethren everywhere, that are left in all the land of Israel, and with them also to the priests and Levites which are in their cities and suburbs, that they may gather themselves unto us: and let us bring again the Ark of our God to us: for we enquired not at it in the days of Saul.* It had lain neglected at Kirjath-Jearim, "in the fields of the wood," as David writes in the 132nd Psalm.

4-8. *And all the congregation said that they would do so: for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people. So David gathered all Israel together, from Shihor of Egypt even unto the entering of Hemath, to bring the Ark of God from Kirjath-Jearim. And David went up, and all Israel, to Baalah, that is, to Kirjath-Jearim, which belonged to Judah, to bring up thence the Ark of God the LORD, that dwells between the cherubim, whose name is called on it. And they carried the Ark of God in a new cart out of the house of Abinadab: and Uzza and Ahio drove the cart. And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets.* A stately array of all the leaders of the tribes, with all sorts of music, to do honor to the Ark of God.

9, 10. *And when they came unto the threshing-floor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the Ark; for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzza, and He smote him, because he put his hand to the Ark: and there he died before God.* I suppose that Uzza, through the Ark having been so long in his father's house, had grown unduly familiar with it and, therefore, touched it. Yet it was an express law that even the Levites should not lay a hand upon the Ark. They carried it with staves. Only the priests might touch it for necessary purposes. It was for this profanation that Uzza "died before God."

11, 12. *And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzza; therefore that place is called Perez-Uzza to this day. And David was afraid of God that day, saying, How shall I bring the Ark of God home to me?* He was afraid lest he, also, might die.

13. *So David brought not the Ark home to himself to the city of David, but carried it aside into the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite.* He must have

been a brave, believing man, to be willing to receive the terrible Ark into his house. But he probably knew that as long as he behaved reverentially to it, he would have a blessing, and not a curse, through taking it under his charge.

14. *And the Ark of God remained with the family of Obed-Edom in his house three months. And the LORD blessed the house of Obed-Edom, and all that he had.*

1 Chronicles 15:1, 2. *And David made him houses in the city of David, and prepared a place for the Ark of God, and pitched for it a tent. Then David said, None ought to carry the Ark of God but the Levites: for them has the LORD chosen to carry the Ark of God; and to minister unto Him forever.* It should not be carried upon a new cart and dragged by unwilling oxen—it should be borne upon the cheerful shoulders of the God-appointed bearers, the Levites.

3, 4. *And David gathered all Israel together to Jerusalem, to bring up the Ark of the LORD unto its place, which he had prepared for it. And David assembled the children of Aaron, and the Levites.* Then follows the list of them, which we need not now read.

11-13. *And David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites, for Uriel, Asaiah, and Joel, Shemaiah, and Eliel, and Amminadab, and said unto them, You are the chief of the fathers of the Levites: sanctify yourselves, both you and your brethren, that you may bring up the Ark of the LORD God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for it. For because you did it not at the first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought Him not after the due order.* They had sought Him, but they had not done it "after the due order." They had been in too great a hurry and they had followed their own notions instead of looking to the written Law of God wherein everything was prescribed for them.

14-16. *So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the Ark of the Lord God of Israel. And the children of the Levites bore the Ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded according to the Word of the LORD. And David spoke to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers with instruments of music, psalteries and harps and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy.* Before, there had been a great medley of musical instruments, but little singing, and there had not been a proper choice as to the persons who were to sing. But now, this service was put into the right hands. Then follows a list of the singers and the players upon the various kinds of instruments that went forth to bear the Ark. Let us pass on to the 25th verse.

25, 26. *So David and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD out of the house of Obed-Edom with joy. And it came to pass, when God helped the Levites.* For, though the Ark was by no means a great load, yet they must have felt some measure of alarm at the very idea of going near to it. But

when God strengthened them, they took up their burden with delight. "When God helped the Levites"—

26. *That bore the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD, that they offered seven bullocks and seven rams.* There is no mention of any sacrifice on the previous occasion. If there had been a proper offering of beasts unto the Lord, there might not have been the death of Uzza. But now, they do everything in the right order and the sacrificial blood is sprinkled. Without that, there is no acceptance before God.

27, 28. *And David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, and all the Levites that bore the Ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah the master of the song with the singers: David also had upon him an ephod of linen. Thus all Israel brought up the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the cornet and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps.* David himself, while playing on his harp, leaping and dancing through the intensity of joy which filled his soul.

29. *And it came to pass, as the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord came to the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul, looking out at a window saw King David dancing and playing: and she despised him in her heart.* So have I known it, when a rich person has been converted and has been found in the first flush of his Christian joy, mixing with the poorest of the brethren, full of delight—and somebody of his own rank has sneered at him. Yet Michal was less honorable than David, though she thought so much of herself. God forbid that we should ever blush to manifest enthusiasm even with the poorest of God's saints while we are glorifying the Lord! Let Michal sneer, if she will—it matters little what she does. We will only reply as David did, "I will yet be more vile than thus."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—98, 186, 317.

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

OUR HIDING PLACE
NO. 2856

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 11, 1877.

[When the Tabernacle was thrown open to all comers.]

"And a man shall be as a hiding place from the wind,
and a cover from the tempest."
Isaiah 32:2.

ONE who is really worthy to be called "a man" is a rare creature. There are great numbers of human beings who come under the generic name, "men," who do not possess those noble, manly characteristics which would entitle us truly to speak of any one of them as "a man." When God gives "a man" to any nation, it is a grand gift. There are many names in history which remind us how much blessing may be conferred upon a race and upon an age by the raising up of one man.

It is possible that in the first instance my text refers to Hezekiah the king of Judah. The Assyrians had invaded the land and the army and the nation were powerless to defend their territory. It seemed as though the homes of the people would be utterly destroyed by fire and that the inhabitants would be either slain by the sword or carried away into captivity. But there was one man, named Hezekiah, who, though he had not a great army, had great faith in the power of prayer to God. And so he took Rab-Shakeh's blasphemous letter and spread it before the Lord in earnest supplication. He sent word to another true man, the Prophet Isaiah, begging him to also lift up his prayer to God—and the Prophet sent to the king the cheering intelligence that the Assyrian monarch would not be able to enter Jerusalem, but would be driven back to his own city of Nineveh—and should be slain by the sword in his own land! Hezekiah and Isaiah were, for Judea, a hiding place from the wind and a cover from the tempest in that time of stress and storm.

Nor is it only in sacred story that we find illustrations of such an experience as my text describes. I might remind you of some of our kings and other great men who have been a hiding place and a cover to our own land in the day of danger and of distress. The name of Alfred the Great will always shine brightly in our national history and, much later, there was "a man" who wore no regal crown, but who was the greatest and best

of all the kings. Oliver Cromwell was a real hiding place and cover to this land in the days when the crowned king was unworthy to rule. In him, God raised up "a man" who risked everything in defense of the liberties which we still enjoy. What a hiding place from the wind and what a cover from the tempest he was to the little company of persecuted saints in the valleys of Piedmont! The Duke of Savoy had determined to extirpate the Protestants, but Cromwell heard of his cruelties and resolved that he would do all that he could to rescue them from their persecutor's power.

He sent for the French ambassador and told him to let his master know that he must have those persecutions stopped immediately. His majesty replied that Savoy did not belong to him and that he could not interfere with the Duke. "Nevertheless," replied Cromwell, "if you tell the Duke that you will go to war with him if he does not cease persecuting the Protestants, he will soon stop his butcheries. If you will not do that, I will go to war with you, for, in the name of the Lord of Hosts, I will defend His persecuted people!" Of course such a brave message as that speedily took effect. Oh, that, in every age, in every land—whenever and wherever there is oppression or persecution to be rebuked and tyranny to be overthrown—God may always find "a man" who shall come boldly to the front and speak and act for truth and righteousness, and so become "a hiding place from the wind, and a cover from the tempest," to the people whom he has the honor to protect in such a time as that!

I have no more to say upon that view of our subject except to pray God to make us all manly in that sense, so that all of us may, through His Grace, take our proper place in the battle for the right and the true against the wrong and the false.

I have, however, to speak of another Man to whom this text more especially refers. It is the Messiah, the Man Christ Jesus, the Mediator between God and men—God's greatest gift to men, the Nazarene, Jesus Christ of the house of David—who is the true Hiding Place from the wind, and Cover from the tempest to all who take shelter in Him. If my lips are Divinely helped to extol Him and if your hearts are Divinely taught to rejoice in Him, we shall all be blessed! In speaking about my text, I want to show you, first, that *this life is very liable to storm*. Secondly, that *from all these storms, the Man Christ Jesus is our Hiding Place.* And that, thirdly, *our wisdom is to shelter in that Hiding Place*.

I. First, then, THIS LIFE IS LIABLE TO MANY STORMS.

He that reckons upon a calm from his cradle to his grave reckons altogether amiss. You may set sail upon a sea as smooth as glass, but I doubt not that, before your voyage is completed, you will often have to reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man—and be at your wits' end by reason of the fury of the storm!

We are subject to great *mental storms.* No man can be a true thinker without finding his mind occasionally storm-tossed. A rushing mighty wind of doubt seems to come sweeping down from the mountains of speculation, driving everything before it. Anchors begin to drag and firm-

ly moored beliefs are driven headlong towards the rocks of destruction. We have known what it is, sometimes, to have such a terrible cyclone of doubt and questioning raging around us that we have hardly felt our own existence to be a fact and have had grave questions concerning our own inner consciousness. When we have these stormy winds and tempests howling within the little world of our souls, we appreciate the promise of the text—"A man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a cover from the tempest."

At other times, the stormy winds take another shape, namely, that *of outward trial and trouble.* "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward." Doubtless, there is a skeleton in every house—some cause of sorrow in every family. A man may have a flourishing business, but there may come serious losses. Or he may have the flush of health upon his cheeks and may suddenly begin to lose his vigor. The little ones around him who are his joy, may sicken and he may have to follow his loved ones to the grave. The wife of his youth may be taken away from him or the friend of his middle age may suddenly be smitten down. The world is full of what we sometimes call, "accidents," though we know that they are Providences—Providences of a sad and mournful character to us. God will not let us, who are His songbirds, build our nests here. He will send a rough wind through the forest which will make the limb on which we try to build rock to and fro in the storm till we are obliged to take to our wings again, for there is no resting place for us upon any of the trees in this world! Many of you only too well know that there are rough winds of outward trial and trouble. I do not doubt that many a stormy blast has swept across your heart, in your families, or in yourselves, or in your estates. Some way or other, you have realized your need of "a hiding place from the wind, and a cover from the tempest."

Then there is a wind which sometimes blows upon men—a penetrating, searching, cutting wind—which may bring good with it, but which, at the time it is blowing, is a truly terrible wind to endure! I mean that of *spiritual distress on account of discovered sin* when, looking into your soul, you have spied out what you could not have believed was there. Sins and iniquities which had long hidden their heads, have suddenly appeared before you and you have been almost swept off your feet as by a tornado! I recollect when that wind blew through and through my soul. No comfort could I get by day or by night. My transgressions haunted and hunted me. I had not been worse than other young men, nor as bad as many whom I knew, but I seemed so to myself. It appeared to me as if I had become the very chief of sinners and the most surely condemned of all who ever lived! Remembering the experience I then passed through, I can truly say that I know of no pain that can be felt by the body which is comparable to the terrible pangs of conscience when the searching breath of the Eternal Spirit goes through the soul and withers up all the comeliness of our own righteousness and spoils all the supposed beauty

of our own good works! That is a wind which I trust we all have felt, or shall yet feel, but, still, while it blows, it is dreadful to endure.

There is another wind which follows upon this and of which this is the prelude unless Infinite Grace shall interpose, that is, *the awful wind of the Infinite Wrath of God.* When that mighty blast begins to blow upon men, it makes their beauty to consume like the moth. When they first realize that "God is angry with the wicked every day," they tremble in His Presence! But what will their terror be when that wind is let loose upon them in all its fury? When God's right arm shall be bared for war and thunders shall clothe His cloudy car, and He shall come forth armed with sword and buckler to confront His foes, saying "I will ease Me of My adversaries"—who shall be able to stand before Him? Good Mr. Whitefield used to cry, "Oh, the wrath to come! The wrath to come!" And, verily, I know not what he could have said about it except to utter the exclamation—and there to leave it—for that wrath to come must surpass all human language or imagination! Sometimes it blows upon men before they leave the body—they begin to be caught by the eternal whirlwind before they have quite got clear of the shores of time and mortal life. And some of them have let us know, by their terrible terror as they have died, a little of what that awful blast must mean to those who are swept away by it.

I will mention but one other wind and that is one to which the best of men, as well as the worst, are exposed—namely, *the sudden and mysterious temptations of the devil.* He knows how to take us unawares and he finds in our natural depravity, an ally, so that when he comes and knocks at the door of our heart, the sin that is within arises and opens to him. And then he comes in and terrible is his entrance into the soul! I have known a young man who appeared to be upright and honest, suddenly decoyed into an act of theft by the temptation of the Evil One. I have seen those who have been, apparently, pure in mind and heart and who, at any rate in their youth, dreaded every thought of immorality—all of a sudden cast down into the very depths of filthiness by a strong Satanic temptation which has assailed them. There is no man living who can truly say, "I am secure against the devil's assaults." You may resolve as you please, but Satan is older and more cunning than you are, and he knows your weak points and how he can most easily cast you down. He is the prince of the power of the air, and he can bring with him such a wind as shall smite the four corners of the human house at once and level it to the ground. Woe to the man who is tempted by the devil in such a way as that, unless he has a hiding place wherein to shelter himself in the stormy and dark day!

I hope I have said enough upon this point. If I go on in this strain, you will think that my sermon is like the roll of the Prophet, written within and without with lamentations and woe.

II. Now, in the second place, blessed be God that I can tell you that FROM ALL THESE STORMS THE MAN CHRIST JESUS IS OUR HIDING

PLACE. I have to try to set Him before you by the help of His Holy Spirit. "A man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a cover from the tempest." It is to Him we sing—

"The tempests awful voice was heard—
O Christ, it broke on You!
Your open bosom was my ward,
It braved the storm for me.
Your form was scarred, Your visage marred—
Now cloudless peace for me."

"A man"—*yet One who is more than a man*—a Man of whom it is written, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." It is the Man Christ Jesus who is, nevertheless, to be adored as "over all God, blessed forever," reigning, as He now does, in the highest heavens, crowned with glory and honor. I invite all of you who are afraid of the storms of doubt, or trial, or temptation, or of the wrath of God, to put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, because, being God, He is Omnipotent and, therefore, nothing can be too difficult for Him. Once enclosed within His hands, where is the power that can reach you there, or pluck you from them? If your shield shall be the Almighty One, Himself, then are you secure from all hurt or harm!

Yet, as the text says, "a man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a cover from the tempest," I remark that *Christ is truly a Man.* Oh, how often, in the thought of Christ's real Humanity, has my soul found a hiding place from all manner of storms! "God"—the word is great! "God"—the idea is sublime! The great Eternal Jehovah who made the heavens and the earth and who bears them up by His unaided power, who rides upon the stormy sky and puts a bit into the mouth of the raging tempest, how shall I, a poor worm of the dust, draw near to such a God as this? The answer quickly comes, "He has been pleased to reveal Himself in the Man, Christ Jesus." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." God deigned to take upon Himself the nature of man! There He lies in the manger, the Infinite, yet an Infant, Omnipotent, yet swaddled by a woman and hanging as though helpless at her breast. Let Bethlehem always tell the matchless mystery of godliness—God manifest in human flesh! Why should I dread to appear before God, now that, in the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ, there is a link between my manhood and His Deity?

The awful gulf that sin had made is bridged and now I perceive how near God comes down to man and how closely He lifts up man to Himself. Jesus Christ was truly Man! With the exception of being free from sin, He was in no respect different from ourselves. And at this moment, though He occupies the very Throne of God in Glory, His sympathies run towards us—

"He knows what sore temptations mean.
For He has felt the same."

He is ready to succor us, for His delights are still with the sons of men. He became a Man because He loved men. God has such affection for our

race that He has married our nature to Himself. Oh, what joy there ought to be in our hearts because of this! Whenever the thought of the greatness, the holiness and the terrible majesty of God oppresses anyone of us, let him say, with good Dr. Watts—

"Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find.
The holy, just, and sacred Three
Are terrors to my mind.
But if Immanuel's face appears,
My hope, my joy begins!
His name forbids my slavish fear,
His Grace removes my sins."

The very fact that God has become Incarnate makes Him to be a Hiding Place from the wind and a Cover from the tempest.

Further, *Christ is the substitutionary Man*, for He stood forward as the Man to die instead of guilty men. Have you not often heard this life called a state of probation? That is a most incorrect term, for our probationary period passed away long ago. There was a man, the first of men, Adam—and the whole human race was put upon probation in him. If he had obeyed his Maker's command, all his seed would have lived by virtue of his obedience. But as he disobeyed, his entire race has suffered. He could not endure the test applied to him, for he ate of the forbidden fruit and so fell from his high estate. And, in his fall, you, and I, and all mankind fell down. We fell in another—we had nothing to do with the matter, for it all happened thousands of years before we were born. Some have questioned the justice of this arrangement. If you have done so, I pray you to lay aside all such questions, for this is the door of hope for you! Because our fall was caused by another, there remained the possibility—on the same plan of representation and substitution—of our being lifted up by Another and saved by Another! So, in the fullness of time there came a second Man, the Lord from Heaven, and stood in our place. Did He obey the Law of God? For 30 years and more He was upon His trial, but He never failed. "In Him was no sin."

But man was under condemnation because of his guilt—will Jesus Christ, as the great Substitute for sinners—bear upon Himself the punishment due to human guilt? He could not have borne it if He had not been God as well as Man! Being the God-Man, He said that He would bear sin's penalty, that all who would put their trust in Him might forever go free! It was a wondrous sight, when, on that awful night in dark Gethsemane, He began to bear His people's guilt and so was made to sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground while His soul was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death.

I hope you all know the sad yet glad story. I expect most of you have often heard it, how Jesus bore that tremendous load of our guilt upon His own shoulders though His back was bleeding from Pilate's cruel scourging. How He bore it though they nailed His hands and feet to the accursed tree. How He bore it though the sun refused to look upon Him

and traveled on in tenfold night. How He bore it though Jehovah, Himself, forsook Him while He was bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, so that He was compelled to cry, "My God, My God why have You forsaken Me!" He bore that terrible burden right to the end! And on the Cross He cried, "It is finished," before He gave up the ghost. This is the Man who is the Hiding Place from the storm, and the Cover from the tempest, the substitutionary Man, the surety Man who stood in the place of guilty man—the just Man bearing, instead of unjust man—the deserved wrath of God!

If you, my dear Friends, will only put your trust in Him, you will find Him to be a blessed Cover from the storm that is now threatening you. How can God's wrath touch you if Christ has borne it all in your place? A hiding place shelters a man because it bears the full force of the storm while he is protected from it fury. Because Christ died for us, therefore we, who take shelter in Him, shall not die! Our debt is paid, Justice is satisfied, Mercy triumphs and we go free! This is the Man, the substitutionary Man, who is "as a hiding place from the wind, and a cover from the tempest," to all who put their trust in Him!

That is not all, however, for this substitutionary Man remains *the representative Man.* And if you are Believers in Him, He represents you in everything. He died, but He also rose again—what a shelter from all tempestuous thoughts of death there is in that glorious Truth! For—

"As the Lord our Savior rose,
So all His followers must."

The wind howls sadly out yonder among the tombs in the cemetery. One would scarcely choose to spend a night there, alone, among the dead, but even that mournful wind, when it is heard by the ear of faith, has music in it. That ancient message is yet to be fulfilled, "Your dead men shall live, together with My dead body shall they arise." This is what Christ says to us, so we need not stand by the pious dead and weep as those without hope, but we may already begin to anticipate the dawning of that glorious morning when, at the summons of the descending Savior, "the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we always be with the Lord."

Jesus, therefore, as our Representative, is a Hiding Place to us from all the winds which would come to us by the way of the sepulcher. We are not afraid to die, for Jesus lives. And He said to His disciples, "Because I live, you shall live, also." He has also gone up into Heaven. In His glorified body He ascended up on high, there to appear in the Presence of God for us. So, whenever you have any dread about the future, remember that you will be where He is. If you are a Believer in Him, you must ascend to Heaven even as He has done and, as He sits upon His Throne, even so shall you! And as He is perfected in Glory, even so must you be! Between the Man, Christ Jesus, and all Believers in Him, there is such unity that wherever He is, there must His people also be. This is what He

rightfully demands on their behalf, by virtue of His atoning Sacrifice—"Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory, which You have given Me: for You loved Me before the foundation of the world." If you hide behind this rampart of stupendous Rock, this mighty mound of Divine Consolation, it matters not what winds may rage, or what storms may roar—you may rest in security and serenity behind the great representative Man who is "as a hiding place from the wind, and a cover from the tempest."

We also have to bless the name of our Lord Jesus that He is the ever-living Man, who is, at all times, a shelter from the wind to those who trust in Him. Our earthly friends may die, but we shall never lose our Best Friend. All merely human comforters will fail us sooner or later, but He will always abide true and steadfast to all who rely upon Him—

"He lives, the great Redeemer lives,"

so His cause is always safe and our safety is always secured in Him. Hide yourself, therefore, in the ever-living Man, for there you need not fear any change that the rolling ages may bring.

Blessed be the name of Jesus! He is also the interceding Man, for at this very moment He is pleading for His people before His Father's Throne. We cannot see Him, yet sometimes when our faith is in lively exercise, we can almost behold Him and can all but hear Him presenting His almighty pleas on behalf of all those who have entrusted their case into His hands. O Beloved—

"In every dark distressful hour
When sin and Satan join their power,
Let this dear hope repel the dart,
That Jesus bears us on His heart."

If nobody else remembers us, He does—and He spreads His wounded hands in powerful, prevalent intercession on our behalf. And our comfort is that "He is also able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He always lives to make intercession for them."

It is true that He is a Man, but He is a Man clothed with Infinite Power. So think no longer of the Christ as "despised and rejected of men: a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief," for He has done with all that! He has ascended from His Cross to His Throne—

"The highest place that Heaven affords
Is His, is His by right!
The King of kings, and Lord of lords,
And Heaven's eternal Light."

Do not look at crucifixes, or any such representations of Christ for He in whom you trust is neither upon the Cross nor in the tomb for He is risen! "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." But do not forget to look up to the place where He now sits, for, "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."Before He ascended, He said to His disciples, "All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth. Go you, therefore, and teach (or, make disciples of) all na-

tions, baptizing them (those who are made disciples) in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." We serve the Christ whom all His creatures must obey—angels fly at His bidding and devils tremble at His frown. He allows the kings of the earth to sway their mimic scepters for a time, but all the while He is King of kings and Lord of lords! For our Lord Jesus Christ, we claim a universal monarchy! He sits enthroned upon the circle of the heavens, and the nations of the earth are but as grasshoppers before Him—

"Sweet majesty and awful love
Sit smiling on His brow,
And all the glorious ranks above
At humble distance bow.
This is the Man, the exalted Man,
Whom we unseen adore!
But when our eyes behold His face,
Our hearts shall love Him more!"

I close my description of this wondrous Man by reminding you that He is the coming Man. It is but a little while and He that shall come will come. The great drama of this world's history draws towards its close. We know not when it will end, for it is not for us "to know the times or the seasons which the Father has put in His own power." But there comes to us, as a clear, ringing message out of the deep mystery of the future, the voice of our Savior, saying, "Surely I come quickly," to which our glad response is, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

I cannot foretell to what a state of anarchy or of despotism this world may yet come. I cannot forecast the ultimate issues of great wars and conflicts between divers nations. But the saints of God shall always have a Hiding Place from every stormy wind that shall ever blow. "The Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." "He comes to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His Truth." There shall come a day when that ancient prophecy shall be fulfilled, "He shall live, and to Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for Him continually, and daily shall He be praised." There shall yet come a halcyon period when they shall hang the useless helmet high and study war no more—but the silver trumpet of the blessed Jubilee shall sound aloud for Christ, the great Prince of Peace shall then have returned to reign and His unsuffering Kingdom shall know no end! This is the world's hope, that the people's Christ, the Man chosen out of the people, the Lover of mankind, the great Philanthropist, the Divine Man—He shall come and reign among His loyal subjects and be to them "as a hiding place from the wind, and a cover from the tempest."

To sum all up, Beloved, I do not know what your storms, inwardly or outwardly, may be, or what may be your special dread or terror; but if you hide away in the Man Christ Jesus, you will find that He will afford you shelter from every trouble that can possibly befall you!

III. So I close my discourse by saying to you, AS THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IS SUCH A HIDING PLACE AS THIS, LET US RUN TO HIM FOR SHELTER.

First, let *us stand behind Him whenever we approach God.* I can imagine someone saying, "I want to pray, but I am afraid to appear before the Lord, for, if His eyes of fire shall look upon me, they may utterly consume me. What shall I do?" Why, stand behind His Son and say unto Him—

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

Come not to God yourself directly, but come unto Him through Jesus Christ the Mediator and Intercessor! Then His wrath cannot reach you, for Christ, your Hiding Place will stand between you, the offender and the God whom you have offended. This seems to me to be very simple. If there are any here who have never acted thus, I entreat the Lord to lead them to do so now. Come, poor Soul, you know that you cannot keep the Law and that you cannot bear the punishment due to sin! Well, then, will you not trust the Lord Jesus Christ to stand in your place and to suffer instead of you? If you do, all is done that is necessary. You are in the Shelter, so the wind cannot blow upon you.

Even when you have done that, there are the storms of this life still to be met, so *get behind Christ by following Him in the path of duty.* If you never go anywhere but where Christ leads the way, you need not be afraid of storms, for they will beat upon Him more than upon you. When I was quite a young man, I was greatly reviled for preaching the Gospel and, sometimes, my heart would sink a little under the cruel slanders that many uttered. But I often used to go upstairs to my room and, after a season of sweet fellowship with my Lord, I would come down singing—

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

Whenever there is a cross to be carried by any of Christ's followers, He always bears the heavy end on His own shoulders! He always takes the bleak side of the hill, Himself, and His disciples may be well content to follow when they have so good a Master to lead the way! Yes, Beloved, whenever any of the troubles of life come upon you, get near to Jesus and shelter behind Him. When John the Baptist was put to death, his disciples took up his body and went and told Jesus. That was the best thing they could have done. When the little baby dies, dear Mother, take up its body and go and tell Jesus. When you are out of employment, Man, and the supply of bread is short in the home, go and tell Jesus. He will sympathize with you, for He also was hungry. And when others of the trials of life come upon any of you, do not hesitate as to what you will do, but, if you have hidden behind Him on account of sin, go and hide *in Him* on account of sorrow, for this Man shall always be a Hiding Place

from every stormy wind that blows if you but know how to go and trust in Him.

Come to my Lord Jesus Christ, my dear fellow men, because *He is an effectual Hiding Place.* Many of us have tried Him and proved that He is all that I have said. There have been millions upon millions of His saints, in all ages, who have cast upon Him their entire life-burden and He has never failed to relieve any of them yet. I have stood by the bedside of many dying Christians, but, to this moment, I have never heard one of them say that Christ had played him false. There are hosts of biographies of Christians published—did you ever find, in any of them, a single instance in which a Believer in Christ found Himself deserted and forsaken by his Savior? No, but on the contrary, the testimonies are heaped up far beyond any evidence that ever could be demanded in a court of law—and they prove, beyond all question, that Christ helps His children in all their emergencies and delivers them in every time of trouble!

I appeal to any of you who have had godly parents. What your father tried and your mother tried, young man, I ask you to try! Where your gracious grandmother rested all her hope and you know that, poor simple woman as she was, she died triumphantly—be not you so unwise as to refuse to rest your hope! I like things that have been tried and proved! The new-fangled notions of this modern age may do for lackadaisical gentlemen who seem to scarcely know whether they have a soul to lose, but I know that I have one, and I cannot afford to risk it on speculations and novelties! That Gospel which has saved the saints for nearly two thousand years is good enough for me—so I trust myself in this ancient Hiding Place of God's people, the refuge which they have found to be safe in all generations! And I invite all of you, by a simple act of faith in Jesus Christ, to do the same.

"But," says someone, "there are so many sinners in the world! If they were all to come at once into this Hiding Place, would there be room for them?" Oh, yes! For, as the caverns of Engedi could hold all David's men, and Saul's men, too, and yet they scarcely came near each other, so, in the secret caverns of Almighty Love, in the Person of the Man, Christ Jesus, there is room enough and to spare for all the sinners who ever lived on the face of the earth! It will never be truly said, "The salvation of God is worn out. The pasture has been fed upon by too many sheep, so it is all gone. The Great Supper has been all consumed because there were too many guests." Never, never shall this happen! There is room in Christ Jesus for every soul that shall ever come to Him. God help you all to come at once!—

"Come, sinner, to the Gospel feast!
Oh, come without delay!
For there is room in Jesus' breast
For all who will obey."

Lastly, this is *an available Hiding Place.* I think I read, some time ago, of a ship caught in a storm which might not have been lost but that the

port it was trying to reach could only be entered at high tide. As the tide was low, the poor vessel had to stay outside to be dashed to pieces within sight of the harbor. My Lord's love is never like that harbor—it is always at flood-tide. Now, poor weather-beaten vessel, almost ready to go down, steer straight for the harbor mouth between the two red lights! There is water enough for you, though you may be so deeply laden a sinner that you seem to draw a thousand fathoms. The Infinite Love of Jesus Christ is bottomless, so there is room enough in it for you and millions more! Steer for it at once by simply saying, "I will believe in Jesus. I will take Him to be my Substitute and Representative—the appointed Man who died instead of me."

If you come to Him thus, you shall certainly find that He will accept you. Your salvation will not depend upon who or what you are, but only upon your Hiding Place. Here is a sinner, almost as big as Giant Goliath, going into this Hiding Place and it completely shields him from the stormy blast! Here is a little tot—is the Hiding Place safe for such a tiny child as he is? Yes, it is quite as safe for him as for the giant if he does but come into it. You who know that you have been big sinners, if you get into this Hiding Place, will be secure! And you who feel yourselves very weak and insignificant—you young children who may be here—if you come to Christ and trust Him, you will be just as safe as the oldest saints—

"Only trust Him, only trust Him,
Only trust Him now!
He will save you, He will save you,
He will save you now!"

That is the way into this Hiding Place—trust in the Lord Jesus Christ! Depend upon Christ for the pardon of your sin and for everything you need for time and for eternity, and you shall find Him shield you from every storm henceforth and forever! The Lord bless you all, for Jesus 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.

GOD'S GOODNESS LEADING TO REPENTANCE
NO. 2857

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 18, 1877.

"The goodness of God leads you to repentance."
Romans 2:4.

GOD is often exceedingly good to those who are utterly unworthy of such treatment. "He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good." Indeed, sometimes the evil seem to have more of the sunshine than the good have! David said, "I have seen the wicked in great power and spreading himself like a green bay tree." God's forbearance has been misinterpreted and even misrepresented by some who have implied, or actually asserted that God winks at sin and does not care how men behave, but treats all alike whether they are good or evil. Some have wickedly asked, as Job reminded his friends, "What is the Almighty, that we should serve Him?" Many have said, "Do not the wicked prosper? Do they not even die in peace? Is it not written concerning them, 'There are no bands in their death; but their strength is firm'?" This is a misinterpretation of the merciful design of God towards the ungodly and is corrected by the Apostle in the verse from which our text is selected—"Do you despise the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?"

The goodness of God to a man of evil life is not intended to encourage him to continue in his sin, but it is meant to woo and win him away from it. God manifests His Infinite gentleness and love that He may thereby kill man's sin and, by His tender mercy, He may win man's hard heart unto Himself—and by His abundant loving kindness, He may awaken man's conscience to a sense of his true position in his Maker's sight, that he may turn away from the sin which he now loves and may seek his God, whom he has despised and neglected. My fellow man, if you are still ungodly, yet you have been prospered by your God, understand clearly the Lord's intention in your prosperity—"The goodness of God leads you to repentance." You must not be so unwise, you must not be so wicked as to say, "I am prospering although I am living in sin and, therefore, I will continue to do so." Remember what the Lord said through Isaiah the Prophet—"The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib." Be you, at least, as wise as these brute beasts are and recognize from Whom your prosperity comes—and then accept as true, God's explanation of

His actions, as given by the Holy Spirit through the Apostle, and believe that "the goodness of God leads you to repentance."

I. My objective, at this time, is that those who are enjoying the goodness of God, but yet have never repented of sin, may see their conduct in its true light and may be brought to a sincere and hearty repentance of their sin. To that end, I shall, first of all, spend a little time in mentioning SOME OF THE TOKENS OF THE GOODNESS OF GOD WHICH HE HAS LAVISHED UPON MANY WITH THE VIEW OF LEADING THEM TO REPENTANCE.

I commence with this remark—*it is a great blessing to have been born of Christian parents*, or even of parents who were respectable and moral. It gives one a good start in life where this is the case. On the other hand, I do not doubt that some have strong propensities to evil which have been at work within them from their very birth, so that they were more likely than certain others were to plunge into gross sin. Therefore, it is no small mercy to have been started in this world under a roof where the name of Jesus was often heard, where holy things were constantly brought before one's eyes, where blasphemy was never heard, where uncleanness would have been put outside the door with the utmost abhorrence! So, if any of you have been the recipients of these marks of God's favor and yet are not godly—perhaps not even moral—it is clear, from our text, that this goodness of God to you ought to lead you to repentance.

Let me just remind you of your gracious mother, who is now, perhaps, with God in Glory. Your godly father, possibly, lives to sorrow over you. If they could have known, when you were a fair-haired boy at home, that you would always be what you now are, they might have wished that you had never been born! Try to recall those early, happy days—imagine that you can hear again your mother's earnest pleadings both with and for her boy. Think once more of how you felt when you were sitting at the table on which the family Bible lay open and morning and evening prayer was offered unto the Most High. And, as you do so, may the Lord, by some soft and gentle voice within your conscience, call you to repentance!

Next, it is a mark of the great goodness and forbearance of God *as He continues to spare the lives of men.* We often marvel that He does not more quickly cut them down as cumberers of the ground! If the first wanton transgression had been followed by a solemn warning and if the next willful sin had involved severe chastisement with the threat that the third offense should be the last, we might not have been surprised—yet God, in His abounding mercy, allows men to sin over and over again, to sin against His Light and knowledge, against rebuke and instruction, against conscience and reason and even against the love of Christ! Singularly enough, God often spares, in an extraordinary manner, the lives of some of the most atrocious rebels against His righteous rule! There are some men who are so wicked that if they were dead, the moral atmosphere of the world would be much purer—yet they live on and seem as if they could not die. Disease after disease has laid them low, for they sin against their own bodies and bring themselves into a truly horrible con-

dition—yet they rise from their sickbed only to sin again more foully than ever!

How is it that such sinners are spared, while an earnest and zealous foreign missionary sickens and dies? And an eminent saint who did but pass through a street where fever raged, was stricken with the disease and speedily carried off by it? I understand why the miscreants are spared when the godly are taken, and I am sure I do, for my text instructs me the goodness of God is manifested in order to lead such sinners to repentance! He spares them that they may turn to Him! The sailor who a little while before was blaspheming the name of the Lord and then working at the pumps, with all his might, to try to save the ship, sees the vessel go down, but he clings to a spar that floats upon the raging sea. His shipmates have been sinking all around him, but he finds himself washed up high and dry upon a rock. To what end, Seaman, are you spared? Is it not that the goodness of God may lead even you, who could scarcely speak without an oath, to repentance? God means, I trust, that you should, henceforth, live a new life and serve Him as you have never yet done.

And the soldier, too. I have heard of him, in the day of battle, when the bullets have whistled close by his ears and comrade after comrade has fallen at his side. I remember speaking, many years ago, with one who rode in that celebrated charge at Balaclava when the saddles were being emptied right and left—yet on to the end he rode—and back again through the valley of death. And, though a stranger to him, I could not help laying my hand upon his shoulder and claiming him for the Christ who had spared his life in that terrible time. Am I addressing anyone who has been in imminent peril of any sort—by railway crash or in shipwreck, in battle or in storm—when it seemed as if you would die yet you did not? Then, surely your preservation means that God was saying to grim Death, "Spare him, for he is Mine. I intend to save his soul as well as to spare his life." If that is the case with any of you, God's goodness is meant to lead you to repentance.

Nor is this all, though there is great mercy in a godly parentage and in life preserved in times of peril, sometimes *ungodly men enjoy, for many years, the privilege of perfect health.* "I never had a day's illness in my life," says one. Yet he has not been careful of his constitution—on the contrary, he has done much to injure it. Another says, "I never missed a day's work and never was kept away from business by suffering of any kind. I scarcely know what aches and pains mean." Well, Friend, God deals with you, in that respect, in a very different way from the treatment He metes out to some of us, who, nevertheless, try to serve Him. Surely, you ought seriously to think of this matter and say to yourself, "He does not even give me as much of the rod as He gives to His own children. It cannot be that He loves me better than He loves them—it must be because I *am not* His child. As a man does not punish another person's boy, but leaves him to go his own way, so I must not reckon that God is especially showing His love to me in this long-continued health and strength—and I must solemnly ask myself, 'Am I His child?' And then, on

the other hand, I must say to Him, 'Do You, O Lord, indulge me with health and strength? Do You favor me with this long immunity from pain—I, who never lived to serve You and never even thanked You for all Your goodness to me? Then I am thoroughly ashamed of myself and I implore You, O my gracious Preserver, to forgive my forgetfulness and ingratitude and to receive me, and to put me among Your children!'"

Nor is this all, for I know *some ungodly people who are greatly prospering in this world.* When they started in life, perhaps things were a little hard with them and they thought that if God would but give them enough to eat and drink, it would be a great mercy. Possibly they soon found a position which just suited their capacities but, before long they began to aspire to something higher and God gave it to them. So it has gone on until now! They have pretty nearly all that they could wish to have. Well, dear Friends, if this has been your experience, remember that all has come to you from the Giver of every good and perfect gift. Each one of these blessings has been sent to you marked with some such message as this from the Lord Himself—"Will not My creature consider what return should be rendered to Me for this mercy, and that mercy, and the other mercy which I have given to him—more even than I have given to some of the best of My own people? Will he not turn unto Me and bless the Giver of all this goodness to him?"

I would like to take you by the hand, young man, you who have been signally helped, perhaps, out of a difficulty in business when it seemed as if you must fail. You have, since then, had many severe storms and trials to face, yet you have always been delivered out of them all. And now you have come into a channel where it is all smooth sailing. Is it not time for you to begin to consider your ways and to turn unto the Lord? You were blessed with a happy marriage. Your children are growing up around you and whereas many others have had to bury their offspring, yours have all been spared! Do you not see how God has blessed you in all sorts of ways? Will you not, therefore, give Him your heart? Will you not cast away from you the sin that He hates? Will you not turn unto Him, trusting and loving Christ with all your heart, mind, soul and strength? The goodness of God to you, coming in so many different forms and ways, should lead you to repentance!

Notice, dear Friends, that the Lord does not drive you to repentance. Cain was driven away as a fugitive and a vagabond when he had killed his righteous brother Abel. Judas went and hanged himself, being driven by an anguish of remorse because of what he had done in betraying his Lord. But the sweetest and best repentance is that which comes, not by driving, but by drawing—"The goodness of God *leads* you to repentance." It is a wretched spirit that needs to be continually flogged with the whip of a slaveholder. I hope I am addressing those who can be affected by other motives than those of dread. The good God, the gracious God who has abounded in mercy and goodness so wonderfully to many of you—should you not feel that something is drawing you towards Him? At least do Him the justice to look at Him as He reveals Himself in Christ Jesus and see if He is not worth serving—if it is not meet and right that you

should serve Him! Having provided His Son to be the Savior of sinners, is it not meet that you should turn to Him and find eternal life through believing in Him?

I have only given a brief outline of the many forms of God's goodness to many of us. But your experiences are so different that you must, each one, fill up his or her own. I know that you all have reason to bless God for some special goodness. We sang, just now—

"Tell it unto sinners, tell
I am, I am out of Hell"—

but I may add that we are also not in the lunatic asylum, not in the workhouse, not in prison, not upon the bed of sickness. And all these things are tokens of God's goodness to us which ought to lead us to repentance.

II. Now, secondly, I will try to show you IN WHAT WAY THE GOODNESS OF GOD IS AN ARGUMENT FOR OUR REPENTANCE.

First, God has been so good to us, *He cannot be a hard taskmaster.* The ungodly man cannot truly say to God what the man in the parable said to his lord, "I feared you, because you are a stern man." How can God be stern when He has manifested all this goodness to you? Your house has been without prayer, yet you have had no fire to burn it down, no thieves to ransack it, no fever to invade it. You have lived for forty, fifty, sixty, or even 70 or 80 years without ever serving your Maker—yet you are surrounded with every earthly comfort! After all that, can you call God a hard task-master? No. It is proved beyond all question that God is good and only good—and that He does good even to the unthankful and the evil!

Well, then, what a shame it is that such a generous, magnanimous God as He is should be treated as the careless and indifferent treat Him! When a man is simply a just man, that is well so far as it goes, but he may be hard and stern. But when a man is generous, forgiving, tenderhearted—surely, the most coarse-minded among us would be unwilling to inflict pain upon such a heart as that! But the heart of God is more loving than that of any man who has ever lived—and more tender than ever any mother was with her child. He cannot bear that you should love evil instead of loving Him. And after He has done all this for you of which I have been speaking, why do you turn against Him? Did I hear you make use of a blasphemous expression? For which of all the good things that He has done for you did you blaspheme His holy name? For sparing your life when you had that terrible fever? Or for raising up your dear little child from the very brink of the grave? Do you neglect to worship the Lord? Do you rail at His people? Do you scoff at all religion because of the many tokens of God's goodness that He has manifested toward you? Come, now, be a man! Sink not below the level of a brute, for even a brute will render good for good! It is the devil who renders evil for good, yet you are sinking to his level if you continue in sin and turn not unto God who has dealt so kindly and so graciously with you.

The next reflection to help you to repentance is this. As God has dealt so kindly with you while you have been living in sin, *then it is untrue, as*

you thought, that He is unwilling to forgive. There are many who do not seek God's mercy because they think it is not to be obtained by them—but that is one of the devil's lies. Why, Man, as He has spared you so long, He must be willing to forgive you! There are some who even dare to invoke their Maker's curse upon their own limbs and eyes! If any of you have ever done that and yet the Lord has not done what you blasphemously asked Him to do, the reason for His forbearance must have been that He is full of long-suffering and gentleness! Turn to Him, I pray you and, with broken heart and contrite spirit, ask Him to forgive you—and you shall see how quickly He will do it, for it is still true that "He is good: for His mercy endures forever." "He delights in mercy." "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." The great goodness of God to rebellious sinners is proof positive that He is willing to bestow His forgiving mercy upon them as soon as they repent of their sin! And so it should be a great inducement to them to turn unto Him and live.

The argument, however, will appear to be still stronger if, in reading our text, we lay the emphasis upon the personal pronoun—"The goodness of God leads *you* to repentance." Now, dear Friend, if God has taken the trouble to be especially good to *you*, in order to lead *you* to repentance, you may be certain that He would not have picked you out in this remarkable manner unless He had intended to welcome you if you do but come to Him! I will not point my finger at any particular person, nor will I intentionally direct a glance of my eyes at any special individual. But I feel persuaded that there are some here who have been, in the Providence of God, very signally favored. If your life story could be written, it would, perhaps, scarcely be believed! And as you look back upon difficulties and trials that you have been enabled to surmount, and upon the many blessings that have been showered upon you, it must sometimes seem to you almost like a dream! You cannot understand it! You say to yourself that you have been one of the darlings of destiny! If you have said that, do not talk any more about destiny, but think of what the Apostle says in our text—"The goodness of God leads you to repentance."

I hope that you are one of His elect, chosen in Christ long before the foundation of the world, and that you have in your heart heard Him say to you, by His Holy Spirit, though not in words audible to your outward ear, "I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you." Think of John Newton, the godless sailor reduced to the level of a slave on the coast of Africa. Yet, after going from sin to sin, being spared to stand in the church of St. Mary Woolnoth, for many a year to preach the Gospel of "free Grace and dying love." So the many fevers from which he suffered could not kill him—and his various shipwrecks could not drown him, for God had ordained that he must come home, find the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior, and be His faithful servant all the rest of his days! And you, my Friend, who have long been roaming about the world, must come to that same Savior if you really wish to be saved! You are like a besieged city, yet something more powerful than great guns are now ranged against you. The batteries of Almigh-

ty Love have come into the field! Providence after Providence has surrounded you with the gracious artillery of Divine Mercy! You cannot escape! Therefore, surrender to your Best Friend! Surrender to your God! Surrender to holiness, happiness and everlasting life! God help you to do so, for the legitimate argument of undeserved goodness given to the worst of men is that it should lead them speedily to repentance and to eternal life! This personal pronoun is in the singular, so I pray you, my Brother, and you, my Sister, to take home to your own heart the message of the text—"The goodness of God leads you to repentance."

Now I want, just for a minute or two, before I close, to address myself to those who have repented. Beloved Friends, shall I tell you what your experience has been? I think I can, if I tell you what mine has been! First of all, when I really came to know the Lord Jesus Christ, I discovered that He loved sinners. Before I made that discovery, I thought He loved only the good and the righteous. But when I read His Word, I found that He came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance. I thought, for a long while, that He wanted my good works and I had none to bring to Him. But, as I read His Word, I found that He gave Himself for our sins, not for our righteousnesses. Then I understood, as I read His Word, that whoever believed in Him would not be condemned. I believed in Him and I knew at once, from His Word, that I was not condemned—that He had died for me and that my sins were all pardoned!

And, let me tell you, I never repented before as I repented then! It seemed to me if it was really true that He had forgiven me all my sin and suffered and died that He might be able to justly forgive me—that I must have been almost as bad as the devil, himself, to have sinned against Him as I had done. Even while I rejoiced in being pardoned, I felt almost ashamed to look Him in the face and claim His mercy! To think that I should have sinned against such a Friend who was so ready to forgive me my guilt, made me ready to hide my head in the very dust! If He had bidden the thunders of His wrath to roll around me, I would not have been surprised. But when, instead of thunders, He gently said, "I love you and I forgive you," then was my heart broken—

"Dissolved by His mercy I fell to the ground,
And wept to the praise of the mercy I'd found!"

After that, I found that He was not only willing to pardon me, but that He had come to robe me in His own righteousness, that I might stand accepted in His place! At this, I wondered much, but when I saw that He really did impute to me His own righteousness and that I, a sinner, stood before God, "accepted in the Beloved," that pulled the sluices up, again, and I repented more than I did before as I realized that I, whom He had ordained to bless with such a wondrous righteousness as that, would ever have been a lover of sin instead of a lover of the Lord!

Then a voice whispered to me that, being pardoned and justified, I was also adopted into the family of God, whereat I wondered, more than ever, how it could be that an heir of wrath should be able to say, "Abba, Father." As I understood this, I said, "Father, I did not know that You were my Father, or I would not have trespassed against You and gone away

from You as I have done." My voice was almost choked, my heart was full, and my tears freely flowed as I grieved that I had so long offended my Father and my God! To make a long story short, I find myself—I thank His name—repenting more and more every day I live! I am more and more angry with myself to think I should not have kept my Father's commands in my mind and served Him with my whole heart. I expect that as I learn more of His goodness, it will always continue to lead me to repentance—and I trust, beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, you can bear me witness that I do but speak what is also in your mind! The dearer Christ is to us, the blacker is sin in our sight. The sweeter the love of God is to us, the more bitter is the thought of having so long sinned against it. The more you see, in these shoreless, bottomless deeps, what Divine Grace has done *for* you and *to* you, the more you smite upon your breast and cry, "How could I ever have sinned against the Lord as I have done? And how can I sin against Him as I still continue to do?"

"Ah," says one, "but mine is a very bad case, for I have had a relapse. I thought I was saved, once, but I have been just as bad or even worse since then." Ah, but my Master delights to forgive His backsliding children! He has put this invitation in the Scriptures on purpose for *you*—"Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord; for I am married unto you." Again and again He says, "Return! Return! Return! You, whom the Church, in God's name, has excommunicated, I yet invite you to return! It is an awful thing to lie under the ban of God's Church, for what is so done on earth is confirmed in Heaven, but, though you lie under this ban, I yet invite you to return unto Me, for I will receive you graciously and love you freely."

"Ah," says one, "but I do not feel my need of Christ as I could wish to feel it. I believe it in theory, but I do not feel it as I should." Well, be humbled about this—weep because you do not weep. Be grieved to think that you should be so hard-hearted. But, oh, remember that Christ can cure hard hearts quite as well as sinful ones! Come just as you are. You have a real need of Christ, whether you feel it or not. It is not your sense of need, but your *real* need of Christ that must draw you to Him. O you who are sick—and who is there among us who is not?—Come to the Great Physician and be made whole! I would gladly move your souls if I could, but this is not in man's power. There have been times when I have been able to stir you through and through, as the waves of the sea are moved by the wind, but I know that when man, only, has done this, all the tempest has soon subsided—and you have gone your way and have been as before!

But, oh, if God shall acknowledge this poor and imperfect statement of most precious Truth, then unto Him shall be the glory! Payson says, "Looking back on my sermons, I often wonder that God should ever have blessed a soul through them." And often do I think the same. I pray God to bless the message. Young Man, what say you to hauling down the black flag and running up the blood-red Cross tonight? You may yet be a minister of Christ—perhaps a missionary of the Cross. In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, I bid you believe on Him and you shall live! And all of

you who are gathered here, I command you, as well as beseech, implore and entreat you—do not put away from you the Gospel which is preached in your hearing! Trust Christ and you shall live! If you will not do so, it may be that you will never again be exhorted to come to Christ. You may never again be told that He is willing and able to receive you. Oh, will you again go your ways and despise the Lord? Will you go to your merchandise and to your trade and neglect the salvation of your souls—and let them become still worse in this foul disease which ends in death and damnation? "Turn you, turn you from your evil ways, for why will you die?"

By that Cross where hung the Son of God in mortal flesh. By those five wounds and by the agonies He endured, I do implore you to look to Him and live! As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so lift I up the Son of Man to you, now, you sin-bitten sinners! Though you feel not the venom, yet look! Look! Look! Sinner, look, and you are saved! By the living God whose splendors of Grace I now proclaim, and whose splendors of wrath you shall one day feel if you reject His Son, look! Look yonder! See the blood! It flows for you, Sinner! See the hands of Jesus—they are nailed fast to the Cross! See His feet—fastened by the nails as if they would stay there till you come to Him! See that heart of His, how it streams with blood to wash away your many sins! O Sinner, look and live!

I cannot say more. God knows I cannot do more. I can only testify to you the Gospel. If you turn not at my message, I must be a swift witness against you at the Day of Judgment! I must say it—I must be a swift witness against you. Your blood is on your own heads! Christ is preached to you. Look and live! Believe and be saved! But reject Him and he that believes not shall be damned! And I can only say, "Amen," to that if you reject so great a salvation.

Yet, I pray you, think not so much of the Law as of the Gospel, nor think so much of Hell as of the Christ who has delivered His people from Hell! Nor so much of Divine wrath as of God's goodness. It is a good God whom I have to set before you. I never so much wish to be eloquent as when I have to speak of Him and all His love to guilty sinners. What has He done to any of us but that which is good? Even if He has sorely smitten us, it has been in mercy that He has done it. Though you may have lain for weeks upon a sickbed, it was meant to cure your souls of the fatal disease of sin! That limb was broken that your spirit might be healed! That loss of sight was sent that you might learn, by inward sight, to see the Lord Jesus as your Savior! God is all goodness, mercy, love and tenderness—and He has set His own dear Son before you, saying to you, "Believe in Him, and you shall be saved! '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.'" Will you not turn unto Him and live? Eternal Spirit, turn them and they shall be turned, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

LUKE 13:11-35.

Verses 11, 12. *And, behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift herself up. And when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him, and said unto her, woman, you are loosed from your infirmity.* Observe the word, "Behold," here. Sometimes, in old books, they used to put a hand in the margin to call attention to something special in the text. So, this word seems as though nobody in the synagogue was worthy of such special notice as the most forlorn and desolate individual there—"a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift herself up." It was to be a happy Sabbath for her, though she did not know it. She used to go to the synagogue, though it must have been painful for her to be present. Possibly she could not even see the minister, she was so "bowed together." It must have been a great surprise to her when the Savior called her to Him and said to her, "Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity."

13. *And He laid His hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.* I should think she did! We have no record of what she said. She may have merely cried out, "Hallelujah," but the very look of her—her streaming eyes filled with gratitude, her face beaming with delight all tended to glorify God! Even if she had said nothing, her being made straight would, of itself, have glorified God! And just as that once crooked woman could glorify God, so can a guilty sinner, crushed and helpless, glorify God. It was when Christ's hands were laid upon her that she was made straight. Oh, that He would lay His hands on some of you! May this be to you the saving Sabbath of the year, that God may be glorified in you!

14. *And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation.* Poor soul! Surely he was more crooked than the infirm woman was, but, alas, he did not get healed.

14. *Because that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them, therefore, come and be healed, but not on the Sabbath.* The Lord then answered him—and what an answer it was!

15-17. *The Lord then answered him, and said, You hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath? And when He had said these things, all His adversaries were ashamed; and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.* His reply was unanswerable.

18. *Then said He.* They were in a right frame for hearing, having been rendered attentive by their admiration for His miraculous work and His wondrous words.

18-22. *Unto what is the Kingdom of God like, and whereunto shall I resemble it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air*

lodged in the branches of it. And again He said, Whereunto shall I liken the Kingdom of God? It is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. That is practically what He was always doing—"journeying toward Jerusalem," toward that great climax of His life—His substitutionary death upon the Cross of Calvary.

23. *Then said one unto Him, Lord, are there few that are saved?* That is a question that many have asked—and some have vainly tried to answer. What did Jesus reply?

23, 24. *And He said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate.* Instead of gratifying idle curiosity, He excites to diligence in seeking entrance into the narrow way.

24. *For many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.* They will only seek, not strive, to enter in. There will also come, in the future, a time when they may seek as they will and strive as they will to enter in, but it will be too late. Once having passed into another world, there will be no hope for any seeker or striver.

25. *When once the master of the house is risen up, and has shut the door and you begin to stand outside, and to knock at the door.* They do not like to go away. They are reluctant to meet their final doom. Oh, that they had been wise enough to cry for mercy when it was to be had! Now they stand and begin to knock—and more than that, they begin to plead.

25. *Saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us!* All this earnestness, all this deference, all this reverence have come too late.

25, 26. *And He shall answer and say unto you, I know not who you are: then shall you begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in Your Presence, and You have taught in our streets.* "We were regular hearers of the Word. We observed all the usual forms of religion—we even went to the Communion Table."

27, 28. *But He shall say, I tell you, I know not who you are; depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the Prophets in the Kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.* Driven away, yet they could see the saintly ones there and see their own kith and kin there, for they were Jews, and they could see "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the Prophets" there, but they themselves were cast out! And what was even worse for them—

29. *And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the Kingdom of God.* Rank outsiders! Far-off heathen! Outrageous sinners, harlots—"they shall come" and repent and "sit down in the Kingdom of God," and this shall cut to the quick those who were hearers of the Word, but who perished because they were workers of iniquity!

30. *And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.* Many who, today, seem to be unlikely to be converted—those who are "last" in character—will yet be "first" in repentance. And there are "first" in privileges and even in hopefulness, who

will be "last" in the Great Day of account. May we take home to our hearts this solemn warning!

31. *The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto Him, get You out and depart from here, for Herod will kill You.* Think of the Pharisees being concerned about Christ's life! What an affectation of regard! Yet it was only affectation. We must always be on our guard against the foes of God even when they speak most fairly. Indeed, it is their agreeable, affectionate words that we have most cause to dread!

32. *And He said unto them, Go you and tell that fox.* Jesus called Herod a fox because he wanted to get Christ out of his territory without having the trouble of driving Him away. So he sent this roundabout message to try to make a coward of the Lord and to get Him to go off on His own account.

32. *Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.* That is, "I shall stay My full time here. While I have work to do, I shall do it, and I am not going away until it is finished. I am not afraid of Herod threatening to kill Me, for I am Immortal till My work is done." He is not even flurried, or put about by such a message as that. Besides, when men mean to bite, they do not usually bark—and if Herod had meant to kill Christ just then, he would not have told Him what he was going to do.

33. *Nevertheless I must walk today, and tomorrow, and the day following for it cannot be that a Prophet perish out of Jerusalem.* What a sad thing for Christ to have to say! So many holy men had been murdered in Jerusalem that He roughly put it as being true, in the main, that all the Prophets were martyred there—the exceptions only proving the rule.

34. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which kill the Prophets and stone them that are sent unto you; how often would I have gathered your children together, as a hen does gather her brood under her wings, and you would not!* There was their weakness—they were like a brood of chickens! There was His power to protect them, like a hen gathers her brood under her wings! Yet there was their infatuation—that they would rather perish than come and be sheltered beneath His almighty wings—"and you would not."

35. *Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, You shall not see Me until the time comes when you shall say, Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord.* There will be no true glory for Jerusalem until the Jews are converted. There will be no return of Christ to that royal city until they shall welcome Him with louder hosannas than they gave when He rode in triumph through the streets and entered into the Temple. The Lord grant that we may never reject Christ! Let us run, even now, like little chicks, and hide beneath the wings of the Eternal.

—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.

MIGRATORY BIRDS
NO. 2858

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 28, 1870.

"Yes, the stork in the heavens knows her appointed times, and the turtledove and crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming, but My people know not the judgment of the Lord." Jeremiah 8:7.

IN our text the Prophet makes use of the flight of migratory birds to teach a valuable lesson. He mentions the swallow, which is the most prominent among the summer visitors to our own country, but he also names the stork, the crane and the turtledove, all of them familiar instances of birds that came, at a certain season, to Palestine and, punctual to the hour, at given changes of the weather, winged their way back again to warmer climates. Too many careless observers, like the peasant of whom Wordsworth writes—

"A primrose by a river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him
And it was nothing more,"

would have seen those birds and soon forgotten all about them. But the Prophet, observing the wisdom of these wanderers of the air, contrasts it with the folly of man who knows not "the judgment of the Lord," and obeys not so readily the monitions of his God as the birds do the instinct by which He guides them to and fro. We shall mark these migratory birds and set the wisdom of their instinct in contrast with the folly of mankind.

I. The first thing that strikes us is the fact that the stork, the swallow, the crane and the turtledove know WHEN TO COME AND GO.

So far as we know, *no audible command is given to them.* You and I might forget, in the beginning of summer, that then is the period when the swallow will put in an appearance in our land. And that towards autumn he must take himself away, across the purple sea, to the African strand, or wherever he can find a suitable climate. But these birds know when to come or go—they tell, by some mysterious means, exactly when to start on their long flight. They were never known to go too soon. They are never known to stay too late. The bulk of them depart at one period and the rest a few days later. If we are living in the suburbs, we hear a twittering congregation gathering around the gables of the houses and, in the evening we miss the swift-winged hawks who had, during the summer, found their evening meal among the dancing insects. Their shrill, joyous twittering is hushed, for they have perceived that the heavy dews

of autumn and the long nights of winter are coming to strew the earth with fading flowers and falling leaves and, by-and-by, with frost and snow and, therefore, they have flown off to fairer lands where other summers await them! They will come back again in due time, true as the calendar. Whether we look for them, or not, they will be punctual to Nature's appointment. As sure as the summer's sun will be their return! They know, without any special instruction, when to come, and when to go.

It is worthy of observation that *the young birds* which have been born in this country and have never made the long journey before, yet *set forth with the older ones at the appointed time.* They are novices in the art of travelling, yet they try their callow wings and away they fly to the far-off land where the sun shines as it does not in this higher latitude. I wish that our young people were all as wise as the young swallows are—that they knew their appointed time, that they understood that there is no period in life which has so much of hopefulness about it as the period of childhood and youth—that it is the best time in which to seek the Savior, for it has a special promise attached to it. "Those that seek Me early shall find Me." I would that they could hear the Lord Jesus Christ's peculiarly sweet and tender message concerning them—"Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come unto Me: for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." Yet, alas, young storks, swallows, cranes and turtledoves fly at the appointed season—but many young men and maidens delay and waste the joyous hours of the morning of their lives in the ways of sin and folly! Yes, they waste the hours which, if consecrated to Christ and to His service, would have brought them a rich return in this life and, in the life to come, would have tended to increase and intensify their everlasting happiness.

Further, *the parent birds, also, go their way at the right time.* They can, and doubtless do, help to guide the young. They may have made that journey but once before, but they know all about it—they remember how long and how weary a way it was to them, but when the hour has struck, away they go, attended by their little ones! I would that all you who are parents among mankind were as wise as these parent fowls of the air. You have your children around you, but where are you leading them? Your example, if not your precept, is guiding them somewhere—you are influencing them for good or evil. You cannot help doing so. I think you would hardly wish to help it, for a child of yours, over whom you had no influence whatever, would be a strange occupant of your home! Oh, that you would be as wise as these migratory birds! May God's own wisdom make you so, that your own flight to Heaven may be an impulse to your child to take flight there, also! May your faith help his faith! May your holiness check him from sin! May your consecration to God, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, induce him to give his heart to God while he is yet young!

I speak to you who are in middle life and remind you that these birds which have come to the prime of their days, take their flight at the appointed time—and if ever there is a set time for turning unto God, with

you who have come so far on life's journey without seeking the Lord, it surely is now! You who have reached the full strength of your manhood and have your households about you and yet are not saved, be not like the rich man whom God called a fool because he had much of this world's goods stored up and yet had not thought of making provision for his soul! Do not set your affections upon those well-feathered nests which you are so soon to leave, but seek an enduring portion in that better land where joy maintains eternal Spring! Stretch your wings for the flight Christ-ward and heavenward, and may you have the happiness of seeing your sons and daughters following in the same blessed track!

Some of the migratory birds are growing old. Their wings are somewhat worn and their flight is a very weary one. Life, to them, has lost its early brilliance, yet, when the time comes, they too, the veterans of the sea passage, are measuring the leagues of ocean waves when the waters are calm, or in times of storm when favoring gales may better serve their purpose. These birds add experience to instinct and rightly follow the guidance of Nature—yet there are old men and old women who are not as wise as the old swallows are! They linger in the plains of sin though the harvest is past and the summer is ended—and the winter is coming fast upon them. I see the first flakes of snow on their frost-crowned heads. Already their leaf begins to wither. The light of their day is darkening, the flower of their beauty fading and the shadows of their weakness lengthening. What? Not away yet, old graybeard? Not away yet, when the killing frost is already upon you? Stretch your soul's wings at once! 'Tis late, 'tis very late! The sere leaf of autumn warns you. The white rime of the early frost chides you! Oh, that you would know the seasons and the judgments of God, even as the birds of the air do, and that you would seek Him, now, before it be too late! It is the eleventh hour with you, Man! You have reached your three-score years and ten, yet you are unsaved! May Divine Grace visit you and make you wise—and if it does, you will not sleep till you have found the Savior, lest your couch should become your tomb! You will not dare to go into another week of work-days until you have made this first day of the week the appointed Sabbath, a day of rest unto your soul in the bosom of your Savior!

Observe well that these birds—*the young, the parents and the older birds, all go at the right time.* Perhaps the bright days linger a while—our autumns sometimes are protracted and tempting. When the winter months have come, we may have some almost summer days in this changeful climate of ours, but no bright second-summer tempts the swallow to linger! That interesting bird may have an eye for fair scenes and lovely views and, I think wherever he may fly, he will see no fairer land than this, and no greener dells and fresher woodlands than those that adorn our happy isle. Yet he lingers not for them. Though it is Africa's brown unattractive sand that calls him, on he goes, for he must go or die! His food will fail him here, the damp will be deadly to him—so away he must go. He has built his nest and birds love their nests as we love our homes. He has formed associations and acquaintances, it may be, for birds have friendships. But the time has come when, with his

companions, or without them, he must without fail proceed on his long voyage to the sunny shore! He performs his predestined journey at the ordained time.

And let nothing tempt anyone to linger in love of sin and love of this world when he ought to be seeking those things which are above! Let not the world's pleasures, nor its gains, nor its most tender associations beguile you. You, O Man, like the swallow, must go or die! It is with you as it was with Lot in Sodom—the city of your habitation is soon to be destroyed—this world, in a little while, must meet destruction. Up, and away! The fiery hail is ready to descend! The angel of God comes to warn you, saying, "Escape for your life; look not behind you, neither stay you in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed." So, let nothing hinder you, but speed on till you reach God, your Father, and Christ, your Brother, and are washed in His precious blood and made meet to dwell with Him in Heaven forever!

But alas, alas, it is still true that men "know not the judgment of the Lord." They know not, as the birds do, their "appointed times." There have been, with some of you, times of very gracious visitation—when your heart has been made soft and impressible. I beseech you, "know" that time and avail yourself of it! You know that the preacher's word is not always with equal power. Even the Inspired Word of God has not always the same effect when it is read. Therefore, cherish every tender emotion that you feel. You know what was said to David, "And let it be, when you hear the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then you shall bestir yourself: for then shall the Lord go out before you." So, when there is a movement within the spirit. When there is a revival in the Church. When there are manifest tokens of earnestness in the assembly, then, I pray you, know your appointed time and "bestir yourself."

There are other times, also, which should not be forgotten. For instance, times of sickness. Have you been laid aside lately and are you able again to come out of doors? This is a loud call to you, an admonition, a very kind and tender one, yet one that ought to say to you, "Prepare to meet your God." If sicknesses do not soften, they harden. If we get no good from our chastisements, we are sure to get harm from them. So, my afflicted but restored Friend, know your time, recognize that you have been smitten by your God and turn not away from the hand that smites you! Sometimes the visitation comes in the form of death. Possibly death has come into your home and carried off your child. O mother, follow your dear babe to the skies! Or, is it your husband who has been called away? Then, O widow, take your Maker for your Husband! Is it your Christian father who has been taken from you and yet you, his child, are still unsaved? Your father beckons to you from the skies and bids you seek his Savior! Is it your brother who is gone? It might have been yourself, so let the tolling of the knell for him have a message for you—let it say to you, "Consider your ways, for your soul shall soon be required of you." Make this period, when God is summoning others to Himself, to be the time when you, also, take flight to the better land—I

mean not Heaven, but I mean the heart of Christ—that is the true Heaven of this life, and makes this life to be the foretaste of the unending life that is yet to come!

It is very sad that seasons like these, of which I have been speaking, are often the very times when people become more hardened than before. Death itself may grow so familiar that it loses all its impressiveness. The grave digger is often the last man to be affected by the thought of dying. It must have been a grim spectacle when, during the French Revolution, a certain cemetery was leveled and turned into a saloon—and there, with the tombstones still in sight, they danced and sang a song in which part of the refrain was, "We dance among the tombs." Their hair was made up in the same way as those had their hair combed who were prepared for execution by the guillotine—and no one was admitted to the dance unless he or she had lost a father, or brother, or some other relative by the guillotine! And knowing that they, themselves, would, in all probability, die in the same terrible fashion, they gathered in the place of the graves and whirled in the merry dance among the tombs! It was a strange sight. Surely, none would have dared to act like that had they not been carried away by the madness of that awful period. Literally, of course, we do not act as they did, but, spiritually, this is just what many are doing—they are dancing and singing among the tombs! In utter carelessness and wantonness of spirit they dance within the very jaws of death and, unless God shall cure their madness and teach them wisdom, even as He has taught the birds of Heaven—they will dance themselves into Hell!

II. But, next, it is very remarkable—indeed, it is one of the wonders of Nature that THEY KNOW WHERE TO GO.

Many of them—those newly-hatched birds—have never seen the land towards which they speed. Yet they go there and go to the very place where their parents went before them! They have never seen that sunny shore, yet onward they fly towards it, straight to the mark as if they were arrows shot from a bow! They have no swift-winged messenger to proclaim the time of going and to describe the country so temptingly as to induce them to go, but feeling the motion of a mysterious impulse within them, they fly at the appointed time to the far-off land where they may dwell, through the winter, in a more genial climate. Why do they go south? Why don't they fly north, east, or west? If we were left to seek other shores and we knew nothing of geography, we could not find a suitable place. But these birds, untaught, find the exact spot where it is best for them to spend the many months until they can return to this more northerly land!

The pity concerning poor foolish man is that *by nature, he does not know where to go.* When our Lord Jesus Christ said to His disciples, "Where I go you know, and the way you know," Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we know not where You go, and how can we know the way?" The cry of many aroused souls is, "Where shall we go? We know not the way." Men want happiness, where shall they go for it? If the swallow were to fly straight for the north pole in the hope of finding a genial climate, he would not be more foolish than most men are in their supposed pursuit

of happiness! Some fly to unchastity and lasciviousness and, in this way both wreck their bodies and damn their souls! Some fly to money-grubbing, raking up their gold and silver till they fancy that they are wealthy, whereas, often the more a man has of these things the more he craves and it is a poor thing that makes us want more than we have any need of. Some fancy that they shall find pleasure in the approbation of their fellow men, but before long they discover that the breath of man's nostrils can never fill an immortal soul.

We need something better than the blasts of fame's trumpet to satisfy the spirit which is to live forever and ever—in raptures or in woe. Some fly to strong drink, some to one thing and some to another, all alike fools! There is but one kind of true happiness and only one place where it can be found. Solid satisfaction can only come from reconciliation to God and that reconciliation can only come to us through Jesus Christ, His Son! Man is never right till he is right with God. And never happy till he is happy in the happy God. Man needs peace and rest—every man needs these blessings. In these feverish days, rest is the great need of the age and, to find it, man sometimes flies to superstition and sometimes to unbelief. He must be quiet, he says, for there are thoughts that vex and perturb his spirit. And Jesus stands and says again, as He said of old, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." But, to a sadly terrible extent, man heeds not His gracious invitation and flies anywhere *but* to the true place of rest!

When man is spiritually awakened, he sees that he needs pardon. And pardon is to be obtained nowhere but in the precious blood that flowed from the wounds of the crucified Son of God! Yet many men try to get it by almsgiving, penances and outward reformations—they will even look to priestly lips for absolution, though none can forgive sins but God! They fly here and there—anywhere except to God and to the one Mediator between God and man, the Man, Christ Jesus! O men, as I look upon you, I see the contrast between you and the stork, and the turtledove, and the crane, and the swallow, for, when the time comes for these birds to fly, they stretch their wings and away they go as though they could even see the far-off land! They never stop until they have reached the goal for which they started. But you fly here, there, anywhere—and nowhere, in the long run, and you drop down, faint and weary—drop, ah, where?—but into the devouring jaws of the old dragon who has long sought your destruction and who will achieve it unless you listen to the voice of wisdom which said, "turn you, turn you from your evil ways; for why will you die?" "Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

II. Thirdly, dear Friends, these migratory birds not only know the time for them to come or go, and the place to which they should go, but, BY SOME STRANGE INSTINCT, THEY ALSO KNOW THE WAY.

There is no road that they can follow. Our swallows, I suppose, fly across the English Channel—sometimes across France and Spain—but they are often met with far, far out at sea and have been known to rest upon the rigging, the masts, and even the decks of vessels when they have grown weary. Their flights are very long and rapid, but they can have no landmarks. They usually fly far across the sea, yet they never miss their way and, in due time, they reach their desired end. No convoy is by their side, no wings of angels are heard rustling around them as they speed upon their way. There may be no favoring wind, but if it should be contrary to them, they fly against it. They must reach the sunnier climate, or die in the attempt and, therefore, though the wind should, at times, keep them back, and impede their flight, yet onward they go!

Now, there are many, many men who can say with the Apostle I quoted before, "Lord, we know not where You go, and how can we know the way?" They say this concerning the way to salvation, the way to safety, the way to Heaven. They do not know the way. Some of you who have heard the Gospel preached for years do not know the way. That is not through our lack of plain speaking, nor through our lack of reiterating—

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

I always feel that I have not done my duty as a preacher of the Gospel if I go out of this pulpit without having clearly set before sinners the way of salvation. I sometimes think that you have so often and so long heard me tell this story that you will get weary of it, but I cannot help it if you do. I had better weary you than in any way be false to my charge. Yet, with all this telling over and over, and over again the simple message of, "Believe, and live," though the outward ears hear it and the mind catches some idea of it, yet the soul embraces it not.

Let me tell it to you yet once more. The way for a soul to fly to the place of safety lies in this direction alone—God's only-begotten and well-beloved Son, who is Himself "very God of very God," came down from Heaven and became Man. He lived upon this earth a life of perfect obedience to His Father's Law, and a life of holy service on behalf of sinful men. On the Cross of Calvary, the sin of all those who will ever trust in Him were laid upon Him and, on the accursed tree, He endured all that they ought to have suffered for their sins. God bruised Christ, His own Son, in the place of as many sinners as believe on Him. God was perfectly just in acting thus. The payment of our enormous debt of guilt was demanded—and Christ paid it in full. So, all who trust in Jesus may rest assured that their sin was laid upon Christ, put away by Christ and so completely blotted out that it has ceased to be! We are accounted just through our faith in Jesus Christ, the great Sin-Bearer. "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." "He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." The way of safety, then, is the way of Substitution, the way of Atonement, the way of Jesus Christ's blood! And the way to travel in that road is by simply trusting—believing with the heart in Jesus Christ, relying upon Him, depending upon Him, leaning on Him, resting on Him, be-

lieving His Word—and accepting Him to be to us what God has set Him forth to be to the trusting sons and daughters of men!

IV. My last remark about these migratory birds the stork, the turtledove, the crane and the swallow is that they not only know the time for their flight and the place they need to reach, and the way they have to go, but THEY SHOW THEIR WISDOM BY ACTUALLY GOING TO THE SUNNY LAND.

It would not profit them, in the least, to know when to go if they did not really go at the appointed time. It would not serve them an atom to know where to go, if they did not go—nor to know how to go if they still loitered here. But the wisdom of these fowls of the air is proved by the fact that they do go. They practice what they know. They yield to the instinct which guides them, the impulse which moves them! But, alas, in contrast with these birds, sinners are often very foolish. *They have long heard the Gospel, but they have not yet obeyed it.* They have never practiced what they know, at least in a sense. There are many who profess to believe all that we preach, who prove, by their actions, that they have never really received our message. How foolish it is to say that they believe there is a Hell and yet seek not to escape from it—to talk of believing that there is a Heaven and yet never begin in the way that leads to it—and to pretend to believe in the only Savior of sinners and yet really not to trust in Him!

Then *there are many who know their danger, yet do not escape from it.* They are fully aware of the terrible place where their sin is carrying them. They are quite conscious that they are without hope of entering Heaven and that, when they die, there will be nothing for them but "the blackness of darkness forever." Yet all this knowledge is of no avail to them, for they do not seek to escape from their impending doom! Where shall I find language strong enough to describe such folly as this? There are some who even say, as that son said to his father, "I go, Sir," yet they do not go. They vow yet break their vow again and again. They are at times moved, but it is only with temporary regrets, for they turn again to the sin they said they had left. Alas! Alas! Alas! Yet these people are not idiots—they are not fools in other matters. See them at their business—they are sharp enough there. They want to see the latest telegram, for it may affect the stocks and shares in which they are so deeply interested. They are very anxious to be on time about their temporal affairs. They are punctual in their payments and they are glad to be equally prompt in their receipts.

They look after their own interests in everything except the greatest and most important of them all! They carefully examine the title-deeds relating to their estates. They will not set their signature to any document till they have thoroughly understood it and seen that it is all right. They make everything as secure as they can except their immortal souls! To take care of the garment, but to neglect the body it covers, is folly! To give all our time to our houses and lands, to our money and our worldly estate—and to leave our soul to be lost—is the most supreme folly of which we can be capable! I know not what to say to those who know

what they should be, what they should do—and yet hesitate, debate and delay to do it! Is there such folly anywhere else under Heaven? The birds of the air and the beasts of the field are not so stupid as that! Surely the very stones in our streets have as much reason in them as those men have who know that there is a Savior for sinners and who yet lose Him by neglecting to trust in Him! Vain is it for me to appeal to you! Instead of doing so, I make my appeal to God! Holy Spirit, save these fools from themselves and from their sins, and lead them to faith in Christ, the only Savior! O fools, and slow of heart to believe, I call Heaven and earth to witness that I have warned you of the consequences of your fatal folly! If you will perish in your sins, remember that I have warned you—not with such a voice as I would use if I had it, nor in such language as I would wish to speak if it were possible—but using the best I have, that which my heart prompts me to use!

"Why will you die?" Why will you be lost to all eternity? You must live forever, for you are immortal! God has made you so and He will never let your soul die. Then, will you deliberately choose to make that endless life of yours to be forever wretched, forever without hope? You do not mean to do so! I cannot think that you are so insane as that! You desire to have peace here and hereafter? Then seek the Savior this very hour! None are as happy as true Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Would you have joy forever? Then trust in Him! But if you do not, no joy can ever be yours. The inexorable decree of God concerning Heaven is, "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defiles, neither whatever works abomination, or makes a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life." Therefore, if your names are not in that Book—that is to say, if you believe not in Jesus Christ as your Savior, if you are not trusting in the blood of the Lamb—you will go to that dread place where hope can never dawn—but where the midnight despair shall darken over the lost souls that will be imprisoned there forever and forevermore!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JEREMIAH 8; 9:1.

Jeremiah 8:1. *At that time, says the LORD, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the Prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves.* The Prophet Jeremiah had to foretell terrible judgments upon the guilty people who had been often warned, but who had, at last, gone beyond all bearing and were about to be destroyed by the Chaldeans. Here we have the picture of Judah and Jerusalem invaded by the Chaldeans and Babylonians, just before the city was utterly destroyed. It was a very common practice to bury treasure with the bodies of kings, hence when any land was invaded by foreign foes, they broke open the tombs and searched for hidden valuables and it was a sign of the special detestation of the enemy, and of their fury against the people when they dragged the carcasses out of the graves and scattered the bones to the four winds of Heaven. In this case, it was fore-

told that this desecration would not only take place with regard to the bones of the kings, in whose tombs the greatest treasure might be expected to be found, but the bones of princes, priests, Prophets and people were all to be alike brought forth!

2. *And they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the host of Heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshipped: they shall not be gathered, nor be buried; they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth.* What a striking and appropriate judgment that was! As they had worshipped the sun, that very sun was to dry their bones. As they had worshipped the moon, that moon's rays should fall upon their relics and the stars, which they had adored, would also be quite unable to help them.

3. *And death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue of them that remain of this evil family which remain in all the places where I have driven them, said the LORD of Hosts.* There was to be stern treatment for the dead, but it would be worse with the living, for the Chaldeans were strong, fierce, cruel and most ingenious in the torments which they inflicted upon their captives. It was an awful thing to be living in such times as those—and it is always a terrible thing to be living when God's judgments are abroad in the earth—and sinners are hardened in their sin.

4, 5. *Moreover you shall say unto them, Thus says the LORD, Shall they fall, and not arise? Shall he turn away, and not return? Why then is this people of Jerusalem slid back by a perpetual backsliding? They hold fast deceit, they refuse to return.* Perseverance in sin is a great aggravation of it. There are some who fall into sin, but, by God's Grace, they are raised out of it and they turn away from iniquity and are restored to God's favor. Where there is true Grace in the heart, where there is spiritual life, there will be restoration sooner or later. But there are others, like the people of Jerusalem, who have "slid back by a perpetual backsliding." Day after day they grow more outrageous in their wickedness.

6. *I hearkened and heard, but they spoke not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? Everyone turned to his course as the horse rushes into the battle.* God listened. He waited to be gracious. He was eager to hear one penitent cry and to observe one tear of genuine repentance, but, as the war-horse is eager for the fray, and, at the first blast of the trumpet, seeks to dash into the very center of the fight, so did these ungodly people! Instead of turning to God, they turned more desperately to sin.

7. *Yes, the stork in the Heaven knows her appointed times; and the turtledove and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming, but My people know not the judgment of the LORD.* When God's judgments are being experienced, it is high time to repent! But these people did not think of such a thing—they were not half as sensible as migratory birds which come and go as the seasons guide them.

8. *Why do you say, We are wise, and the Law of the Lord is with us? Certainly in vain he made it. The pen of the scribes is in vain.* What? Do

they talk like that, the people who do not know and do not regard God's judgments—do they talk in such a style as that? Ah, yes! Some of the most wicked of them have a so-called "religion" upon which they still pride themselves. Their hands are red with blood, yet they keep a Bible handy. They say, "We are wise, and the Law of the Lord is with us." All the while that they are sinning against the Lord and His Law. Scribes multiplied copies of the Law and some of these very people who were most hardened in guilt possessed a copy. But, says God, "certainly in vain he made it. The pen of the scribes is in vain." And our own Bible Societies may go on printing Bibles by the millions but, as long as men do not obey what is taught in the Bible, the work of the printing press, like that of the copyist, will be in vain! We need more than the letter of the Word, valuable as that is! We need to know, in spirit and in truth, what the Spirit teaches *through* the letter, and also to practice it! God grant that even our Bibles may not rise up in judgment against us!

9. *The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD, and what wisdom is in them?* See God's judgment upon a man wise in his own conceit? You hear, every now and then, of some wonderfully learned philosophic, scientific man—and many folk are frightened because he is an infidel. He does not possess true wisdom. God's description of such a man is this, "The fool has said in his heart, There is no God."

10-11. *Therefore will I give their wives unto others, and their fields to them that shall inherit them; for everyone from the least even unto the greatest is given to covetousness, from the prophet even unto the priest everyone deals falsely. For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace—when there is no peace.* It is a dreadful thing when those who ought to warn the people simply flatter them. When, instead of speaking sharp, stern, honest, faithful words, they cry, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace. Such false teachers say, "Do not trouble yourself. All will be right at last. You may live as you like, for there is no hereafter that need alarm you. In another state you may get set right, whatever God's Word declares as to the punishment of the impenitent." There are far too many of these smooth-tongued deceivers now living! God deliver this land from them, lest they become an occasion of judgment against the people!

12. *Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, says the LORD.* They had gone so far that they could not blush. It is a dreadful thing when a man has lost the very sense of shame—there will be no repentance where that is the case!

13. *I will surely consume them, says the LORD: there shall be no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree, and the leaf shall fade; and the things that I have given them shall pass away from them.* They would not recognize the Giver, so the gifts would be taken away from them. Now the people dwelling in the country villages begin to be alarmed because of the Chaldeans—and they say—

14-16. *Why do we sit still? Assemble yourselves, and let us enter into the defended cities, and let us be silent there: for the LORD our God has put us to silence and given us water of gall to drink because we have sinned against the LORD. We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble! The snorting of His horses was heard from Dan: the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of His strong ones, for they are come, and have devoured the land, and all that is in it; the city, and those that dwell therein.* Dan was the northernmost tribe, bordering on Phoenicia. And after Nebuchadnezzar conquered the Phoenicians, he began to march through the territory of Daniel. The mighty horses of the Chaldeans can be seen represented upon the slabs brought home by Mr. Layard. They are a very prominent part of the Chaldean force—so the poet-Prophet pictures them as being heard as far as from Dan as all the way to Jerusalem, so terrible was their snorting. This, of course, is the imagery of poetry, but there was terrible reality behind it.

17. *For, behold, I will send serpents among you, vipers which will not be charmed, and they shall bite you, says the LORD.* Such were the Chaldeans—crafty as serpents, full of the venom of cruelty wherever they came! There was no way of charming them as a serpent may be charmed. They came on a deadly errand and thoroughly did they perform it.

18-21. *When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint in me. Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people because of them that dwell in a far country: is not the LORD in Zion? Is not her king in her? Why have they provoked Me to anger with their graven images, and with strange vanities? The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment has taken hold on me.* The weeping Prophet sorrows over the desolation of his land in words that have seldom been surpassed for sublime sympathy and pathos—

22. *Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?*

Jeremiah 9:1. *Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!* Matthew Henry well observes that, in the Hebrew, the same word signifies, "eye," and, "fountain," as if God had as much given us eyes to weep with as to see with, as if there were as much cause to sorrow over sin as to look out upon the beauties of the world. Magnificent in its poetry and most touching in its pathos is this verse which ought never to have been cut off from the previous chapter—"Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"

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

PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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THE LIONS' DEN
NO. 2859

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"O Daniel, servant of the living God, is your God, whom you serve continually, able to deliver you from the lions?"
Daniel 6:20.

THE empire of Babylonia and Chaldea passed into the hands of a new dynasty and king Belshazzar was slain in a night-assault upon his capital. On that very night, he had clothed Daniel in scarlet and made him the third ruler in the Kingdom. This was Providential, for, had Daniel been in obscurity, he would have been little likely to attract the notice of Darius. But, observing him in the palace, clothed in scarlet, Darius would naturally ask who he was and enquire into his antecedents. The fame of his wisdom would be quickly told and the fact of his having twice interpreted the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar, in former times, and of his having just then, with startling precision, foretold the downfall of Belshazzar and the capture of the city by the Medes and Persians, would be eagerly related. Hence it was not at all surprising that Darius took great notice of Daniel, weighed his character, observed his conduct and, after a while, exalted him to be prime minister of his realm.

Daniel's prosperity and honors excited the envy of the courtiers. Full of sullen spite and brimming over with jealousy, presidents and princes conspired together to cast him down with calumnious accusations. We are known to say that "any stick will do to beat a dog," so they looked about for any charge with which they might assail him. I have no doubt they watched him constantly, waited eagerly for his halting—all the while basely flattering the man they wanted to trip up. Can they discover a flaw in his accounts? Can they question the impartiality of his judgment? Can they detect a lack of loyalty in the administration of his government? Can they find fault with his private life? No, but is there nothing against him? Is Daniel such a four-square man that he is more than a match for them? I can well believe that they hunted him here and there till their haughty faces grew haggard in the sin effort to find a cause of complaint—and that they set spies to skulk about his house and mark his movements. And, in fact, they stooped to the meanest stratagems, little heeding how much they compromised themselves if they might but compass his downfall. But his integrity was proof against all their devices. The more closely they observed him, the more clearly they discerned that

he was always diligent, discreet and devout. So conscientious and so uniformly consistent was Daniel, both in his character and his conduct, that every effort to entangle him in the meshes of their conspiracy proved to be vain.

At length the devil, who does not often run short of devices, puts them up to a fresh plot. O Satan, you are full of all subtlety! "Let us contrive a new law," they say, "that shall bring his piety and his patriotism into conflict. He is a Hebrew by birth and he believes, with all his heart, in only one God. Our divinities he despises. Towards our temples he shows a silent scorn. He sets no value on the magnificent statues that we venerate. Three times in the day he has been accustomed to offer prayer to an invisible Protector whom he calls, 'the living God, Jehovah'—surely these peculiarities will supply us with a pretext and so we shall entrap him." So they laid their evil heads together and devised as cunning a snare as they could possibly invent. And yet, clever as they were, they perished in the trap they had prepared! They managed to involve the king, himself, in their iniquitous device and to entangle him in such a way that he must either sacrifice his favorite courtier, or compromise his own truthfulness and violate the sacred traditions of the empire! A royal statute was framed and a decree published forbidding any petition to be asked of God or man for 30 days. How preposterous!

But when was there ever a despot who was not, sooner or later, deserted of his wits? The passion for power, when indulged without restraint, will lead a man to the utmost foolishness and urge him to a madness of vanity. In such a false position stood the monarch who was easily persuaded to issue the infamous edict desired. In this strait, how will Daniel acquit himself? Will he count it prudent to desert his post and get out of the way? No. Daniel had a soul above such policy. Yet you might imagine that if he must pray, he would go down into the cellar, or offer his supplications to God in some retired place where he need not challenge notice. His petitions will be heard in Heaven without respect to the place from which they are presented. Or it might have been expedient to suspend the vocal utterance of prayer and offer his supplications silently. Daniel, however was a servant of the living God and, therefore, he scorned thus to compromise and play the coward. Well does one of the old writers call him, Coeur de Lion, for he had the heart of a lion! Into that den of lions he went, a lion-like man, not cruel, like the beasts of the forest, but far more courageous! His conscience towards God was clean and the course he pursued before his fellow creatures was clear. His sense of the Truth of God would not suffer him to be a trimmer. He does not change his habit, but goes upstairs, though he might have known that it was like climbing the gallows. He drops upon his knees, puts his hands together, with his windows open toward Jerusalem in the presence of all his adversaries—and there he prays three times a day as he had done before. He prays openly, not ostentatiously. He prays in the spirit of a Protestant rather than in the fashion of a Pharisee. He sought no honor, but he shunned no danger. To encounter shame, or to endure

reproach, if necessary, for the cause of righteousness, had long been his fixed habit—and now that it threatens to bring on him swift death, he swerves not!

Hear those quick feet as they patter along the streets of Shushan! All the presidents and princes are coming together! There is mischief brewing, for they are going to seek an interview with the king. They are anxious to inform his majesty that they have caught Daniel committing the horrible crime of prayer! Was not this a new offense? Oh, no! The first man that ever died fell a victim to his religion and so, I suppose, for many and many a century, this was one of the foulest offenses a man could commit against society! Those who serve the living and the true God are sure to challenge the sneers of the time-servers in any age. There are many, nowadays, who hate nothing as much as a religious man! All the epithets in the catalog of scandal are too good for the man who offers homage to God in everything. An infidel may be reputed honest, intelligent and worthy of respect—but a genuine Christian is at once denounced as a hypocrite! Away with such a fellow—his conscience is as offensive as his creed! There is toleration for everybody who conforms to the fashion of the day, but no toleration for anyone who believes that the laws of Heaven should regulate life on earth.

So they told the king that the laws of his empire must be kept inviolate. Good, loyal souls as they were, they would not have a statute broken for the world! There is an end to your monarchy if your royal proclamations are not to be respected! They are so jealous for the common law and so earnest for the king's honor that they must, at all hazards, even if it is at the risk of seeing their dear friend, Daniel, put into the lions' den, maintain the dignity of the king and assert the majesty of his imperial edict! The king perceives that he is caught, but thinks the matter over and, finding no alternative, gives Daniel up to the conspirators.

Alas! I see the godly man flung in among the lions, but what do I hear? Do I hear his bones cracking? Can I hear a shriek from the Prophet? Is there a noise of the howling of those savage beasts of prey? There is an awful hush while the king puts his seal upon the stone—shall we step down and peer into the den to see what is going on there? No sooner had Daniel arrived at his destination than an angel of God encamped in that dungeon. Stretching his broad wings, he seems to have fixed his station in front of those fierce beasts. The safety of Daniel was secured! The mouths of the lions were shut and they lay down like lambs. Perhaps Daniel found a comfortable pillow for his night's rest upon the shaggy body of one of those monsters that would have devoured him had not the heavenly visitant hushed them into silence by his presence! Or perhaps the appearance of the angel was as a flame of fire and worked an illusion before the lions' eyes, so that Daniel seemed to them to be surrounded with flame, or robed with fire. At any rate, that night the prophecy of the latter days—that the lamb shall lie down with the lion, was fulfilled to the letter! God, in His Providence and Grace, preserved His servant!

We can easily imagine that, like Paul and Silas, when Daniel did not sleep, he made the lions' den vocal with his songs and that the lions growled the bass while God's angel stood there listening to such music as he had never heard before! And when the morning dawned he then sped his way up to Heaven as the king came to fetch Daniel out of his prison house. So Daniel was delivered and his foes were confounded. There is the story. Now, what lessons are we to learn from it?

I. First, I want to set before you DANIEL'S EARLY AND ENTIRE CONSECRATION TO THE SERVICE OF GOD.

The king said, "Your God, whom you serve continually." This was no empty compliment. His scrupulous uprightness had become so habitual that it was like an instinct of his nature. Daniel began to serve God in his youth. There are no saints to be compared with those whose childish minds were imbued with heavenly Truths as soon as their infant lips began to lisp them. Just as there are no sinners so inured to wickedness as those who are bred and trained in haunts of vice, tutored from their cradle to utter profane words and prone to act as they think, bravely, in defiance of every precept of the Decalogue till they become proficient in every kind of profligacy. They, who give their morning to God, shall find that, in beginning early, they can keep pace with their work all day. Happy Daniel, thus continually to serve his God from his youth up! Yet it was not the good fortune of his birth that gilded his name with glory. Far from that—it was his sad lot to be carried away captive from his native land while but a stripling! Alienated from the home of his ancestors, he was taken to the palace of Nebuchadnezzar and there, with three other youths, he was entered as a bursar in a heathen school to be instructed in the strange literature of a strange nation and so to become one of the king's learned men!

His loyalty to the faith of his forefathers was at once put to the test. Certain food that was repugnant to his conscience, was served up every day. Probably it had been offered in sacrifice to a false god. Daniel feels that he would be polluted by partaking of it. He, therefore, with his companions, refuses either to eat the king's meat or to drink the king's wine. As a total abstainer, he drank nothing but water and, as a vegetarian, he ate nothing but simple plants. With no desire to please his palate, it was his delight to serve his God continually. Another man might have thought it mattered little what he ate and drank, but, for Daniel, the jots and tittles of Divine Revelation had a meaning. He dared not go contrary to the Law of his God, even with regard to meats and drinks. Though far from the land that Jehovah cared for, he longed to live in the Light of God's Countenance. Strict obedience to God has a swift reward. His face soon became fairer than the faces of those who fed on the royal diet!

At length, the time arrives when Daniel is to be brought from private tuition into public notice. Nebuchadnezzar has been distressed by a dream which his astrologers cannot comprehend and his soothsayers try in vain to search out. To Daniel, alone, who served his God continually, the secret is revealed. Of that vision I do not now attempt to speak—but

with what nobility of heart does Daniel stand before the king! He does not tremble before the earthly potentate, nor does he conceal the name of the God in Heaven who inspires him with wisdom. He recalls the forgotten dream and forthwith he is made a great man in the realm—yet he still goes on to serve his God continually! Obscurity could not hinder him, publicity could not mislead him. Again the king dreams. again Daniel boldly explains, though that explanation is to the effect that the haughty monarch shall be driven as a lunatic from the abodes of men!

For a while, Daniel retires into the shade. You hear nothing of him till Belshazzar ascends the throne, but he is still serving his God. I doubt not, sometimes ministering to his poorer brethren and visiting the sick, but often in his chamber, by prayer, and by study of the Scriptures, seeking and finding communion with the Most High. All of a sudden Belshazzar summons him to his presence. There is a mysterious writing on the wall which can be read by no eyes and interpreted by no lips but his. He is not disconcerted, but, at the call of royalty, to court he goes. Oh, with what simple dignity, with what sublime composure, with what heroic courage does the man of God tell the proud monarch, who might cut him in pieces if he willed, of his immediate doom—"You are weighed in the balances, and are found wanting"! If you want to find a counterpart of John Knox in the Bible, I do not know, leaving out Elijah, where you will find a rival to Daniel. How confidently he speaks, "This is the writing"! And again, "This is the interpretation." His word commends itself to the conscience—no man dares to gainsay it.

He is promoted to the highest honor in the realm—now what will he do? There has been a change of monarchs, but there is no change in Daniel. No time-server, he stands to his principles at all times. "Servant of the living God," is still his title! He had taken for his motto, when he began life, "I serve God," and he retains the motto to his life's close. The glory of his God was his one objective throughout all his days—and he never swerved. He is now lifted to a higher post of dignity than he had ever been raised to before. He is prime minister of the greatest monarch of the age, yet he abhors the idolatry of the heathen and maintains his allegiance to him who rules in the heavens. They can find no flaw in him, though the eyes of envy watch him from early morn to dewy eve! O my Brothers and Sisters, it is a hard thing to serve God in high places! Many a man seems to adorn the Doctrine of God our Savior when humbly earning his livelihood by the toil of his hands, and eating his bread in the sweat of his face, but, afterwards, when advanced to ease and opulence, he has turned his back upon his friends and forsook the Lord. Be very jealous of yourselves if you are rising in the world. Riches are deceitful. It is not easy to walk on a high rope—what lamentable Providences have befallen those who have thus risked their lives! Let us be the more circumspect when we are called to walk in high places. Popularity and fame, riches and honor are among the sharpest trials of integrity that mortal man can pass through. But Daniel could endure them all without his head growing giddy, for he served his God continually.

Now note the effect of what Daniel did. It is comparatively easy to follow the Lord in bright days, but the sun of prosperity suddenly darkens and the man of God is encompassed with perils. If he continues in his holy course, he will forfeit the king's favor and lose his life in the most dreadful manner. What will Daniel's determination be? Oh, the true grit is in him! He is a blade of the true Jerusalem manufacture and is not to be broken. He will do just as he did before! He opens his window and in the same posture, down on his knees, he prays as he did before! Glory be unto the God of Daniel, who made and who kept such a man with his head clear in the crisis, with his heart pure in the midst of persecution and his feet steadfast to the end!

Ah, dear Friends, some of us little know what these pinches mean. There are a few of you who do—you have endured torture without accepting deliverance. I have felt a holy pride in some of you when I have seen how you have borne trial. Witness the man who has a shop which brings him in more profit on a Sunday than it does all the rest of the days of the week, and who says, "It must be one thing or the other. I cannot go to the Tabernacle and keep my shop open, too—which shall it be?" His faith proves stronger than his fear! The shutters are closed on the first day of the week. His business goes—he loses everything and yet he does not regret it. He parts with ill-gotten gain without a grudge and goes back to hard manual labor with a moral satisfaction and a manifest ease of conscience that he never knew before! Dear souls, your pastor is proud of you! I feel that I can thank God and take courage since the Gospel of Christ educates and brings up such simple, honest servants of the living God! And when I have heard of young men serving in a shop, who, when asked to do something positively dishonest, have at first mildly answered that they could not—but when told that they must either comply or retire—have boldly said, "Then we will leave," I have felt how highly honored I am of God to have such men in our ranks.

My eminent predecessor, Dr. Gill, was told by a certain member of his congregation, who ought to have known better, that if he published his book, "*The Cause of God and Truth*," he would lose some of his best friends and that his income would fall off. And the Doctor said, "I can afford to be poor, but I cannot afford to injure my conscience." The devil and the deceit of your own heart will readily suggest that you must look after your family—and some good Christian people mistake prudence for piety. I daresay, had Daniel gone to consult Mr. Prudent Thrifty and asked his advice, he would have said. "Well, you see, it is a very important thing for us to have you at the head of affairs. I do not think you ought to throw away such an opportunity as you have of doing good. It is not absolutely necessary for you to pray for thirty days! Would it not be better for you to trim a little and yield a point or two? You do distinguished service to our cause and, by keeping your position, you will be putting your foes to a non-plus. By compromise you will obtain concessions. Worldly wisdom is worth your study." This is the way that fools are beguiled and in this way many Christians, alas, drift from their moor-

ings. To plead the present distress is, for the most part, a mere pretence. "Let us do evil that good may come," never was in the code of Old Testament or New Testament Truth!

I remember a notable instance, some years ago, of this fallacious reasoning. A reflection was cast on the career of a distinguished clergyman who resigned his connection with the Established Church and, after much consideration, allied himself with the Baptists. "Did he gain credit," it was asked, "or increase his congregation by the change?" What of that? The answer is easy. Let conscience assert its supremacy, for circumstances do not weigh a feather in the scale. Long departed from among us, we may still speak of him as the Hon. and Rev. Baptist Noel—and he was right and righteous in his decision, as one who feared the Lord in the face of any loss. If, by stopping where he thought he ought not to stop, or by conforming to what he believed to be a corrupt corporation, he could have saved multitudes of souls, the good done to others would not have extenuated the guilt incurred by himself! You and I have nothing at all to do with consequences! Be it ours to hearken to the voice of the Lord and obey His high behests. When God prompts our conscience to a course of action, the slightest demur will recoil with a sense of intolerable guilt. Though the heavens should fall through our doing right, we are not to sin in order to keep them up! At the call of duty, never parley with danger. Should everything seem to go amiss with us after we have done the right thing, there is no cause for regret. Remember that our conduct is the maker of our character. You men of faith, hoist your colors! Leave to your God the providing! Stick to the obeying. Learn your duty and do it bravely. "Through floods and flames," if Jesus leads, follow on, never dubious that your welfare is assured.

Here, dear Friends, I would remark that the only service to God which is real, genuine, remunerative, is this continual service that sticks at nothing. Any hungry dog will follow you in the streets if you do but entice him with a piece of meat, or a bit of biscuit. How closely he keeps to your heels! But, after a while, the bait is gone and the dog retreats. That is like many a professor. There is some little pleasure in religion, or some advantage, and so he follows Christ, but, after a while, there is an attraction elsewhere and, impelled by greed rather than gratitude, he pursues it. Thus do false professors forsake Christ, whom they never did really follow. But I have seen a man on horseback, splashing the mud about and I have seen his dog keeping close at the horse's heels, up and down hills, whether the roads were smooth or rough—what did it matter to the faithful hound? His master was before him, so on he went! That is the only kind of dog I would care to own and I believe this is the only sort of follower that our Lord Jesus Christ is willing to acknowledge. Oh, those time servers who look one way and pull the other, like the ferry-men upon the stream! As for Lord Fair-Speech, Lord Time-Server, Mr. Smooth-Man, Mr. Anything, Mr. Facing-Both-Ways, Mr. Two-Tongues and all the members of their club, Mr. By-Ends included, the entire com-

pany of them will be swept away when the Judge comes with the besom of destruction!

I know you feel the force of this Truth. How you loathe a friend who will not stick to you in dark times! Do you remember that companion of yours who used to call in the evening and sit and chat with you? What a dear fellow he seemed! You always thought he was a sincere friend. You liked him much and you confided in his judgment as you often took counsel together. And all went well till, one day when the dark clouds began to gather over your head. It made a serious change in your circumstances. What was it? A severe loss in business, or perhaps a bankruptcy—now you cannot keep such a well-spread table, or wear as good a hat as you used to—there is not so much nap on your Sunday coat. You look rather less thriving than in days of yore. What has become of your friend? Ah, never mind, let him stay where he is for you have not suffered much loss by getting rid of him. He was never worth knowing, before, but you have found out his worthlessness, now, and I advise you to have nothing more to do with him. Do you not despise the character of such a man? Do you not feel in your heart, "Well, I can forgive him, but I will have nothing more to do with such a fellow"?

This is but a picture of yourselves if you try to follow Jesus Christ only when you are in the society of His people and as easily lend yourselves to sing a frivolous or lewd song when you are with the ungodly. What is that man's profession worth who lets his tongue run loose with flippant speech and vain conversation when he gets into the company of such friends as are known to be sons of Belial? Oh, that we had more Daniels who would serve the Lord continually! The only way to build up a character which will be proof against the temptations of the age and of your own immediate surroundings is to commit your cause to God, as Daniel did. Be much in prayer! Prayer keeps the Christian steadfast. You may make a loud profession, but it will not last without prayer. Amidst work and worry, heavy responsibilities and incessant anxiety, you had need often renew the confession of sin and weakness on your bended knees. Then, again, you must have a lively faith in the living and true God, as the Prophet had, for only this can sustain you in such a warfare. Is your faith genuine, of the right metal? Spurious faith soon loses its edge.

The Christian is in hard straits if he finds that when he needs courage and comfort most, all his strength and joy have departed! Prove your faith in the petty skirmishes of the passing hour, if you would have it endure the perilous conflicts of an evil day. Have you a religion that did not begin with rigorous self-denial. Then, get rid of it! If you have a religion that suits your constitutional fondness for ceremonies, your aesthetic taste for culture, your habitual passion for music, beware of it! The root of all real religion is simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Away with every counterfeit. That faith which lives only on Jesus, rests solely on Jesus, builds wholly on Jesus and shows itself in earnest prayer will give you a consistency and decision of character that will make you like Daniel all your days!

II. Now, secondly who WAS THIS GOD WHOM DANIEL SERVED CONTINUALLY?

Let me ask—*Is Daniel's God worthy of our worship?* I ask the question in all earnestness because I feel positive that multitudes of men have a religion that, in their own judgment, is hardly worth debating about, far less worth dying for. It must have been a sorry spectacle to watch a Papist going to the stake or the scaffold as many Protestants have gone, for the maintenance of a fiction or a lie! I should be surprised to see an Agnostic lay down his life for the defense of nothing. But what shall we say of the living and true God whom Daniel delighted to honor? Is He worth living for, worth serving, worth dying for? Doubtless the Prophet's devotion grew stronger with the proof he made of the Lord's goodness and greatness. With childlike faith he clung, at first, to simple precepts that he would not transgress. The Revelations he afterwards received seem like rewards for his unfaltering integrity. In his direst emergencies, God manifestly delivered him. He had no other longing for life than communion with the Lord of All the Earth! From the Christian point of view, he was a "man greatly beloved." To the outside heathen, he was "a servant of the living God." But let us repeat the question, that we may have the pleasure of answering it for ourselves. Is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ worthy of our love and our life? Words are lacking to tell the gratitude and joy that we cherish towards God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love with which He loved us even when we were dead in sins!

By faith I understand that the blessed Son of God redeemed my soul with His own heart's blood and, by sweet experience, I know that He raised me up from the pit of dark despair and set my feet on the rock. He *died* for me—this is the root of every satisfaction I have! He put all my transgressions away. He cleansed me with His precious blood. He covered me with His perfect righteousness. He wrapped me up in His own virtues. He has promised to keep me, while I abide in this world, from its temptations and snares! And when I depart this life, He has already prepared for me a mansion in the Heaven of unfading bliss and a crown of everlasting joy that shall never fade away! To me, then, the days or years of my mortal sojourn on this earth are of little concern, nor is the manner of my decease of much consequence. What more can I wish than that while my brief term on earth shall last, I should be the servant of Him who became the Servant of servants for me?

You, dear Friends, must be the best judges of your own religion, whether or not it is worth suffering for. If it is not full of immortality, I would not advise you to risk your reputation on retaining it. If it is only a fair profession, you may well blush for it as a foul delusion. The fleeting fashion of the time has its market value, but the sterling Truth of God is a commodity that never fluctuates. Have you found Him of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth? Your religion is genuine if Christ Himself is the All-in-All of it. Is He your own dear Savior? Then you have pardon and peace, happiness in this present time and Heaven in prospect—happier lot no heart can wish for!

Then there comes another question—*Is Daniel's God able to deliver us from the lions?* My dear Friends, you who are suffering just now for the Cross of Christ, you who know what it is to be losers for Jesus, to stand out and to endure pains and penalties as Daniel did—you are well aware that the lions are fierce and furious creatures. They are not stuffed animals, having the name without the nature of those beasts of prey! So, the sufferings of a Christian are not sentimental—they are real! Those lions had not their teeth knocked out, they were not transformed into lambs. They could have devoured Daniel if they had been permitted to do so. It would be foolish to talk of your troubles as trifles, but for the Grace of God they might have been enough to drive you back into the world and to reduce you to despair! Full often, your steps have well-nigh slipped. The lions have sharp teeth and they would have devoured you—only Divine Grace has found a means of delivering you out of their mouths.

I ask the man who has given up a profitable appointment because he would not be false to his convictions, whether, on shorter commons he has not found the sweeter luxury of contentment? I ask him whether he has not enjoyed, on a harder pillow, more refreshing sleep? I appeal to you, one and all, if a sense of rectitude has not invariably a soothing effect and a gentle stimulus? I know, Brothers and Sisters, that those of you who have passed through such trials will bear me witness that there is a sustaining influence vouchsafed to you while you are cast, as it were, into the lions' den. Some of you are enduring the ordeal, now, but others, who have got farther on, have been rescued from dire peril. In most cases that have come under my notice, when anyone has ventured loss for Christ, he has presently reaped some substantial advantage—and his loss has, in the end, proved to be his gain.

Many a man has, in this manner, proved God's Providence. For an honest scruple, he has been put out of a position that supplied him with a scant livelihood. Contentment, with a bare pittance, was his only outlook. Loosed from his moorings, he feared lest he should be lost—yet he afterwards traced his enlarged prosperity to that very date! God, who is rich in mercy, has soon found for that man a far better position than he could have held had it not been for his forfeiting the other. And even if your deliverance is not thus speedy and sudden—if, like David, you should say, "My soul is among lions: I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword," yet shall you sing, like David—"My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise."

But should we even dwell among lions till we die, what joy shall it be to leave the lions and be linked with saints and holy angels in the beatific hereafter! The higher reward is bestowed on the higher service and brighter crowns encircle their brows who have suffered most bitterly and most bravely. You and I have but few and slender opportunities, in this soft and silken age, of showing our love to our Lord by the surrender of liberty and life for His sake. There are no stocks or racks, no stakes or gallows for martyrs now. These are smooth and slippery time, yet, if we are

so inclined, we can work with the will, with the self-denial and self-sacrifice of missionaries! For the love of Jesus, we can dare to die under a cloud with no hope of being canonized. Faith and patience are martial virtues which it may be quite within our province to illustrate in humble rather than heroic fashion.

You may wonder why I keep on in this strain. I am aiming at instances which are much more common than some of you may imagine. There are many worshippers gathered within these walls whose constant attendance at what is sneeringly called "a conventicle," exposes them to no reproach and, in some instances, would rather win them a measure of esteem. There are others, to my knowledge, who can never enjoy the privileges of the Lord's people without encountering grievous provocations and bitter malice.

In a congregation of this magnitude, the confidential words spoken to the pastor by the solitary ones would often startle those who sit in their family pews. Confession of Christ frequently causes division in a household. Husband and wife are, for His sake, in hostility. Mother and daughter cannot agree. Taunt and jibe are difficult to bear with equanimity. Perhaps it touches men in their trade and it goes hard with the bread-winner when faithfulness takes away his bread and cheese. My sympathy, however sincere, is of small account—would to God I could inspire you with more fortitude! Let me challenge you to quit yourselves like men! Let me exhort you to play the Daniel! Is your God the living God able to deliver you out of the den of lions? I hope you will be able to cheerfully respond, "I believe He can! I believe He will! But if not, though I abide in the den till I die, I will rest quietly there with the Angel of His Presence as my guardian for I know He will bring me, when I have suffered a while, to everlasting Glory!"

"Is your God, whom you serve continually, able to deliver you from the lions?" Let me put this question in one or two lights and thus draw our reflections to a close. Leaning over, like that Persian king, I look down into a greater den of lions than he ever descried. It is dark. The stench is foul and 'midst the dim shadows I discern struggling forms and figures. Tormentors, whose faces are hidden, stretching women upon racks and torturing men with switch and leather flogs. And, yonder, a spot where, on hundreds of stakes, martyrs have been burned to the death. In the far distance, a wild horse and a human victim tied to his heels to be dragged to death. Strange and horrible spectacle that, out yonder!—a long procession of men who were scourged, who were stoned, who were beheaded, who were sawn asunder—saintly men were they, of whom the world was not worthy! Leaning over the mouth of this great lion's den, I ask the persecuted saints of all ages—Has your God been able to deliver you? And with a cheerful shout, loud as the voice of thunder, they cry, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us!"

I look down upon another lions' den. It is still dark, but not so dreary. Night reigns in sacred shade and solitude. The stars are hid, but tapers

burn in chambers dimly lit. There, sons and daughters of sorrow are tossed on beds of sickness. Thus they have lain for months, perhaps for years—all hope of health extinguished, all prospect of pleasure passed. Their limbs paralyzed, their sight failing, their hearing dull—calamities of every kind have befallen them. God has permitted the great lions of affliction to come howling round and to tear away all their comforts and their joys till they are left without any of that cheerful fellowship with nature which seasons mortal life with sweet relish.

Some of you are robust in health—your head never throbs, your heart never aches, you are hardly conscious that you have any nerves. Small account do you take of the secret, silent, saintly heroism of sufferers whose pilgrimage on earth is blighted with pain. Oft have I been their companion in tribulation. I appeal to these tried and afflicted children of God. Tell me, you Daniels, has your God been able to deliver you out of the mouths of the lions? And I hear each one say, "Bless the Lord, O my Soul!" And all join in chorus, saying, "Not one good thing has failed of all that the Lord our God has promised! Our shoes have been iron and brass, and as our days, so has our strength been."

Will I strain my parable too far if I turn my eye upon another lions' den? It lies in a deep valley. The night hangs heavy. The beasts of prey are diseases that skill and shrewdness, time and talent have striven in vain to tame. Like lions, strangely dissimilar in outward fashion, but strongly resembling them in instinct, they pounce on their victims and seal their doom. We call this place "the Valley of the Shadow of Death." I think I am gazing, now, on the forms of shivering men and women as they are dragged down by the lions. One after another, my familiar friends descend into the grave and I ask them, in the hour of their departure, "Is your God, whom you serve continually, able to deliver you from the lions?" Calm is their countenance and clear their voice, as each one chants his solo, "O Death, where is your sting? O Grave, where is your victory? Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" So, at length, this lions' den, too, loses all its terror.

Then I look into another den. It is almost empty. There is a lion in it, a grim old lion, but I do not see so much as a bone to tell the tale of its victims. No trace of its ravages is left behind. On this soil there once were countless thousands of the slain, but it is empty, now. All of a sudden I look up and, lo, I see myriads of immortal souls and they all tell me, "Our God delivered us from the grave, and rifled the tomb of its prey. By a glorious Resurrection, He has brought all His ransomed people forth to meet their Lord at the Great Day of His appearing. There shall they stand before the Throne of God, for He has broken the teeth of the lion and rescued all His children from the power of the adversary!"

—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.

OWL OR EAGLE?
NO. 2860

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 10, 1872.

"I am like an owl of the desert."
Psalm 102:6.

"Who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's."
Psalm 103:5.

IN the 102nd Psalm, the Believer likens himself to an owl, and in the 103rd Psalm, in almost the parallel verse, he is compared to an eagle. What a blessing it is that the saints of God, in the olden times, were moved by the Holy Spirit to write down their experiences. And what a mercy it is that they wrote them out so fully! They have not given us miniatures so much as full-length portraits. Especially was this the case with David—again and again he draws himself to the very life. Possibly, if left to himself, he would have omitted from his autobiography some of his faults and failings, as well as the grosser sins of his life, but he was under the guidance of the Spirit of God and, therefore, he has shown us his true self—infirmities, iniquities and all that he was! It is related of Oliver Cromwell that when his portrait was about to be painted by an eminent artist, the painter desired to conceal the wart upon the Protector's face, but the true hero said, "Paint me just as I am, wart and all." In a similar style, David, the champion and hero of Israel, in the portrait of himself, painted by himself, shows us his scars and warts, his blemishes and imperfections.

This, I say again, is a great mercy because if it were not for this fact, we might have supposed that these gracious men of the olden time were not subject to the same infirmities as ourselves. And we might have concluded that we were not the Lord's people, "for, surely," we would have said, "God's true people never wandered as we wander, never failed as we fail, were never downcast as we are and were never on the borders of despair as we sometimes are." But we turn to this blessed Book and we find that the saints of God described in it were very much like the saints of the present time. The sea of life is rough to us and it was rough to them. Their vessels leaked, then, and ours leak now. The winds sometimes blow a hurricane just as they did, then, and spiritual navigation was, in their day, very much what it is today. This must always be a cause of consolation to us and also a means of direction, for, seeing that

they fought and struggled as we do, we can examine their methods to discover how they gained their victories. And, having the same sort of enemies to deal with and the same Divine assistance at our disposal, we flee for help and strength where they fled and use the same means which they used so well in overcoming their adversaries. If God had changed, that would have altered matters for us, but, since He is still the same and deals with His children after the same rule of Grace, we are both comforted and instructed as we read how He delivered His ancient people. I hope it may be so while we are meditating upon our two texts.

Observe, first, that *the saints of God have differed, the one from the other.* Some think that these two Psalms are by different authors, yet one of them says, "I am like an owl of the desert," while the other says, "My youth is renewed like the eagle's." But, as I believe that these Psalms were both written by the same person, I see another line of thought, which is that *the saints of God have, at times, differed from themselves.* Extremes have met in them. They have been like an owl one day and like an eagle another day. We shall close our meditations by observing that *the Lord alone can change the sadness of His people into gladness* and make the owl of the desert into the eagle that soars aloft on mighty wings.

I. To begin, then, The SAINTS OF GOD HAVE DIFFERED, THE ONE FROM THE OTHER. One mournfully hoots, "I am like an owl of the desert." Another, stretching his broad wings, cries, as he mounts towards Heaven, "My youth is renewed like the eagle's."

This may be accounted for in various ways. Something may be set down to *the different times in which men have lived.* David, on the whole, lived in times in which the Church of God prospered. Some think that the 102nd Psalm was written by Nehemiah, or by Daniel, who lived in more troublous times, when the House of God lay waste and Israel was carried into captivity. The children of God usually sympathize very much with the condition of things by which they are surrounded. When there are revivals, they are cheered. And when there is a long season of declension, they feel humbled and brought low. We do not expect that the age of Jeremiah should bring forth many rejoicing saints. Neither, on the other hand, should we expect that the days in which the Lord magnified His name through His servant, David, should bring forth a majority of mournful saints. Much will, therefore, depend upon the times in which God's people live—yet not as much as some would think. There have always been some who have blessed the name of the Lord when they have been the only godly persons in the district. They have shone like stars of the first magnitude amidst the thick darkness of the night that reigned around them. While there have been others who, even in times of refreshing, have cried out, "My leanness, my leanness!"

Something must also be set down to *the various works in which different men have been engaged for the Lord.* Some of God's servants must be of a joyful disposition, or they would never get through the heavy work that is appointed to them. Others, who have the heavy task of rebuking incorrigible sinners and threatening God's judgments upon them, are na-

turally of a somewhat gloomy cast of mind. They would not be fitted for their stern work if they were not, themselves, stern. I have no doubt that those wonderful sermons of John Bunyan, when he "preached in chains to men in chains," were the more powerful because there was a sympathy in the sorrow of his heart with those who were themselves in sorrow through their sin. God may be as much glorified by a weeping Jeremiah as by an eagle-winged Ezekiel!

The trials of God's people also differ. All of them feel the weight of His rod, but they do not all feel it alike. There are some Believers whose path is comparatively smooth. In temporal things they are well provided for. They have good bodily health, the members of their family are spared to them, they seem to travel along a very easy way to Heaven. But there are others to whom the getting to Glory is like crossing the Atlantic in a storm! They have wave upon wave—all God's billows sometimes seem to go over them. Divine Wisdom arranges our lot, but our lots are not precisely alike. I do not doubt that there is a more equal distribution of happiness than we sometimes dream. Still, there are differences and those differences are very conspicuous, here and there, among Christians.

Still, I think a great deal more is to be set down to *constitutional temperament* than to any of these outside things. I know some of my dear Brothers and Sisters who, if they were very poor, would still be happy. Indeed, I have seen them very sick and ill, but they have still been joyful! I have gone with them to the graveside, but they have rejoiced in the Lord even there. They could not help doing so—there seemed to be a fountain of joy in them, like water in a well that springs up continually! On the other hand, there are some brethren—I will not say that there are many, here—still, there are some who could not help grumbling wherever they might be! If they had the fat of the land upon their table, it would not quite suit their appetite—they would prefer a mixture of bitter herbs! I believe that there are some Christians whom God Himself will never satisfy until He takes them to Heaven. They seem to have a soul that utterly disdains to be content and shows its greatness, I suppose, in continually feeling that nothing is quite good enough for it. That is a dreadful constitution for any man to have! Perhaps it is his liver that is wrong, or, more likely his heart, but there is no doubt whatever that physical disease has a great effect upon constitutional temperament. And some sad folk are rather to be pitied than to be blamed for the dark and somber view which they take of everything around them.

I incline to think, however, that we must not lay too much stress upon such things as these, but that the main difference will be discovered in another direction. *Some saints have more faith than others have*—and very much in proportion to their faith will be their condition of heart and mind! Such saints, having more faith than others have, will also have *more zeal for God, more conscientious observance of His commands, more complete devotion to His will, more self-denying consecration to His service*—and where there is much of all these things, there will be *more joy* than there can be in any other condition of heart and life! If you are a true Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, yet are slack in serving God, you

shall get to Heaven but you shall have very little Heaven on the way there. But if your faith rests, like a trustful child, upon the Omnipotence and Immutability of God. If you simply and implicitly rely upon the atoning Sacrifice of Christ and then, out of love to your Lord, are fired with a sacred devotion to be used to Christ's Glory, your peace shall be as a river and your righteousness as the waves of the sea! God, in His all-wise Sovereignty, may send you various trials which will cast you down, but it is according to the gracious rule of His Kingdom to give the sweet reward of His Presence to His obedient children. He says to us, as He did to His ancient people, "If you will walk contrary unto Me, then will I also walk contrary unto you." But if you walk with God as Enoch did, you shall have the joy which doubtless beamed from Enoch's face, beaming also from yours!

The practical lesson of this first part of my subject is this. Do not judge yourself, dear Brother or Sister in Christ, by any other human being. Do not say, "I cannot be a Christian because I am not as mournful as So-and-So was." God forbid that you should fall into such a delusion as to think that you ought to imitate any man's miseries! Do not say, on the other hand, "I cannot be a Christian because I have not the joys which I have heard such an eminent saint speak of." It would be an ill day for you if you should try to counterfeit those joys! The man who said, "I am like an owl," and the man who said, "My youth is renewed like the eagle's," are both in Heaven praising God! If they were two different men, both were accepted in the same Savior, both were washed in the same precious blood and both entered into the same everlasting Glory—and you, whether you are joyful or miserable, if you are depending alone upon the atoning work of Jesus Christ, shall be there too, in due time, to praise the Lord forever with them!

II. But now, secondly, I have to remind you that SAINTS DIFFER FROM THEMSELVES AT DIFFERENT PERIODS. They are not at all times what they are sometimes.

I feel morally certain that David wrote both these Psalms, for there are very similar expressions in both of them. Anyone who has studied every verse and letter of the Psalms, with diligent care, as I may rightly claim that I have done, gets to feel as if he knew the tones of David's voice and could tell which is Asaph's and which is David's. And there is, to my mind, a Davidic ring in this 102nd Psalm quite as surely as there is in the 103rd. If it is so, then it was David who one day said, "I am like an owl of the desert." And the day after said to his own soul, concerning his God, "Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's." It was the same man in different moods—and Brothers and Sisters, we know, experimentally, that the children of God have these various moods!

First, notice the contrast here—a contrast which I have verified and so have you, if you are a child of God. Here is *a man under sense of sin.* He has discovered that he is a lost soul. The arrows of God drink up the life of his spirit and his self-righteousness is smitten and withered. He cannot bear company and gaiety, nor even the common joys of life, so he

gets away alone and pines, and cries, "I am like an owl of the desert." The most dreadful verses that he can find in the book of Job, or the Lamentations of Jeremiah exactly suit his case. This is how he talks to his God—"I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping because of Your indignation and Your wrath: for You have lifted me up and cast me down." But look what happens when the Lord Jesus Christ manifests Himself to that poor guilty sinner! He looks at Christ upon the Cross—it is a trembling look and his eyes are half blinded by his tears and by the mists arising from his doubts and fears—but he does look to Christ, honestly and sincerely, and trusts Him with his soul!

Have you not seen the change that such an experience works in men? Now he is not like an owl any longer. His sin is completely forgiven. In a moment he has passed from darkness into marvelous light, from bondage into liberty, from death unto life! Now, like the eagle, he stretches his wings and mounts aloft into the glorious sunlight! Ask him whether he is like an owl, now, and he will say, "God forbid! Why should I be?" See how the man walks now? Before, his feet seemed like lead. Now, they appear almost as if they were winged, like the feet of the fabled messenger of the gods. Now, the man runs along the path of duty! He delights in his God. He loves Him! He adores Him! He triumphs in Him and boasts of the Lord Jesus Christ as His Savior. All this change is sometimes worked in a single hour—yes, in a single *moment* the sackcloth and ashes are taken away, the loins are girded with the garments of praise—and sorrow is changed into overflowing bliss! There you have one example of the contrast between the owl and the eagle spirit.

And, afterwards, *in the Christian life*, you may see the same difference. Here is a Believer in deep trouble. Christians have a promise that they *shall have trouble* and that is one of the promises that God always keeps! "In the world you shall have tribulation." Now see the Christian in the time of his tribulation—sometimes he is bowed to the very earth under it. If you need an example, look at Job, covered with sore boils from head to foot, sitting among ashes and scraping himself with a potsherd. His children dead, his property destroyed, his friends—the few that remain—miserable comforters to him! Watch him a little while till the Lord returns to him in mercy and gives him twice as much as he had before, and "blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning." So is it, often, with the people of God today. If they do not receive temporal prosperity, they get spiritual blessings that are more valuable by far and so, up from the ashes, God's Jobs still arise! From the willows they take their harps, again, and—

"Loud to the praise of love Divine,
Bid every string awake,"

because the Lord has dealt so graciously with them! So you see that the same men may be like owls in their time of trouble and like eagles in the day of their deliverance out of it.

The contrast will be still more conspicuous if you look at another picture. It is a portrait of yourself and of myself. Do you ever sit down and look within and look around and look beneath? If so, when you look

within, you see imperfections, infirmities, temptations, sins. You fetch a long-drawn sigh and moan, "I shall surely fall one day by the hand of the enemy. With all this combustible material in my heart, someday there will be a terrible catastrophe and my profession of religion will be destroyed in a moment." Possibly you look around you. Business is not prospering. Perhaps one child is sick and ill. Another is deformed, another has gone out to a job, but is not behaving well. You have all manner of troubles. Your house is not "so" either with yourself, or with God, as you desire it to be. Then you look down. You feel that you are soon going to die and you wonder how you will bear the pains, groans and dying strife. And your dear wife will be a widow and your children fatherless. Ah, you fetch some more sighs and say to yourself, "I am like a pelican of the wilderness—I am like an owl of the desert." Of course you are and you always will be as long as you turn your eyes inside! But when, instead of looking within, or around you, or looking down to the grave, you look up and see Christ, the ever-living Savior who has passed through the grave and now lives to die no more, you will no longer dread to die because you will know that there is to be a glorious Resurrection in which you shall share!

Then you will not be, any longer, like an owl of the desert, but you will mount aloft, above the clouds, into the clear blue sky of happy fellowship with the ever-blessed God, rejoicing that in Christ Jesus your salvation is accomplished, the Everlasting Covenant is signed, sealed and ratified, your security certain beyond all doubt, you yourself adopted into the family of God and being made ready, in due season, to enter into the glorious abode of eternal bliss! When you realize all this, no longer will you sigh, and cry, and repine, but you will rejoice "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Give up the habit of looking within or around you, or if you do sometimes mourn over what you see there, even then say, with David, "Although my house is not so with God; yet He has made with me"—you can see the eagle stretching his wings there—"yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure."

Let me set before you another contrast. Sometimes even good men, when they rise in the morning, get up in a humor which is anything but amiable. They go downstairs and find their family in a condition which is anything but amiable. They go out to their business and they find their affairs anything but pleasing. All day long everything seems to go wrong with them, or else they go wrong with everything—which is probably the real truth. Some Believers seem to like to indulge in a little comfortable misery and appear all day long to determine to be unhappy. A certain thing in which they are interested has not prospered as they desired, although it has prospered far beyond their deserts. Another thing has not happened just as they wished it might, though it has happened a great deal better than they ought to reasonably have expected.

Have you ever met a Brother in that condition? I have, and I have also met Sisters in the same condition! I have gone to visit them and their story, from beginning to end while I have been there, has been about their rheumatism, or about the smallness of their allowance from the

church or the parish, or about their sorrow at having lost so many friends and helpers! But what a mercy it is when the sorrowful soul is helped to shake off that depression and to say, with Habakkuk, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be on the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." This is the way to leave the owl in the desert and to let the eagle soar upwards in his glorious flight! Suppose we have miseries—have we not also mercies? Are Marah's waters bitter? Then put the Cross of Christ into them and they will at once be sweetened! Is your way rough? Yet your God leads you in it, so it must be the right way! Does it traverse a desert? Yet the manna has always fallen even there! Are you weary and footsore? Then remember that "there remains, therefore, a rest for the people of God."

Some people will always look on what they call "the black side" of things, but to faith's eye, there is no black side, for even the dark side of God's Providential dealings with us glows with light when faith looks at it! Many people appear to take a telescope and try to look through it upon the unknown future and, before they look, in their anxiety they breathe on the glass and then, as they gaze, they cry, "There are a great many clouds to be seen!" Yet, all the while, it is only their own breath that has created them! It is best for the Believer to leave the future with God—to rest entirely in His purposes of love and mercy and to march forward singing to his God—

"What may be my future lot
Well I know concerns me not!
This should set my heart at rest,
What Your will ordains is best."

Here is another contrast. From the 102nd Psalm we learn that the Believer, in his trouble, had forgotten to eat his bread, but in the 103rd Psalm we are told that the Believer, in his joy, has his mouth satisfied with good things. There are some persons who fall into spiritual trouble through neglecting the means of Divine Grace. You say that you are very depressed in spirit, that you have lost your evidences and are brought very low. Brother, let me ask you some personal questions. How long is it since you were at a Prayer Meeting? How long is it since you were at a week-night service? How long is it since you left off the habit of carefully reading a daily portion of God's Word? How long is it since you enjoyed conscious fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ? I asked a Christian, as I believe him to be, that question some time ago, and he shook his head and said, "I wish you had not asked me that question, for, alas, it has been many a month since I could truly say that I have had any such fellowship." If that is the case with any of you, do you wonder that you are like an owl of the desert? If a child never goes to his father to get a good word from him, is it any wonder that he doubts whether his father loves him? What wife would live in the same house with her husband and yet never speak to him by the six months together? It would be a shame if she did act like that, yet here are some of us, with Christ always near us,

living on without speaking to Him, or having fellowship with Him! Well may such a person be like an owl of the desert—but let a man begin diligently to attend the means of Grace, let him be much in private prayer, let him seek fellowship with Jesus—and he will soon shake off his mourning and forget his sorrows! And up again into the clear air he will mount, like the eagles, on wings renewed by God!

The last point of contrast is this. The owl is a bird that is afraid of the light. It loves the darkness and, therefore, it loves not the sunshine. But the eagle is not afraid of the sun—it even dares to stare into the face of the great father of day! There are also some Christians who appear to be afraid of the Light of God. They have a little, but they do not want too much. I have heard of a good man who would never read, at family prayer, that chapter about Philip and the eunuch. There is, in that chapter, a good deal of the Light of Good upon the subject of Believers' Baptism and that man did not want to read about it, for he was afraid of the Light. Others will not read those passages, in the Epistles, which speak of Election, Predestination, Particular Redemption, Final Perseverance and similar great Truths of God that are revealed by the Holy Spirit. Such people say that these doctrines are too Calvinistic, so they do not read about them, for they do not want to see too much Light. I know Christians—at least they profess to be Christians—who, in various matters, are like the owl of the desert—they do not like the Light. But the true-born child of God needs the Light of God—he cannot have too much of it! He delights to do his Lord's will. He says of everything he does, "If it is not according to God's Word, I desire to be undeceived concerning it. And if there is any Truth of God taught by the Holy Spirit which I have not yet received, I desire to receive it and to sit down humbly at Jesus' feet, to unlearn all I know if it is wrong, and to learn whatever He would have me learn." Let us pray to God to give us the eagle eyes which are glad of the light and to take away from us the sleepy eyes of the owl which only see in the darkness.

III. My last point, for which I have only a minute or two left, is this—THE LORD ALONE CAN CHANGE SPIRITUAL SADNESS INTO SPIRITUAL GLADNESS.

No hand can heal a broken heart save the Divine hand that made it. The minister's words cannot heal your wounds. The Holy Spirit alone can pour in the true balm. The ancient question was, "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?" The answer is, No, there is none. There is no balm in Gilead—that is not the place to look for it. There is no physician there. If there were, the health of God's people might be recovered. But it is not recovered in Gilead and never will be. The only true balm comes from Calvary! The only unfailing Physician is He who has gone up to His Father's Throne, yet who hears the cry of all who call upon Him in sincerity. He alone can turn the owl into an eagle, but He can do it! He understands your case, for He has passed through an experience exactly similar to yours. He has not only walked the hospitals that is an essential thing for a physician to do, but He has, Himself, lain on the bed in the hospital. Christ took upon Himself our sicknesses and

bore our sorrows—and even our sins were caused to meet upon Him when He hung on the accursed tree as the Substitute for all who believe in Him! You have, therefore, the best of physicians to heal you! So, sin-sick Soul, look to Him! If you have only an owl's eyes, yet turn them unto Christ and He will change them into an eagle's eyes. If you are only as the owl of the desert, resolve that you will see no light but His Light, for, then, His Light will surely soon come to you!

Remember, O you Mourners, that there is one Person of the ever-blessed Trinity who has been pleased to consecrate Himself to the work of comforting tried and troubled souls. As Christ has redeemed us, *so the Holy Spirit comforts us.* He is The Comforter, The Almighty Comforter. As God Himself has become the Comforter, what case of sorrow can be thought to be hopeless? Of old, the Lord said, "As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you; and you shall be comforted." And our Lord Jesus Christ, after going back to Heaven, has sent us the Holy Spirit to be our Comforter. And the Holy Spirit uses the very best medicine that can possibly be compounded. Do you ask, "What is that?" Christ said to His disciples, "He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you." What medicine can ever be equal to the things of Christ? O poor owl of the desert, if the Spirit of God shall come and visit you, as He will, and reveal the things of Christ to your soul, you will then spread your wings, like an eagle, and mount aloft into the heavenlies in Christ Jesus!

With one more remark I will close my discourse. *Whenever a soul is cast down by God, there is a reason for it, and that reason is love.* When the Lord kills, why does He do that? When He wounds, why does He do it? Here is the reason, given in His own words, "I kill, and I make alive. I wound, and I heal." You must first be stripped by God if you are to be clothed by Him! You must be emptied if you are to be filled! You must be uprooted if you are to be transplanted! You must become nothing if Christ is to be your All-in-All! Is not this Christ's usual rule, that He cuts down the green tree, and makes the dry tree to flourish? The Virgin Mary truly sang, "He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away empty: He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree." Destitute, empty, broken, crushed, wounded, dead—you are just the sort of people Jesus came to save!

He came into the world to save sinners, to seek and to save the lost. So you, being lost, are the most suitable objects for the display of His love. I am sent to preach the Gospel to the broken-hearted, to minister consolation to the afflicted and tried, and to tell of the opening of the prison to them that are bound. Not to those who are satisfied with their own righteousness, but to those who know that they are sinners do we preach a Savior! You who can fall no lower than you are—unless you sink into the lowest Hell—are the very persons to be the objects of Divine regard! Your extremity is God's opportunity to bless you. To you who pine, sigh, cry and say, "We are like the owls of the desert," is this message of mercy proclaimed, by the voice that sounds even in the wilderness, "Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God. Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accom-

plished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she has received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

Bankrupt sinners, come and learn how all your debts have been discharged! Wounded sinners, come and be healed by the Great Physician! Yes, and even to you who are dead, and in your graves, the Lord says, "Live." And you shall live, even as the Lord Jesus said to Martha, "He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." The Lord grant you Grace to look to Jesus, that the owls' eyes may now be turned into eagles' eyes and the owls of the desert into eagles, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 102.

Kindly notice the title of this Psalm—"Prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and pours out his complaint before the LORD." I call your attention to it in order to remind you what charges there are in the life of a Believer. Here, in the 102nd Psalm, the afflicted saint is pouring out his complaint. And then, in the 103rd, the rejoicing Believer is blessing the Lord in a jubilant song of grateful praise. Such are a true Christian's ups and downs, nights and days, and I can see how the 103rd Psalm blossoms out of the 102nd. When the afflicted Believer can pour out his complaint before the Lord, it will not be long before he will be able to cry, "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name." If you carry your complaint in your own bosom, or tell it to some earthly friend, you will probably continue to have cause to complain. But if you pour out your heart before God, it will not be long before He will give you ease and relief.

Verses 1, 2. *Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto You. Hide not Your face from me in the day when I am in trouble.* "For that would make my trouble to be unbearable." So William Cowper sings—

"That were a grief I could not bear
Did You not hear and answer prayer."

2. *Incline Your ear unto me.* "Stoop down to me. Bend over me. Listen to the moans of my darkness, the whispers of my weakness."

2. *In the day when I call, answer me speedily.* "For I am brought so low that if a delay is not a denial, it will be tantamount to it, for I shall be dead before the answer comes unless it reaches me speedily."

3, 4. *For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as in a hearth. My heart is smitten and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread.* That is a very pitiful state for anyone to be brought into, in which the sorrow of the mind begins to weaken the strength of the body! The soul itself is so inflamed that a fever is generated within the bodily frame, which seems "burned as in a hearth."

5. *By reason of the voice of my groaning, my bones cleave to my skin.* By grief he had brought himself down to such an emaciated state that his bones pierced through his skin.

6, 7. *I am like the pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert. I watch and am as a sparrow alone upon the housetop.* He had got into such a melancholy state of mind that he shunned human company, sought solitude and became as mournful a creature as "an owl of the desert."

8-10. *My enemies reproach me all the day; and they that are mad against me are sworn against me. For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping because of Your indignation and Your wrath: for You have lifted me up and cast me down.* Observe that all David's enemies could not make him weep. Mad as they were against him, they could not extort a tear from his eyes, but God's indignation and wrath touched him to the quick and made him mingle his drink with weeping. He felt that God was treating him as wrestlers treat one another—when a man deliberately lifts up his opponent in order that he may give him the worse fall—"You have lifted me up and cast me down." All the joys that he had ever known seemed to make his sorrow the more bitter. The Light of God's Countenance, in which he had formerly walked, made the darkness, in which he was enshrouded, to seem all the blacker.

11, 12. *My days are like a shadow that declines; and I am withered like grass. But You, O LORD, shall endure forever; and Your remembrance unto all generations.* That was David's usual way—to comfort himself in his God when he could find no comfort in himself or in his surroundings. You remember that he did so on that memorable occasion when Ziklag was burned and the people spoke of stoning him—"David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." We shall be wise if we follow his example, for, when every other source of joy is dried up, when all earthly wells are stopped up by the Philistines, the stream of God's mercy flows on as freely as ever!

13, 14. *You shall arise and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favor her, yes, the set time, is come. For Your servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof.* God is sure to bless His Church when the members of it take a deep interest in even the least things that appertain to God's cause. "Your servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof." I fear that, in many churches, the set time to favor Zion has been postponed by the apathy, the lethargy, or the carelessness of many of those who profess to be the servants of God!

15, 16. *So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth Your Glory. When the LORD shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His Glory.* It was to God's Glory for Him to build up the ancient Jewish Kingdom and it is equally to His Glory to build up His Church at the present time—quarrying the stones of nature, changing them by His almighty power, polishing them, by His Grace, after the similitude of a palace, building them up upon the one Foundation, that is, Jesus Christ—laying course upon course until the whole structure shall be finished.

17. *He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.* There is a gracious promise for all destitute souls who cry unto God!

18. *This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD.* This is written for our comfort, dear Friends! There it stands permanently, in this blessed Book, that as long as there is a destitute and tried people of God, He will not despise their prayer!

19. *For He has looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from Heaven did the LORD behold the earth.* As if God was looking down from the battlements of Heaven, observing, watching for something—and what is it that God is looking for?

20. *To hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death.* Is not that a delightful view of God? Watching not for the music of sweet singers, nor for the noise of victorious warriors, but for "the groaning of the prisoner," the sight of those shut up in the condemned cell, "appointed to death."

21-23. *To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and His praise in Jerusalem; when the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the LORD. He weakened my strength in the way; He shortened my days.* It is most instructive to notice how the Psalmist ascribes all to God, not only his strength, but his weakness—not merely his extended life, but even the shortening of his days! It takes away the sting from our sorrow when we know that it comes from God. It helps us to bear any apparent calamity when we feel that it is our Heavenly Father's hand that has worked it all, or His will that has permitted it to happen.

24-27. *I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: Your years are throughout all generations. Of old have You laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They shall perish, but You shall endure: yes, all of them shall wax old like a garment, as a vesture shall You change them, and they shall be changed: but You are the same, and Your years shall have no end.* The ever-living God is our constant comfort amidst the ever-changing scenes of this mortal life! Yes, and when we come even to the border of the land of death-shade, this is still our joy, "The Lord lives," for, from the midst of the Throne of God, we hear our Savior say, "Because I live, you shall live also."

28. *The children of Your servant shall continue.* We pass away, but our children take our place. As Wesley said, "God buries His workmen, but His work goes on." One generation passes away, but another comes in its place.

28. *And their seed shall be established before You.* Blessed be the name of the ever-living 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.

"THE TIME IS SHORT"
NO. 2861

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The time is short."
1 Corinthians 7:29.

THE text does not say that *time* is short. That would have been a true statement, but compared with eternity, time, at the very longest, is but as a pin's point. But note what the text does say—"*The* time is short." It is the time of our life, the space of our opportunity, the little while we shall be upon the present stage of action that is short. It is narrow and contracted, as the original implies. "Behold," said the Psalmist, "You have made my days as a handbreadth and my age is as nothing before You." Brief is the season we have allotted to us, Brothers and Sisters, in which we can serve the Lord our God.

This is a Truth of God which everybody believes, knows and confesses. It is trite as a proverb on every tongue, yet how few of us act as if we believed it! We are conscious of the precariousness of other people's lives, but, somehow or other, we persuade ourselves that our own time is not quite as limited as theirs. We think we have "ample time and verge enough," but we wonder that our neighbors can be so careless and prodigal of days and years, for we observe the wrinkles on their brows, we detect the gray hairs on their heads and perceive the signs of death in their bearing and we doubt not they will soon have to render in their account. "All men think all men mortal but themselves," is a "night thought" that may well startle us as we rest from the business and the bustle, or the waste and wantonness of each succeeding day. Why do you hide from yourselves the waning of your own life-work, the weakening of your own strength, the weaving of your own shrouds? As a creature, you are frail—as an inhabitant of the world, you are exposed to casualties. As a man, there is an appointed time for you on earth. You must be swept away by the receding tide—you must go with the rest of your generation.

Ask an angel what he thinks of the life of a mortal and he will tell you that he remembers when the first man was made—and since then the earth has been always changing its tenants. Perhaps he is baffled to recall the races that have come and gone in countless succession. For a little while they floated on the surface, then they sank beneath the stream. At first they struggled on through centuries, but, after that, they failed,

any one of them, to attain a tenth of that pristine age. "Short-lived!" says the angel, "they seem to me as leaves upon a tree, as insects on the earth, as flies in the air. Like the grass that flourishes in the meadows, scarcely have I gazed upon them before they are cut down, withered and gone." Oh, if you never meet with an angel to interrogate him, talk familiarly with one of the trees of an ancient forest! Ask what it has seen and, though it cannot speak in articulate tones, you can lend it a tongue and it will tell you that hundreds of years have passed and history has accumulated, from the time when it was an acorn, till now. It covers a wide space with its far-spreading foliage. Yes, the oak and elm can tell us that man is but an infant of today!

Would you rather take counsel of your fellow creatures? Then ask the old man what he thinks of life. He will tell you that when he was a boy, he thought he had a vast length of time before him. So heavily did the days hang on his hands that he played the hours away and was glad when birthdays told of the years that were gone. It was his strong desire and his panting ambition to break loose from the moorings of childhood and launch out into the great wide sea of turmoil and enterprise! But now he looks back on these 70 years that have been gradually accumulating, as a dream. Through all the fitful stages of life's journey, present time is always perplexing—it must be past before it is understood! It seems to him only as yesterday when he left his father's roof to be an apprentice. He remembers it distinctly and fondly tells you of some quaint things that happened in those olden times. How short a while since the bells rang out his marriage peal and now his children have reached their manhood—and his children's children climb upon his knee and call him "Grandfather." Yet he remembers when, as it were but yesterday, he was himself a little child and his grandfather clasped him to his bosom! My venerable Friends, you will bear witness that I do not exaggerate when I speak thus—my language is only the feeble expression of a forcible experience. You can realize more vividly than I can paint the sensation of looking back over the entire span of threescore years and ten! To the stripling, this appears a very long period, while to you it merely seems as a watch in the night.

And yet, perhaps there are among you, some hoary veterans, some elderly matrons who need to be reminded that "the time is short." Present health and activity may tempt you to forget that nature, in your case, stands upon the verge of her confines. What if your frame is strong? What if the bloom still lingers on your checks? You have nearly reached the goal, the allotted term that mortals cannot pass. I have seen fine days, in autumn, when the air was soft as in balmy spring, but they gave no promise of another summer. I knew the season was too far advanced for winter to delay its approach much longer. So, you, my aged Friend, can be sure that the hour of your departure is drawing near. Should five, or even 10 more years be granted to you, how quickly they must pass when 70 by-gone years have so rapidly fled! The remnant of your days

will surely cover little space when the whole compass of your life has stretched over so small an area. Be frugal of minutes, now, though you may have been, at one time, prodigal of years! At the end of life you have no time to parley and postpone—to resolve and yet to trifle with resolutions—to waste and squander golden opportunities. "The time is short"!

But to estimate this Truth aright, we may well turn from the cycles that angels have witnessed, the centuries that trees have flourished and the seasons that have come and gone in the memory of our grandparents to consider "the years of the right hand of the Most High." Enquire at the mouth of the Lord. Take counsel of the eternal God. Remember how it is written, "A thousand years in Tour sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night." "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." "He sits upon the circle of the earth and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers"—insects of an hour compared with Him. Like the grass, we spring up, and like the grass we are mowed down! Compared with the lifetime of the Eternal, what is our life? No, there is no comparison! It is almost too insignificant for contrast. "My days are like a shadow that declines, and I am withered like grass. But You, O Lord, shall endure forever; and Your remembrance unto all generations." I wish I had the power to impress this Truth on every heart. As I have not, I shall try to point the moral it suggests and pray that the Spirit of God may seal the instruction upon every heart.

"The time is short," so, first, *it warns.* Next, *it suggests.* Then, *it inspires* and, lastly, *it alarms.*

I. First, IT WARNS. If you knew the sterling worth of time, you would shrink from the smallest waste of so precious a thing. Fools say that time is long, but only fools talk like that. They say that "time is made for slaves." He alone is a free man who knows how to use his time properly—and he is a slave, indeed, who finds it slavery to pursue his calling with a good conscience and serve his God with diligence, fidelity and zeal. Knowing that "the time is short," you and I have not an hour to squander upon unprofitable amusements. There are some diversions which afford a respite from the incessant strain of labor and anxiety and are profitable to strengthen the mind and brace up the nerves. These are not only allowable, they are fit and proper. But while recreation is both necessary and expedient to keep the mental and physical powers in working order, we can give no countenance to such dissipation as tends rather to enervate than to invigorate the constitution. Popular taste displays its own perverseness in seeking to extract pleasure from folly and vice. Fashion lends its sanction to many a pastime that ill becomes any wise, rational, intelligent person. But the Christian, in his relaxations, must seek healthy impulse and avoid baneful stimulant. "The time is short." *We cannot afford to lose it in senseless talk, idle gossip, or domestic scandals.*

Nor can we afford to plan a round of empty frivolities to while away an afternoon or an evening, as the manner of some is. Our time is too precious to be frittered away in formal calls and punctilious visits. Well

might Cotton Mather complain of the intrusion of a certain person who had called to see him, as people will call on ministers, as though their time was of no importance. "I would sooner have given that man a handful of money," he said, "than that he should have thus wasted my time." You count it a little thing to trespass on our minutes, but in so doing you may spoil our hours! Whether you think so, or not, it is often distracting to us to be troubled with trivial things in the midst of our sacred engagements. We may be called from an absorbing study. We may be rudely interrupted when our knees are bent and our heart is being lifted up to God in intercession. We may have our minds drawn from the weightiest matters to listen to the most frivolous observations. It is said of Henry Martyn that he never wasted an hour. I wish it could be said of us that we wasted neither an hour of our own time, nor an hour of other people's time! Brothers and Sisters, the time is too short to make a desire for a friendly visit an excuse for frothy conversation. It requires no stretch of imagination to picture to ourselves two men who are both Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, "called to be saints," and accounted faithful, meeting in a room and greeting each other as friends. They will surely have something choice to talk about. All Heaven is full of God's Glory and the earth is full of His riches. There is range enough for thought, for speech, for profitable converse!

But listen awhile. One observes that the weather is very cold. "Yes," says the other, "the frost is still very sharp." There they stick—they have nothing further to say till, presently, one of them remarks, "It will be rather slippery travelling tonight," to which comes the reply, "I daresay many horses will fall down." And are these the men of whom Peter testifies that they are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ from their vain conversation received by tradition from their fathers? Are these the men who have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit? Is this frivolity becoming to the heirs of Heaven? Yet thus, often is precious time squandered and the faculty of speech abused! There is an ancient prophecy which I would love to see fulfilled in modern history. In "David's Psalm of Praise," (only one Psalm, the 145th, is so entitled), he says, "All Your works shall praise You, O Lord; and Your saints shall bless You. They shall speak of the glory of Your Kingdom, and talk of Your power; to make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His Kingdom." By such converse as that, Beloved, you might "redeem the time" in these evil days!

But you are afraid of being charged with cant, or with pushing your religion a little too far. Brothers and Sisters, it is high time we had a little more of such cant and that we did push religion a little farther than has been our habit! Golden opportunities are lost and profitable interchange of holy thought is lamentably neglected in these days! In days of yore, "they that feared the Lord spoke often, one to another, and the Lord listened and heard it." Not much of this now prevails among professing Christians. Little enough is said that is worth men's hearing, much less

worth God's hearing—and if He did hear it, instead of putting it down in "a Book of Remembrance" and saying, "They shall be Mine," surely, in His Infinite Mercy, He would forbear to record the vain thoughts and empty words which could only be a stigma upon their characters! By the brevity of time, then, and by the rapidity of its flight, I admonish you to refrain from all abuses of the tongue. Invest each hour in some profitable manner that, when past, it may not be lost. Let your lips be a fountain from which all streams that flow shall savor of Grace and goodness.

The time, moreover, *is much too short for indecision and vacillation.* Your resolving and retracting, your planning and scheming, your sleeping and dreaming, your starting up from slumber only to sink down into a drowsier state than before are a mockery of life and a willful murder of time! Of how many of you is it true that if you ever did entertain a noble purpose, you never found a convenient season to carry it out? On the verge of conversion, sometimes, you have halted till your convictions have grown cold. Ten or 20 years ago, you listened to the appeal, "My son, give Me your heart," and you answered, "I will." But, to this day you have never fulfilled your word! "Go work in My vineyard," said the Master. "I go, Lord," was your prompt reply—yet you have never gone! Today, as before, you stand idling. Some of you, indeed, were in a more hopeful condition 30 or 40 years ago than you are at present! What account can you give of yourselves? What has become of those intervening years? The Infinite Mercy of God has kept you out of Hell, but there is no guarantee that His long-suffering will shield you from destruction another instant. O Sirs, "the time is short," the business urgent, the crisis imminent! 'Tis madness to be halting between two opinions! If God is God, serve Him—and if not, take the alternative and serve Baal! Let your mind be made up, one way or the other, without another moment's delay. How long do you waver between two opinions?

And you Christian people with your grand illusive projects, how they melt away! Some of you would have done a great deal that is useful by now if you had not dreamed of doing so much that is imposing. Oh, what wonderful plans for evangelizing London, for converting the whole Continent of Europe to Christ float in the brain, or evaporate in a speech—and nothing is done! We are like a certain Czar of Russia, of olden times, who always wanted to take a second step before he took the first. We are always projecting some wonderful scheme that proves too wonderful to ever be carried out! So we dream of what ought to be and should be—of what might be and as we hope may be! Such "dreams are the children of an idle brain." The dreamers grow listless and nothing is done. In the name of the eternal God, I beseech you, if you love Him, get to work for Him! Better slay a single enemy than dream of slaughtering an army! Better that you sow a single grain of corn or plant a single blade of grass, than dream about fertilizing the Sahara, or reclaiming from the mighty sea untold acres of fertile land! Do something, Brothers and Sisters, do something! It is high time to awake out of sleep, for "the time is short."

This thought may serve to warn us against another folly—*that of speculating upon the points of controversial theology.* You know how the schoolmen used to debate and wrangle about how many angels could stand on the point of a needle—and with many other propositions, no less absurd, did they weary themselves. Strange, indeed, was the ingenuity of men taxed to find subjects for discussion in the dark days of those dull doctors of learning. There is something of that spirit abroad even now. Ministers will devote whole sermons to the discussion of some crotchet or quibble that does not signify the turn of a hair to anybody in the universe! I have generally noticed that the less important the point is, the more savagely will some persons defend it—as if the world might go to rack and ruin—and all the sinners in it go blindfold to Hell and the work of salvation must stand still to have this point discussed! One Brother who occasionally meets me, can never be five minutes in my company, but what he attacks me upon the question of free agency and predestination. I told him the last time I saw him that I would have it out with him one of these days, but I must defer it till after the Day of Judgment, for I was too busy to talk about it just now. And I feel like that about a great many questions!

There are Brothers who can fully explain the Book of Revelation, though I generally find that they exclaim one against the other, till they declaim each other off the face of the earth! I would sooner be able to proclaim the Cross of Christ and explain the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, than to decipher the imagery of Ezekiel, or the symbols of the Apocalypse. Blessed is he who can expound the mysteries. I have no doubt about his blessedness, but I am perfectly satisfied with another blessedness, namely, if I can bring sinners to Jesus and teach the saints some practical Truths which may guide them in daily life. It seems to me that the time is much too short to go up in a balloon with speculations, or to go down into the mines of profound thought to bring up some odds and ends and scraps of singular knowledge. We want to save souls and to conduct them to that Heaven where God's Presence makes eternal day! This seems to me to be the pressing demand upon us now that "the time is short" and, "the night comes when no man can work."

Let this also admonish us, Brothers and Sisters, *to singleness of purpose.* We must have only one aim. Had we plenty of time, we might try two or three schemes at once, though even then we should most probably fail for lack of concentrating our energies. But as we have very little time, we had better economize it by attending to one thing. The man who devotes all his thought and strength to the accomplishment of one reasonable objective is generally successful. My Soul, bend yourself down and lay yourself out for the Glory of God! Be this the one aim of your entire being! Form your friendships and order your occupations so as to fulfill this first and highest duty of life. Be it your one sole motive to live for His honor and, if necessary, even to die to promote His renown among the sons of men! "Present your bodies a living sacrifice." Attune your

souls to the great Hallelujah—"While I live will I bless the Lord. I will sing praises unto my God while I have my being. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise you the Lord."

O Brothers and Sisters, this sublime enthusiasm will work wonders! You dissipate your strength and fritter away your opportunities by dividing your attention. You say that you want to be a Christian—meanwhile, your heart is set upon getting riches, you seek to store your mind with the learning and wisdom of the world, you wish to gain repute as a good talker in company and a convivial guest at the social board. Ambition prompts you to seek fame among your fellows. Very well, I shall not denounce any one of these things, but I would use every persuasive to induce you who are Believers in Christ to renounce the world! If Christ has bought you with His blood and redeemed you from this present evil world, He has a claim on you as His servant and it is at your peril that you take up with any pursuits that are inconsistent with a full surrender of yourself to Him. You belong to Him, so live wholly to Him! The reason why the majority of Christians never attain to any eminence in the Divine life is because they let the floods of their life run away in a dozen little, trickling rivulets, whereas, if they cooped them up into one channel and sent that one stream rolling on to the Glory of God, there would be such a force and power about their character, their thoughts, their efforts and their actions that they would really "live while they lived."

II. "The time is short. THIS SUGGESTS.

Do you know what reflection this fact suggested to me? "Surely, then," I thought, "I have some opportunity to follow out the work of faith, the patience of hope and the labor of love, though not the opportunity I once had." Then, picturing to myself an ideal of a short life all used, nothing wasted, all consecrated, nothing profaned, I seemed to see a boy giving his young heart to Christ. I saw the lad believing in Jesus while yet beneath his father's roof and under his mother's care. No sooner saved than he began at once to serve God after a boy's way. And still increasing in intelligence and energy as a stripling and afterwards as a young man, from the first he devoted himself, with all the intensity of his being, to his Lord's service. So diligent and persevering was he that he lost no time. So jealously did he watch his own heart and so far was he from falling into sin, that there were no dreary intervals spent in wandering and backsliding, and retracing his steps in repenting of the evil, in getting lukewarm and then rekindling former ardor. With my mind's eye, I followed that young man living a holy life through a succession of years, getting up to the highest possible platform of spirituality and staying there, and all the while blessed with such abundance of the Graces and gifts of the Spirit of God as should make him bring forth much fruit to the Glory of the Father, do much for the honor of Jesus, prove a great blessing to the Church, bear a rich testimony to the world and spread saving benefits to the souls of men.

This was my ideal of a vessel "meet for the Master's use." I lingered lovingly upon it. The child became a man. His life was brief. It was soon over. Our days on earth are as a shadow but happily they may be radiant and leave a trail of light behind them. Might not even God, Himself, look down, with a measure of admiration, from His eternal dwelling place on the career I have sketched? The slender threads of fleeting moments are worked up to the goodly fabric of a complete biography. Endowed with one talent, this and that endowment sparse—the gift so prized as to be economized, so looked after that it is never squandered, so usefully employed that its judicious expenditure can never be vainly regretted—so profitably invested that the faithful steward welcomes the advent of his Lord, ready and anxious to give in his account! This is as I would wish to be!

Some of you, who are unconverted can never hope to receive the greeting that awaits such a faithful servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. You have lost your golden opportunity. You have wasted your substance in riotous living. But are there not children here to whom this is possible? And youths who might convert my daydream into a narrative? Oh for men and women with the ambition and one enterprise to glorify the Lord! Ardently do I desire that God should be glorified in me and that not in a small measure. I have prayed and I do pray Him to make the most He can make of me, to do it anyway He wills. What, if to this end, I must be cast into the furnace of action and suffer for His sake? What if my honor should be trampled in the dust and my name become a hissing and a byword, and a reproach among the sons of men while the witness of my integrity is on high? Here am I, O Lord, to do anything, to bear anything that You shall bid! Only get as much Glory to Your own name as can be got out of such a poor creature as I am! Who will join me in this petition? Vows made in our own strength are vain, but I solemnly charge each Christian young man to foster this aspiration. In the name of Him who has redeemed you with His blood, gird up the loins of your mind and survey the course you have to run. Prepare for the good fight of faith in which you are to engage. Live to the utmost possible consecration of your entire manhood in its triple nature—spirit, soul, and body. Yield yourself up unreservedly to the Lord Jesus Christ! Do not stop to parley. "The time is short," therefore, "whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave where you go."

III. "The time is short." THIS INSPIRES US.

It ought to fire us with zeal for immediate action. The sun hastens on, the sands run down. "Now is the accepted time." Let those who love the Lord be prompt. The time to do the deeds that you must do, or leave them undone, flies swiftly past. Say not, "I will do this, by-and-by." Do it at once! Other duties await you. Brief is the space allotted you for all. Are your children converted? Pray with them tonight. Let not tomorrow come without putting your arms about their necks and kneeling down with

them devoutly—and praying fervently that God would save their souls. It is the King's business and it demands haste! "The time is short" for others as well as for yourself. A dear Brother told me, a week or two ago, that a man who frequently worked for him, brought in goods when they were finished. And he thought that the next time the man came in, he would speak to him about his soul. When he came, however, business absorbed the employer's attention and the man went his away. He felt, he did not know exactly why, pricked in his conscience, and resolved that on the next occasion, he would enquire as to his eternal interests. But he was too late.

Instead of coming again, a messenger brought tidings that he was dead. Startled by the news, our Brother could find no comfort in regrets, though he bewailed as one who could not forgive himself a hundred wasted opportunities in the presence of one keen self-reproach. Oh, that an inspiration would constrain you to serve the Lord now! Every time the clock ticks, it seems to say, "now." The time is so short that the matter is urgent. Do not wait, young man, to preach Jesus till you have had more instruction—begin at once! You who mean to do something for the poor of London when you have hoarded up more money, spend your money *now*—do it at once! You who mean to leave a large sum to charities when you die, defer it not—be your own executors. Lay out the capital at once! Get some joy and comfort out of it yourselves. Now is the time to carry a good purpose into good effect. Before you were saved, the message to you was, "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart." After you are saved, the message to you is, "Today, obey His voice and serve the Lord your God with all your heart, and mind, and soul, and strength." "The time is short," so make the most of it!

"The time is short." I want to ring this sentence louder and louder in your ears, that it may *inspire you to pray for immediate conversions.* I have met with many who are hoping to get converted some day, but not now. Is not such procrastination perilous? Dare any of you run the risk of willfully abiding in unbelief another hour? Can you brook the thought of remaining, month after month in jeopardy of your soul? Is it safe to tempt the Lord and provoke the anger of the Most High? O Sirs, while you flatter yourselves with pleasing prospects, you are beguiling your hearts with a reckless presumption! We want you to be converted and no time can be more suitable than this present time. Forsake your sin immediately! Do not turn back to dally with it a little longer. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and lay hold on the promise of eternal life without any further delay! You may never see another morrow, or the desire that whets your appetite now may fail you then. This is our prayer, that you may, this very hour, be brought into the fold of Christ!

Then seeing that "the time is short," *let us bear with patience the ills that vex us.* Are we very poor? "The time is short." Does the bitter cold pierce through our scanty garments? "The time is short." Is consumption beginning to prey on our trembling frame? "The time is short." Are we

unkindly treated by our kinsfolk? Do our comrades revile and our neighbors mock us? "The time is short." Have we to bear evil treatment from an ungenerous world? "The time is short." Do cruel taunts try our tempers? "The time is short." We are travelling at express speed and shall soon be beyond the reach of all the incidents and happenings that disturb and distract us. As we travel home to our Father's House, the distance diminishes and we begin to see the city of the blessed, "the home over there." It is needless to murmur or repine! Why trouble yourselves about what you will do a month or two from now? You may not be here! You may be in Heaven. Your eyes will have beheld "the King in His beauty," you will have seen "the land that is very far off."—

"The way may be rough, but it cannot be long,
So smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song."

Worldly-mindedness ill becomes us who have confessed that we are "strangers and pilgrims on the earth." "The time is short" in which we can hold any possessions in this terrestrial sphere. Then let us not love anything here below too fondly. We brought nothing into the world and it is certain we can carry nothing out. Survey your broad acres, but remember that you will not long be able to walk across them. Look on your plenteous crops, but before long another shall reap the profit of those fields. Count your gold and silver, but know that wealth, greedily as it is sought, will not give you present immunity from sickness and sorrow—neither will it secure your welfare when called to quit your frail tenement. Trust in the living God! Love the Lord and let eternal things absorb your thoughts and engage your affections. "The time is short"—it remains that both they that have wives be as though they had none. And they that weep, as though they wept not. And they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not. And they that use this world, as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world passes away."

Are these gloomy reflections? No, dear Brothers and Sisters, the fact that "the time is short" *should inspire us, who are of the household of faith, with the most joyous expectations!* Do you really believe in the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? Do you really believe that your head is to wear a crown of life that fades not away? Do you really believe that these feet of yours, all shod with silver sandals, will stand upon that street of pure gold? Do you really believe that these hands shall pluck celestial fruit from trees whose leaves can never wither and that you shall lie down in the spice-beds in the gardens of the blessed? Do you believe that these eyes shall see the King in that day when He comes in His Glory and that these bones shall rise again from the grave and your bodies shall be endowed with an incorruptible existence? "Yes," you say, "we do believe it and believe it intensely, too." Well, then, I would that you realized it as so very near that you were expectant of its fulfillment! Who would cry and fret about the passing troubles of a day when he saw the heavens open, beheld the beckoning hand and heard the voice that called him hence? Oh, that the glory might come

streaming into your soul till you forget the darkness of the way! Oh, that the breeze from these goodly mountains would fan you! Oh, that the spray from that mighty ocean would refresh you! Oh, that the music of those bells of Heaven in yonder turrets would enliven you! Then would you speed your way towards the rest that remains for the people of God, inspired with sacred ardor and dauntless courage! But the ungodly are not so. It is to them I must address the last word, "The time is short."

IV. THIS ALARMS US. And well it may on their account. Let me toll a knell. It is a dismal knell I have to toll for the unconverted man to whom life has been a joy, for he has prospered in the world. You have succeeded in the enterprise on which you set your heart. You have bought the estate that you longed to secure. It is certainly a fine place, but you have only got it for two or three years! Would I have taken it for that term? No, I would not have taken it on a 999 years' lease. Freeholds for me! Did I say two or three years? No, there is not a man beneath the sun who can guarantee that you will hold it for three weeks! "The time is short." Drive down the broad avenue, walk round the park—look into the old feudal mansion, but, "the time is short," very short, and your tenure very limited. You have gained your objective, you are possessed of real property—what next? Why, make your will! The thing is urgent. "The time is short." But what have you not done?

You have not believed in Christ! You have not embraced the Gospel. You have not found salvation, you have not laid hold on eternal life—you have not a hope to solace you when your strength fails and you pant for breath! How few the opportunities that remain! Some of you have attended my ministry all the while I have been in London. I wonder how much longer you will hear me and yet remain unsaved? Your turn to die will come at length. You ail a little, but your trifling indisposition does not yield to treatment. The symptoms grow serious, the disease is dangerous, your death is imminent. Pain unnerves you. Terror distracts you. Your family and your friends look at you with helpless pity. The doctor has just left you in dismay. Send for the priest, or fetch the parson—but what can they do for you unless you believe in Jesus? 'Tis over, the last struggle!

Then picture yourself to yourself—a lost spirit asking for a drop of water to cool your tongue! That will be your portion, Sinner, unless you repent! Think, Sirs—there is but a step between you and death—a short step between you and Hell unless you believe in Jesus! Do you still imagine that there is time enough and to spare? I beseech you, do not cherish so vain a thought! It may be that you suspect me of exaggerating, but that I cannot do in such a case as this. Time is rushing on, swiftly but silently. While I speak, the minutes pass, the hour is soon gone, the day is almost spent. I charge you, then, by the ever-blessed Spirit, listen now to the warning—escape from sin! Get out of that broad road which leads to destruction! Believe in Jesus! Lay hold on eternal life! May the Spirit of God awaken you! May these words be blessed to you! They

would be put more forcibly if I knew how. With all the fervor of my soul, I entreat you, for I know your everlasting interests are in imminent jeopardy! God grant that you may not linger longer, lest haply you linger too long and perish in your lingering! "The time is short."

In a little while there will be a great concourse of people in the streets. I think I hear someone enquiring, "What are all these people waiting for?" "Do you not know? He is to be buried today." "And who is that?" "It is Spurgeon." "What? The man that preached at the Tabernacle?" "Yes. He is to be buried today." That will happen very soon and when you see my coffin carried to the silent grave, I would like every one of you, whether converted or not, to be constrained to say, "He did earnestly urge us, in plain and simple language, not to put off the consideration of eternal things. He did entreat us to look to Christ. Now he is gone, our blood is not at his door if we perish."

God grant that you may not have to bear the bitter reproach of your own conscience! But, as I feel that "the time is short," I will stir you up as long as I am in this Tabernacle! And I do pray the Lord to bless the word every time I preach it from this platform. Oh, that some souls may be saved, that Jesus Christ may be glorified, Satan defeated and Heaven filled with saved ones!—

"'Tis not for man to trifle! Life is brief
And sin is here!
Our age is but the falling of a leaf,
A dropping tear.
We have no time to sport away the hours
All must be earnest in a world like ours.
Not many lives, but only one, have we—
Frail, fleeting man!
How saved should that one life ever be—
That narrow span!
Day after day filled up with blessed toil,
Hour after hour still bringing in new spoil."

—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 WAY OF WISDOM
NO. 2862

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 28, 1872.

"There is a path which no fowl knows, and which the vulture's eyes have not seen; the lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it."
Job 28:7, 8.

IN this chapter Job is speaking of the hidden treasures that are to be found deep down in the bowels of the earth. The keen eyes of the vultures, though they see their prey afar off, have never seen the gold, silver and other precious metals which lie in the dark places of the earth. And the lions, especially the young lions hungering for their prey, though they will lie in wait in their lairs in the dens and caves of the earth, have never been able to descend into places as deep as those that are opened up by men who seek after gold and silver.

Yet further on in the chapter we notice that Job refers to the search after wisdom and that he seems to say that though men should explore the deep places of the earth with all the diligence of miners seeking gold and silver, though they should exert all their mental force as miners use all their muscular vigor—and though they should employ all the machinery within their reach, as men do who pierce through the rocks in search of precious treasure—yet it is not within the range of human labor and skill to attain unto wisdom. That can only be found by another and a higher method. It must come to us by Revelation from God, for we cannot find it by our own efforts. I believe, therefore, that I am justified in using the expressions which are found in my text in a spiritual sense, for I think that Job meant to teach us not only what is true of the treasures hidden in the earth, but also something concerning the path of wisdom which is altogether beyond the understanding of the most piercing eyes of reason or imagination.

I shall use the language of our text, first, *in reference to the way of God* which is, in the highest sense, *the way of wisdom.* And then, secondly, *in reference to the path of the truly wise* which is also, secondarily, the path of wisdom as far as mortal man can be wise—as far as he who is born of a woman can walk in the way of wisdom.

I. First, then, IN REFERENCE TO THE WAY OF GOD. His way in dealing with men is past our power to find out.

Think, first of all, of the way of God *in relation to predestination and free agency.* Many have failed to understand how everything, from the

smallest event to the greatest, can be ordained and fixed—and yet how it can be equally true that man is a responsible being and that he acts freely, choosing the evil and rejecting the good. Many have tried to reconcile these two things and various schemes of theology have been formulated with the objective of bringing them into harmony. I do not believe that they are two parallel lines which can never meet, but I do believe that for all practical purposes, they are so nearly parallel that we might regard them as being so. They *do* meet, but only in the Infinite mind of God is there a converging point where they melt into one! As a matter of practical, everyday experience with each one of us, they continually melt into one, but, as far as all finite understanding goes, I do not believe that any created intellect can find where they meet! Only the Uncreated as yet knows this.

It would be a very simple thing to understand the predestination of God if men were clay in the hands of the potter and nothing more. That figure is rightly used in the Scriptures because it reveals one side of the Truth of God—if it contained the whole Truth, the difficulty that puzzles so many would entirely cease. But man is not only clay, he is a great deal more than that, for God has made him an intelligent being and given him understanding and judgment and, above all, will. Fallen and depraved, but still not destroyed, are our judgment, our understanding and our power to will. They are all under bondage, but they are still within us. If we were simply blocks of wood, like the beams and timbers in this building, it would be easy to understand how God could prearrange where we should be put and what purpose we should serve. But it is not easy. No, it is difficult! I venture to say that it is impossible for us to understand how predestination should come true in every jot and tittle, fix everything and yet that there should never be in the whole history of mankind a single violation of the will or a single use of constraint—other than fit and proper constraint—upon man so that he acts according to his own will, just as if there were no predestination whatever and yet, at the same time, the will of God is, in all respects, being carried out!

In order to get rid of this difficulty, there are some who deny either the one Truth or the other. Some seem to believe in a kind of free agency which virtually dethrones God, while others run to the opposite extreme by believing in a sort of fatalism which practically exonerates man from all blame. Both of these views are utterly false and I scarcely know which of the two is the more to be deprecated. We are bound to believe both sides of the Truth revealed in the Scriptures, so I admit that when a Calvinist says that all things happen according to the predestination of God, he speaks the Truth of God—and I am willing to be called a Calvinist. But when an Arminian says that when a man sins, the sin is his own, and that if he continues in sin and perishes, his eternal damnation will lie entirely at his own door, I believe that he, also, speaks the Truth of God—though I am *not* willing to be called an Arminian! The fact is, there is some Truth in both these systems of theology—the mischief is that, in order to make a human system appear to be complete, men ignore a certain Truth, which they do not know how to put into the scheme which

they have formed and, very often, that very Truth, which they ignore, proves to be like the stone which the builders rejected—one of the headstones of the corner—and their building suffers serious damage through its omission.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, if I could fully understand these two Truths of God and could clearly expound them to you. If I could prove to you that they are perfectly consistent with one another, I would be glad to do so and to escape the censures which some people constantly pour upon those who are trying to preach the whole of revealed Truth. But it is more than my soul is worth for me to attempt to alter and trim God's Truth so as to make it pleasing to men! I preach it as I find it in God's Word. I am not responsible for what is in the Book—I am only responsible for telling out what I find there, as it is taught to me by the Holy Spirit. But mark this—to the mind of God there is no difficulty concerning these two Truths, though there is, to us, so much mystery and perplexity! It is all simple enough to Him. He is Omnipotent in the world of mind as well as in the world of matter and He is Omniscient—He knows everything, He foresees everything—so that there are no difficulties to Him. I suppose that if it will add to our happiness in Heaven for us to understand this way of God, which as yet the vulture's eyes have never seen, He will reveal it to us. Yet it may be that even there it will be of no practical use for us to understand it, but it will be better for us, even throughout eternity, to still continue as little children at our Heavenly Father's feet, believing a great deal which, even there, we cannot comprehend.

Even in this life I am as pleased not to know what God does not tell me as I am to know what He reveals to me! At least, if I am not, I ought to be, for that is the condition of a true disciple of Christ—to be inquisitive up to the point in which His Lord is communicative, but to stop there and say—"If, my Master, You have anything to say to me, yet, in Your wisdom, You know that I cannot bear it now, my ears are closed while Your tongue is still, and my heart asks for no more when You tell me that You have revealed enough." Believe me, Brothers and Sisters, there is a path which God takes which you cannot yet understand. You may look and look, and look as with eagle's eyes, but you may blind those eyes by glaring at the sun. You may force your way, as with a lion's heart, into the deep mysteries of God, but you must beware lest you perish in the pit of controversy, or be taken, as in a net, in difficulties which you cannot break through doubting and enquiring man! Be satisfied that God is infinitely above you and that you can no more comprehend Him than your hand can hold the ocean, or your fingers grip the sun! If there were no mysteries in our holy faith, we might well believe that it was devised by men like ourselves, for, if men could fully understand it, men might have invented it. But as it is far beyond the comprehension of the mightiest human intellect, we recognize that it is the work of the Infinite God. Infinite must His Gospel and His Truth be because He is, Himself, Infinite! And dark and mysterious must His pathway sometimes be, though He, Himself, dwells in light that is insufferable to mor-

tal eyes. Finely does John Milton put this thought in his apostrophe to God—

"Dark with excessive bright Your skirts appear."

Passing on to another illustration of the same great Truth, I remind you that God is equally beyond our understanding *in the accomplishment of the designs of His Providence.* There are ways of God, in dealing with the human race, which are very perplexing to the judgment of such poor mortals as we are. We try to study a piece of history and especially if it is a short piece of history, it appears to us all tangled and confused. A further research, over a longer period, will often explain what could not be understood in the shorter range of vision. But even history as a whole, from the Creation and the Fall until now, contains many strange puzzles to a man who believes that God is, through it all, working out His own Glory and that a part of His Glory will consist in producing the highest amount of good to the greatest number of His creatures.

What a mass of mysteries meets us on the very threshold of human history! The serpent in the Garden—how and why came it to be there? And the devil in the serpent, why was there a devil at all? And the evil that made the angel into a devil, why was that permitted? And all the evil that has been since then—why has it not been destroyed? We cannot answer any of these queries. The Negro's question to the missionary, "If God is stronger than Satan, why does not He kill him," is another enquiry which we cannot answer. Depend upon it, if it were, on the whole, best that the devil should be killed, he would be killed. And if it had been, after all, most for God's Glory that there should be no evil, there would have been none. We do not know how and why certain things have happened and we must be content not to know unless God reveals it to us.

All through history God seems to be aiming at a certain mark, yet His arrow does not hit the target as far as you and I can judge. Often He appears to do as the rifleman does, who knows that if he sent the ball in a direct line to the target, he would miss it, so he makes allowance for certain deflections which will be caused by the force of attraction, by the wind and various other opposing influences, and aims accordingly. God often proves that the nearest way to attain His end is to go round about—so, when He means to cleanse a man, He sometimes allows Him to first get more foul! When He intends to clothe him, He first strips him naked. When He resolves to enrich him, He first makes him as poor as Lazarus at the rich man's gate! And, strange to say, when He means to make him alive, He kills him. God's modes of procedure, then, allow for deflection and every other kind of influence—and are not to be understood by us. If you take the whole range of history and look at it carefully, you will be obliged to feel that if God has been working there, as we are quite sure He has, ordering all things with consummate Wisdom, then His pathway through the world is one which no vulture's eyes have ever seen and which no lion or lion's whelp has ever traveled.

It may be that some of you are, at the present moment, complaining of a certain Providential dealing of God with regard to you and that you are thinking and saying that it must be an evil Providence. Yet it is, all the while, one of the best things that has ever happened to you. That over

which you are now mourning will give you good cause for singing in a little while. Probably that tribulation which fetches most tears from our eyes here, will be among the subjects of our choicest song in the eternal realms of joy! We need not know and we cannot know what God is doing, but we may be quite sure that He does all things well.

Very much is this also the Truth in another respect, namely, *in the methods of His Grace.* God will certainly save His chosen people. He will bring Home all His lost children, but how strangely does He deal with some of them! His pathway in Grace no vulture's eyes have ever seen and no lion or lion's whelp has ever trodden. I have known Him allow a child of His to go into sin after sin before He has saved him. A godly mother has anxiously prayed that her boy might be converted, but he has not been. He has grown up to manhood and there has been much tender solicitude for him and many prayers on his behalf. Yet he has passed twenty, thirty, or 40 years in sin and has grown worse and worse. It did not seem as if all this could be according to God's Grace, yet it was, for, in the mysterious Providence of God, this man was brought low by sin, humbled by the iniquity which carried him into the far country and led him to waste his substance in riotous living, and then—and not till then—did he come to God!

His mother had gone to Heaven, doubting whether her prayers for him would ever be heard. Others who were anxious about him slept amidst the gods of the valley, not knowing, except by faith, that their supplications for him would be heard. And that man, because he had gone so far in sin, became the greater monument of the power of Sovereign Grace, was the better able to tell others what God had done, was the more firmly bound to Christ, was the more ardent in Christ's service through the gratitude he felt and became, for God's purposes, a better instrument than he would have been if he had been brought in sooner!

John Bunyan, if he had not been among the chief of sinners, might never have been among the chief of saints. Had he never been what he was—one of the worst men in the village—he might never have preached as he did about "Jerusalem Sinners Saved," and might never have so boldly declared that the biggest sinners should receive the greatest mercy, and that God should be most glorified in their salvation!

I know that some people have turned this great Truth to an evil purpose, for he who looks at God's way and sees the greatness of His Grace, may, if he is wicked enough, draw the inference that he may continue in sin that Grace may abound. Paul tells us plainly what the doom of such men will be—"whose damnation is just." A child of God draws no such evil inference as that from God's mercy, but he says, "After such love as that, how can I sin against the Lord?" So, in saving men, God traverses a path which no fowl knows, which the vulture's eyes have not seen, and the lion or the lion's whelp has not trodden. God knows best how to time His gift of Grace or His postponement of Grace—He knows why He chooses this man at this time and that man at that time—so let Him do as seems good in His sight, for He always does right and unto His name be praise forever and ever!

Now, Beloved, I am persuaded that this Truth may also be applied *to the great things of God which are yet to come, in the latter days, and in the eternity of Glory.* I do not often preach upon the Book of Revelation, nor upon the marvels that are to occur during the millennial period, or at the time of the ingathering of the Jews and so on. I will tell you the reason why I do not and I think it is a sufficient one, namely, that I do not understand these things. If I do not have clear views about these things, I will leave them alone until I have. I have often studied them and I have never found anything as easy as the refuting of every view I have heard or read about the future—nor anything so difficult as to invent a view which somebody else could not refute! There are some great Truths of God about the future that are clearly revealed, such as the Second Coming of Christ, the flooding of the world with the Gospel so that all flesh shall see the salvation of God, the ingathering of the Jews to Christ, if not to their own land, and so on. But as to the order of the various events and the putting together of the various pieces of the puzzle, I believe that my text is true that "there is a path which no fowl knows, and which the vulture's eyes have not seen; the lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it."

It is not easy to tell what Paul means in that wonderful passage, "Then comes the end, when He shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God even the Father…that God may be all in all." What new worlds may yet be created, what revolts there may be among fresh orders of creatures, how many orders of creatures there may yet be in the universe and how great and comprehensive the vast dominions of Jehovah may be, we do not, at present, know—but we shall know all that we need to know in due time! It is enough for us to now know that our Bible is true, that Jesus Christ is our Savior and that we shall be with Him where He is and behold His Glory forever and ever!

Why is there all this mystery? Is it not because God is so great? We can never gauge His greatness by our measuring line or plummet. We get utterly lost whenever we begin to estimate God's unsearchable greatness! Some of you have, perhaps, studied a little astronomy. You have begun to hear or read about the millions and millions of miles which some of the fixed stars are away from us and yet, far beyond those, there may be others from which we are so distant that we are, comparatively speaking, quite near to those that now seem so far away! In trying to realize these wonders in the heavens, one feels as though the brain needed fresh faculties to enable it to grasp even that which the telescope reveals, yet all the starry worlds which human eyes have gazed upon through the most powerful glass yet made, may only be like some tiny cove or bay upon the seashore of a universe which to us must be utterly boundless. Yet that universe, which we conceive to be boundless, is all known to the God who created and sustains it! We are utterly lost in the contemplation of the greatness of God's works—then how can we imagine that we can ever understand God who is infinitely greater than the greatest of the works of His hands?

Then, next, are not all these things mysteries to us because we are so little? I do not merely mean those of us who are feeble and poor, and ignorant—but I mean the great divines, the doctors of the Sorbonne, the members of our Royal Societies, our D.D.'s, LL.D.'s, and all our most learned men! All are fools compared with the wisdom of the Omniscient! All are feeble compared with the Almighty. I do not know how much a gnat understands, but I feel sure that a gnat understands a far larger proportion of what I know, than I can comprehend of what God knows. A fly on the dome of St. Paul's has a very imperfect idea of the greatness and glories of the cathedral, a still more incomplete idea of London and a far more inadequate idea of England. Even if the fly knew England thoroughly, he would need to learn much more to enable him to understand the world! And then there would be the sun and the sun itself is only like a tiny point of light compared with the greater worlds in God's universe. If the fly could comprehend all those worlds, he would still be no appreciable way towards understanding God!

If you knew all that was to be known about a number of marbles that I had given to my sons to play with, that would not prove that you knew all about me—so, if we could understand everything about all the worlds that God has made, it would not prove that we could understand God Himself! He is infinitely above our loftiest conception and we are just nothing at all in comparison with Him. You talk very loudly about your opinion, your thoughts and your conclusions. Ah, poor Souls, the chattering of sparrows in the street is as much worthy to be called wisdom as the predilections of the most learned men among you apart from anything that they have been taught by God the Holy Spirit! All the wisdom that they have which they have learned by themselves is but varnished folly and nothing more!

Moreover, dear Friends, the powers we possess are absolutely insignificant compared with God's. In trying to comprehend the Almighty, we are like a child with a thimble, seeking to tell the size of the sea. We cannot, at our utmost, hold more than a thimbleful and, besides that, our thimble leaks! The powers that we have are warped and spoiled by sin and sinful influence. When we come into this world, our powers are very far from being fully developed and, as they are being developed, somebody or other comes along and warps us with prejudice in our early youth. And as we grow older, we make other prejudices of our own so that what we might know, we sometimes do not care to know. Also, our scales in which we try to weigh God are not accurate. Instead of being true, they are all out of gear and utterly unreliable as well as inadequate to such a task! Our faculties are so disordered and disarranged by all manner of surrounding circumstances that we cannot comprehend much about Him who is incomprehensible even to the loftiest created intelligence. And, besides this, we have such a little time in which to learn about God. A child, going to school for five minutes, knows as much about Greek as we do about God in 70 years, apart from what He pleases to teach us by His Spirit!

Even with regard to God's dealings with His people, what mistakes they make in their judgments! No doubt, Protestantism in England was, upon the whole, greatly strengthened and more deeply rooted by the persecutions under cruel Queen Mary. Foxe's "Book of Martyrs," (which could not have been written had not the martyrs suffered and died), is still, next to the Bible, the great master-gun of Protestantism. Yet many of the Protestants who lived in Mary's day must have felt that God had made an awful mistake in allowing that woman to sit upon the throne and to do so much towards putting down the Gospel of Christ by fire, sword and imprisonment! Yet they made a great mistake in judging by the few years of Mary's reign. God was judging more justly by the whole history of the land for hundreds of years to come! There is not much more wisdom in man's judgment of God than in the flies' fabled judgment of an elephant. It is said that a senate of flies once determined to form a judgment concerning an elephant, so one of them settled on the great creature's ear and walked all round it and then said that an elephant was a long flabby mass of flesh of a certain shape. Another fly had settled on one of the huge legs of the animal and he said that an elephant was a tall column, something like the trunk of a cedar. One lit somewhere on the back and he said that an elephant was a great moving plain, a sort of animal table-land.

The flies could not agree upon any theory of what the creature was like. The fact was that none of them had any clear idea of the whole elephant, but only a partial notion concerning the portion that they could manage to see. So, all that we can do, if we have 50 years in which to study the Scriptures, is to get some imperfect idea of a part of the great Truth of God. Yet some talk as if they knew all about it—like a man who says that he knows all about the Continent because he once landed at Boulogne for a few minutes and then crossed the Channel again! Suppose that we have landed on the shores of knowledge and that we have been there for 50 years—what is that compared with eternity?

What shall I further say before I leave this point? First, let none of us despond because we do not know everything. Let no one say, "I am not God's child because my knowledge is so limited." A *grain* of Divine Grace is worth more than a ton of knowledge! If you have but a spark of true faith in Jesus Christ, it is better than a whole volcano full of worldly wisdom! Do not say, "I cannot be saved because I cannot understand all mysteries." Who but God can understand them? Be thankful that the way of salvation is not a mystery! It is this—"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." Are you puzzled about the Doctrine of Election? Do not ever fall into the mistake of imagining that nobody goes to Heaven but those who understand that great Truth! There are many there who disbelieved it while they were here below, though I think they rejoice in it now. It is not essential to salvation that you should understand that or any other difficult Doctrine of the Scriptures. Do you believe in Jesus as your Savior? Then go your way and rest assured that you will, in due time, find yourself in Heaven!

Again, let us never arraign God before our bar. It is a horrible thing for any man ever to say, "Well, if God acts like that, I do not see the justice of it." How dare you even *hint* that the Judge of all the earth is not just? He has said, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," so do not you say, "It cannot be so." Is it so written in God's Word? Then it is so just because it is there! If God has said anything, it is not right for you to ask for an explanation of His reason for saying it, or to summon Him to your judgment seat. What impertinence this is! He must always do right—He *cannot* do wrong!

Some have staggered over the Doctrine of Eternal Punishment because they could not see how that could be consistent with God's goodness. I have only one question to ask concerning that or any other Doctrine. Does God reveal it in the Scriptures? Then I believe it and leave to Him the vindication of His own consistency! I am sure that He will not inflict a pain upon any creature which that creature does not deserve, that He will never cause any sorrow or misery which is not absolutely necessary and that He will glorify Himself by doing the right, the loving, the kind thing in the end. If we do not see it to be so, it will be none the less so because we are blind! The finger on the lips is the right attitude for us in the presence of things revealed by God, or worked by God! As David said, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth because You did it." If You did it, O Lord, there is no question about the rightness of it, for You are supreme and You ought to be supreme! There is none like You for goodness, for love, for wisdom. Your will ought to be, so let it be done on earth, as it is Heaven, let it be done everywhere, for what You do is always best!

II. I have not much time left for the second part of my discourse which is IN REFERENCE TO THE TRULY WISE, that is, to those who are wise according to Job's declaration in the 28th verse of this Chapter—"Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." Concerning their path, we may truly say that no fowl knows it, no vulture's eyes have seen it, no lion or lion's whelp has trodden it.

First, *the entrance of the Christian into that path is beyond human knowledge.* Who can explain what it is to be born-again? The very figure used by our Savior implies a mystery. Our introduction into this world is shrouded in mystery—so is our introduction into the spiritual world, the world of Divine Grace. You will never be able to explain, even though you have experienced it, how the Spirit of God creates a living soul, as it were, within the ribs of death. How He breathes into our soul the breath of spiritual life so that we who were enemies to God, become the newborn children in His family. This secret cannot be told by mortal man, for he does not know it—it is known only to God.

And, next, *the walk of the Christian along that path as equally beyond human understanding.* How shall I tell you what it is to walk by faith? I have sometimes had, before my mind's eye, as it were, a vision. I thought I saw a great staircase made of light. There appeared to be nothing solid or earthly about it. I was called to ascend this staircase. Beneath my feet there seemed to be nothing. Each step I stood upon appeared to be the

last, yet I went on, on, on—up, up, up, till I was at a dizzy height and I thought that a voice said to me, "Look up." I could see no other step, but, as fast as I ascended one tier, I was told to go on—and fresh steps of light revealed themselves beneath my ascending feet. I trod upon the clouds and found them to be granite. It seemed to be thin air and mist—to mortal men it was nothing. They laughed at me for trusting to it, but, each time my foot went down upon the stair, I found it to be like the eternal hills that are never to be moved. When, in my vision, I had climbed, and climbed, and climbed till I seemed to look down upon the stars, I still climbed on and I understood that this is walking by faith—going ever upward, seeing Him who is invisible, depending upon Him whom no mortal eye can see, but who is clearly recognized by our spiritual senses—grasped by the hand of faith, seen by the eye of faith, heard by the ear of faith—walking through a desert where there is no corn growing, yet daily gathering full supplies of heavenly manna—standing by a rock in which there is no water, yet seeing the living floods leap forth to refresh the weary soul. This is walking by faith and it is a great mystery.

I have known some, with eyes like a vulture's, who have said that they could live by reason. They always did that which they perceived to be best. They would never venture a step beyond where logic would lead them. Ah, Sirs, your bleared eyes which you think to be so keen, can never see the path of the Christian! Others have fancied that to work themselves up into a high state of excitement and enthusiasm is to lead a Christian life. Believe me, Sirs, your vulture eyes have not seen this God-made path! Faith is reasonable, in the highest sense, for it reasons upon the real Truth of God, whereas mere human reason only reasons upon the semblance of truth. Some, who have no more spiritual knowledge than a lion's whelps, have said, "All you have to do is to persuade yourself that you are one of God's elect and it is so." Ah, they know not the path of faith and they who follow their lead will go down to destruction!

Another says, "I feel much that is good within myself and I believe that I have strength enough and wisdom enough to find my way to Heaven." Ah, you may be strong as a fierce lion, but you know not the way of wisdom! That is the very opposite way to yours. We who walk by faith have nothing in ourselves to lean upon! Our very weakness is our strength because it drives us to the Almighty! We have nothing to rely upon except this—that it is written that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"—and we depend on Him and upon the oath and Covenant of God, the Covenant that has been sealed with the precious blood of Jesus—there we rest! There are many imitations of this faith, but the genuine article is as different from all the imitations of it as the true coin of the realm is from the counterfeit of the forger!

Once more, *the Believer's trials are things which unrenewed men cannot comprehend.* If some of us were to begin to tell the ungodly all about our spiritual conflicts, they would think us fools. If we were to describe to them our despair and our hope, our rejoicing and our depression, they would say, "You must be mad to have such experiences!" Just so—"there

is a path which no fowl knows"—and no fool knows and no unsaved soul knows! Our desires, too, are beyond men's sight, and so are our struggles with doubt and our temptations and trials. Many a Believer has been another Hercules, slaying a dragon and cleansing the Augean stables, yet it is all unrecognized except by God—and by those who are themselves spiritual, for the path of Christian victory is one that the lion's whelp treads not.

So is it also with *the Christian's joys.* O Brothers and Sisters, I wish I had time to talk about them! I could not get to the end of that theme, for there are joys that we have in which our spirit is as cool and composed as at any other moment of our life, yet those joys fill us with holy rapture and sacred ecstasy till we feel that, whether in the body or out of the body, we cannot tell—only God knows! Then the head leans on the bosom of the Savior and the lips of Christ are set to our soul's lips and He kisses us with the kisses of His mouth and His love is better than wine! I know that worldly men say, "Give us gold and silver in abundance! Fill our barns and let our wine vats burst with new wine! Give us all the good things of earth and we will be content." It is so, I know, but as for the Christian, he says, "Whom have I in Heaven but You and there is none upon earth that I desire beside You." When we have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given unto us, we get into a way of joy which is as far above all human joy as the path of the eagle, soaring among the Alps is above that of the mole burrowing in the ground!

There are many other equally high things about the way of a Christian which I have not time to mention. I will just refer to two other things. One is *the path of communion with Christ.* We who believe in Jesus know what it is to walk with God. Yes, to walk with God, though He is a consuming fire! To walk with Christ though He is the Judge of the quick and the dead. I have been as conscious of the Presence of God as ever I have been of the presence of my child or of my friend. I have been as sure that I spoke with Christ and emptied out my soul into His soul, and then received His heart's love into my heart, as I have been sure of any event in my whole history! I know what it is to receive sympathy from Christian men, but I also know what it is to have the sympathy of my Lord! I speak not now of things that are only occasional and out of the ordinary course of our lives. To some of us, it has become a blessed habit to speak with Christ—to speak, not merely into His ear, but right down into His heart and to know that we have done so! And to act in a certain way because we have done so and to have no other motive for the action than the fact that we have put the case before the Lord and asked whether it was our duty to do this—and when we knew that it was, have risked everything because we were sure that God had bid us take the step! Oh, the blessedness of living with God! You cannot imitate it. You cannot get near it—it is unapproachable to unrenewed men! It "is a path which no fowl knows, and which the vulture's eyes have not seen."

And it is so, lastly, *with regard to many a Christian's death.* In this matter, also, "there is a path which the vulture's eyes have not seen."

There are some of you who have heard with your ears, and seen with your eyes, the wondrous manifestations at the deaths of some who were dear to you in life and precious in death. Some of these have seen, in their departing moments, what no unaided human eye could ever have seen. And they have told us that they have heard words which it would not have been lawful for them to utter. And that they have enjoyed what it was impossible for human language ever to express. And while they have spoken, we have known that they spoke the truth, for the flash of their eye was supernatural and the calm of their spirit, amidst racking pain which naturally would depress, has been something sublime. We have felt, with regard to their deathbed, as Moses did with regard to the burning bush—humble was the pallet and humble was the patient who lay upon it—but, as the bush glowed with heavenly fire, that bed seemed to be bright with the Presence of Deity, for God was there with His children and Christ was there succoring the members of His mystical body! And we have marvelled, been astonished and have felt that we should take off our shoes, for the place whereon we stood was holy ground!

Those of us whose calling makes us familiar with the departure of Believers, have often felt that there was a path for dying saints which biographers could not describe, which language could not picture and of which memory has left but faint traces upon the tablets of our soul—but which, in itself, was something indescribable, unutterable, Divine! May God grant to all of us the Grace to know all this for ourselves! We can only know it by the illumination of the Divine Spirit, but that blessed Spirit illuminates all the souls that look to Jesus! Indeed, their looking to Jesus is one effect of the Divine Illumination which they have already in part received. Oh, that each heart here may "lay hold on eternal life" by laying hold on the Savior by faith, for then He will reveal to you the great mystery that the unsaved cannot comprehend—and He will say to you, as He said to Peter, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood have not revealed it unto you, but My Father which is in Heaven." The Lord bless you, Beloved Friends! 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.

GREAT FORGIVENESS FOR GREAT SIN
NO. 2863

A WATCH-NIGHT SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 31, 1876.

"In whom we have redemption through the blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His Grace."
Ephesians 1:7.

You scarcely need me to say that Paul is here writing concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, Christ was his constant theme, both in preaching and writing. I have heard of ministers who can preach a sermon without mentioning the name of Jesus from beginning to end. If you ever hear such a sermon as that, mind that you never hear another from that man! If a baker once made me a loaf of bread without any flour in it, I would take good care that he should never do so again. And I say the same of the man who can preach a Christless Gospel! Let those go and hear him who do not value their immortal souls, but, dear Friends, your soul and mine are too precious to be placed at the mercy of such a preacher. Paul's harp had only one string, but he brought such music out of it as never came from any other! He found such infinite variety in Christ that he never exhausted his theme. With him it was Christ first, Christ last, Christ midst, Christ everywhere—and so he could never have his pen in his hand without writing something in praise of his glorious Lord and Savior!

Paul had good reasons for doing this, for Christ had met him on his way to Damascus, stopped him in his persecuting career, renewed his heart and given him a bias ever afterwards towards his new Master. Never did Paul forget that spot, on the road to Damascus! I will guarantee you that he could have found it to his dying day—that spot where he fell to the ground and heard the Voice from Heaven saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" He was a different man ever afterwards! That one event had turned the whole current of his life, so that, from then on, for him to live was Christ. Previously, he had breathed out threats and slaughter against all who bore the name of Christ. Now, he breathes out Christ and His Gospel and has nothing else for which he cares to live and is even willing to die for Him! "But," says someone, "do you not think that Paul carried this idea a little too far? A man of one idea rides his hobby to death and he does not see the other things that are around him." Ah, Sir! Paul did see all around him that which was worth seeing! For him, everything above, below, within, without, around,

had Christ in it, just as, on a bright summer's day, everything has sunshine in it. And, like the Apostle, we can never exaggerate when we rightly speak of Jesus, "for in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," and in Him is stored up all manner of riches and treasures for poor sinful creatures like ourselves.

I am going to magnify Christ, as His gracious Spirit shall help me, by speaking of the pardon of sin which freely comes to us through the redemption which He obtained for us by the shedding of His precious blood. I shall have two divisions. First, *the sins, spoken of in our text, are great sins.* And, secondly, *the forgiveness, spoken of in our text, is also great*—"according to the riches of His Grace."

I. First, then, THE SINS MENTIONED HERE ARE GREAT. Because we preach the greatness of God's mercy, some wicked minds think that sin is but a little thing. But, Sirs it is not so. And if any of you are living in it, listen to me while I try to show you how great it is.

For, first, *see what sin has done to us all.* Our first parents lived in a Garden of delights and, if they had not sinned, we would have been heirs to a happy life free from sickness, sorrow and death. But sin entered the Garden of Eden and withered every leaf, blighted every flower and, soon, Adam was driven out to till the ground that brought forth thorns and thistles in abundance. As for the woman, she and her daughters were condemned to bring forth children in pain and sorrow. Now look at the result of sin all over the world—the poverty that springs from drunkenness, the disease that comes of debauchery, the pangs of conscience that follow all evil-doing. And when you have gazed at the misery now existing on this earth, think of the many graveyards and cemeteries with their myriads of tombs. The very dust which flies down our streets, was, much of it, once alive as part of the body of one of our forefathers! This earth is, indeed, a huge morgue. What was it that slew all these people and dug all these graves? It was sin, for, "sin, when it is finished, brings forth death." It is no small thing that has worked all this mischief among mankind!

If any of you doubt the greatness of sin, let me remind you of *what has happened to those who have died in it.* This Bible, which is the Revelation of God, tells us that sinners who die impenitent are driven from the Presence of God into the outer darkness where there will be weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth forever! I cannot adequately depict that dread abode of lost souls, but there are already myriads there, without light, or hope, or joy, or comfort, waiting for the Day of Judgment when their bodies shall rise and body and soul shall stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. And then will come upon them "the terror of the Lord." If I had to describe the woes of the lost, the language I would have to use would be exceedingly strong, but where would I have to look for it? I would not go to Milton and the other poets, but I would have to gather similes most terrible from the lips of the gentle and loving Christ, for it is He who has told us most about these things! Because He loved men so dearly, He faithfully warned them of the wrath to come—and one proof that sin is no trifle is that the wrath to come is so terrible!

If any still doubt whether sin is a great thing, I ask them to remember *that it must be great because it takes such great Grace to pardon it.* Our text teaches us that the forgiveness of sin is according to the riches of God's Grace—as if, in order to get rid of sin, the Infinite Wealth of His great heart of love must be freely spent. God, who delights in mercy, had to lay out a mint of Grace before sin could be pardoned! Therefore, sin is no small thing. But if you would really know how great a thing sin is, *remember what it cost Christ to be its Forgiver.* Go to Gethsemane and see what it cost Christ to bear it there. The sin that covered Him with a bloody sweat was no trifle. Then follow Him to Pilate's Hall and hear the cruel whips falling on His blessed shoulders, for it is with those stripes that you are healed, and it must be a dire disease that needs such sharp medicine! See the soldiers take Him away and nail Him to the Cross. There He hangs, between Heaven and earth, to die for guilty sinners amid untold anguish which no human eye could see and no mortal mind could understand. Yet there could never have been any forgiveness for sin if there had not been all these pangs on the part of the sinner's Substitute. Surely, sin must be a great thing to need such a great Sacrifice to put it away.

While I am recalling these familiar Truths of God, I hope somebody is saying, "Ah, Sir, I know that my sins are great!" You need not go into particulars, for, if nobody else's sin is great, mine is." Let us all look over the records of this year and see whether it is not so with us. Get out your diary. Ah, you do not put down such things there—you try to forget them. I have been told that, in Naples, there used to be a pit for every day in the year, and each day they took the dead out of the city and flung them into the pit for that day. So there were 365 of these pits which were opened, year after year. In a similar style, you have buried your sins in these 365 days. Let us roll one of the big stones away and look down. No, no! We could not bear to do so, for even one day's sin has such filthiness about it that we cry, if we are in our right senses, "Bury my dead out of my sight!" Think what your sins have been. Think of the idle words you have spoken—for every one of which you will have to give account. Think of the evil thoughts you have had—angry thoughts, proud thoughts, lustful thoughts—they are all sins. Oh, what a terrible heap they make! Would any man here like to shoot out his sins on this platform? I can never understand how a so-called "priest" can ask people to confess their sins to him. I would not make my ear into a common sewer for all the wealth in the world! What foulness there must be on the soul of him who has heard what others have done and who knows what sin he has himself committed! Sin, when we see what it really is, whether in ourselves or in others, horrifies us.

But there is one thing I want you to remember. If there has been nothing done, or said, or thought by you of which you can convict yourself, yet, if you are not now loving God—if for another year you have been God's enemy, if for another year you have refused Christ and have lived without prayer, without repentance and without seeking to be right with God. If for another year you have been indifferent to the claims of the

Most High and careless of His commands—if you have done nothing else but forget God—*that one sin* would be enough to cast you into Hell forever! Remember David's words, "the wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God."

II. Now I turn to the much more joyful side of my subject which is that THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN IS ALSO A GREAT THING.

Is there such a thing as forgiveness of sin? When Martin Luther was in great trouble because of his sin, he obtained much consolation from the remark of a brother monk, who, observing him so cast down, asked to him, "Martin, can you say the Credo?" Martin, of course, answered, "Yes." "Then, do you not remember," said the monk, "that in the Credo it is written, 'I believe in the forgiveness of sins'?" Light seemed to break in upon Luther's darkness by that simple question, as I pray that it may break upon yours while I speak upon that blessed article of a true Christian's creed.

First, you may judge the greatness of the forgiveness *by the greatness of the sin which God forgives in a single moment.* I do not know your age, my dear Friend. Say, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, 80 years—possibly, even 90—but, if you now believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, this very instant the whole mass of your sin will disappear forever! I have heard of one who had lent much money to a debtor and who had received from him many bonds. And when he found the debtor sinking into hopeless bankruptcy, he sent for him and, after showing him the bonds, the amount of which he was unable to meet, even to the extent of a penny in the pound, the generous creditor said, "There is only one way in which we can settle all this debt." And, gathering up all the bonds in his hand, he cast them into the fire. "Now," he said, "I wish you a happy new year. Go your way, for you are out of debt to me." That was a noble thing for anyone to do, and I feel sure that the bond for a thousand pounds would burn as fast as a bond for 50 pounds. So the Lord takes all the bonds of our sin throughout our whole lifetime and puts them into the blaze of His Infinite Mercy—and they all disappear so that, if our sins are searched for, they cannot be found!

Next, measure the greatness of the forgiveness *by the guilt of the sin forgiven.* I always feel that I must speak guardedly upon this point, but I will be as bold as I may. Sinner, if you trust in Christ, He will forgive you the blackest sin into which you have ever fallen. If (God grant that it may not be true!) the crime of murder should be on your conscience. If adultery and fornication should have blackened your very soul. If all the sins that men have ever committed, enormous and stupendous in their aggravation, should be rightly charged to your account, yet, remember that "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all our sin." And remember, also, "he that believes in Him is justified from all things," however black they may be. I like the way Luther talks upon this subject, though he is sometimes rather too bold. He says, "Jesus Christ is not a sham Savior for sham sinners, but He is a real Savior who offers a real Atonement for real sin, for gross crimes, for shameless offenses, for transgressions of every sort and every size."

And a far greater One than Luther has said, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." I have set the door of Mercy open wide, have I not? There is no one here who will dare to say, "Mr. Spurgeon said that I was too guilty to be forgiven." I have said nothing of the kind! However great your guilt, though your sins, like the great mountains tower above the clouds, the floods of Divine Mercy can roll over the tops of the highest mountains of iniquity and drown them all! God give you Grace to believe this and to prove it true this very hour!

In the third place, the greatness of God's forgiveness may be judged *by the freeness of it.* When a poor sinner comes to Christ for pardon, Christ does not ask him to pay anything for it, or to *do* anything, or to *be* anything, or to *feel* anything, but He freely forgives him. I know what you think. "I shall have to go through a certain penance of heart, at any rate, if not of body. I shall have to weep so much, or pray so much, or do so much, or feel so much." That is not what the Gospel says—that is only your fancy. The Gospel is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Trust Jesus Christ, and the free pardon of sin is at once given "without money and without price"!

Another thing that indicates its greatness is *its immediateness.* God will forgive you at once, as soon as you trust Christ. There was a daughter, well beloved by her father, who, in an evil hour, left her home and came to London. Here, having no friends, she soon fell prey to wicked men and became an utter wreck. A city missionary met with her and spoke faithfully to her about her sin—and the Holy Spirit brought her to the Savior's feet. The missionary asked for her father's name and address, and at last she told him. But she said, "It is no use for you to write him. I have brought such dishonor on my family that I am quite certain he would not reply to any letter." They wrote to the father and stated the cases—and the letter that came back bore on the envelope, in large text hand, the word, "IMMEDIATE." Inside, he wrote, "I have prayed every day that I might find my child and am rejoiced to hear of her. Let her come home at once. I have freely forgiven her, and I long to clasp her to my bosom."

Now, Soul, if you seek mercy, this is just what the Lord will do with you. He will send you mercy marked, "IMMEDIATE," and you shall have it at once! I recollect how I found mercy, in a moment, as I was told to look to Jesus and I would be forgiven. I did look and, swift as a lightning flash, I received the pardon of sin in which I have rejoiced to this very hour! Why should it not be the same with you—the blackest and worst sinner here—the most unfeeling and the least likely to repent? Lord, grant it, and You shall have the praise!

Again, the greatness of God's forgiveness may be measured *by the completeness of it.* When a man trusts Christ and is forgiven, his sin is so entirely gone that it is as though it had never been! Your children bring home their copy-books without any blots in them, but if you look carefully, you can see where blots have been erased. But when the Lord Jesus Christ blots out the sins of His people, He leaves no marks of erasure

and the forgiven sinners are as much accepted before God as if they had never sinned!

Perhaps someone says, "You are putting the matter very strongly." I know I am, but not more strongly than the Word of God does. The Prophet Micah, speaking to the Lord under the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, says, "You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." Not into the shallows, where they might be dredged up again, but into the great deeps, as in the middle of the Atlantic. Then Isaiah says to the Lord, "You have cast all my sins behind Your back." Can you tell me where God's back is? God's face is everywhere—then where is His back and where are His people's sins? Why, nowhere at all! Daniel says that the work of the Messiah is to finish the transgression—and it is finished for all who believe in Him. Daniel also says that He is to make an end of sins—then there is an end of them for all who trust in Him! Then there is that glorious passage which cannot be quoted too often—"In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none." What? All my sins gone? Yes, they are all gone if you believe in Jesus, for He cast them into His tomb where they are buried forever. This is enough to make you dance, like David did before the Ark, for, when God once pardons a man, He never condemns him again. It is not God's way to play fast and loose with people. If I am in Christ Jesus, the verdict of, "No condemnation," must always be mine, for who can condemn the one for whom Christ has died? No one, for, "whom He justified, them He also glorified." If you have trusted your soul upon the Atonement made by the blood of Christ, you are absolved and you may go your way in peace, knowing that neither death nor Hell shall ever divide you from Christ! You are His and you shall be His forever and ever!

"Well," asks one, "that is a great thing. How is it to be obtained?" It is to be had for nothing, simply for the asking, simply by trusting Christ. If that is done, all is done and all these blessings are yours, and yours forevermore!

Now I close by showing you how really God forgives sin. I am sure He does, for I have proved it in my own case and I have heard of many more like myself. I have known the Lord to take a man full of sin and renew him and, in a moment to make him feel, and feel it truly, too, "God loves me." And he has cried, "Abba, Father," and he has begun to pray and has had answers to prayer! And God has manifested His Infinite Grace to him in a thousand ways. By-and-by, that man has been trusted by God with some service for Him, as Paul and others were put in trust with the Gospel—and as some of us also are. With some of us, the Lord has been very familiar and very kind and has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus.

Now I have done when I have just said that, as these things are true, then nobody ought to despair. Come, Sister, smooth those wrinkles out of your forehead! You have been saying, "I shall never be saved," but you must not talk like that, for Christ's forgiveness of sin is "according to the riches of His Grace." And, Brother, are you in trouble because you have sinned against God? As He is so ready to forgive, you ought to be sorry

that you have grieved such a gracious God! As He is so ready to forgive, let us be ready to be forgiven! Let us not leave this house, though the midnight hour is about to strike, until we have received this great redemption, this great forgiveness for great sin!

Perhaps someone says, "When I get home, I will ask God's forgiveness." Do not wait until you get home! Suppose that I had done some wrong to any of you and that I sat next to you—I do not think that I should wait until we entered the new year before asking you to forgive me. Do so with God—say to Him, "Since You are so ready to forgive, I ask to be forgiven. I trust that I shall be forgiven through Jesus Christ, Your Son." It is a grand thing to begin the new year with a new heart and a new spirit! That would set all the bells of your soul ringing. The question is, Will you believe on the Son of God? In the name of Jesus Christ who died upon the Cross, I demand your faith in Him! He is no impostor. He is no pretender, He is worthy of your heart's trust, so believe in Him. I pray the Holy Spirit to work this faith in you, that you may be saved, and saved now, and receive at once the forgiveness of all your sins!

Thus have I preached the Gospel to you. If you reject it, it is at your peril. I draw a ring round you as the Roman ambassador drew one round the Eastern monarch and said to him, "Step out of that ring, and it will mean war with Rome." So I draw a ring round the seat where you are sitting and say to you, in the name of God, "You must not rise up from that seat until you have peace with God through faith in Jesus Christ, or else have taken upon yourself the responsibility of remaining an enemy of God, for I can say no more to you till the Judgment Day breaks and I have to give account for preaching this sermon—and you have to give account for hearing it! I can say no more than this! There is pardon to be obtained by believing! Jesus Christ is fully worthy of your confidence—trust Him now and you shall receive full and free forgiveness! The Lord help you to do so, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—548, 562, 595.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 15.

We have read this chapter together many times. Possibly some of us have read it hundreds of times, yet whenever we read it, we always find something fresh in it. It is always bright and sparkling, full of diamonds and other precious gems of Truth.

Verses 1-3. *Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners, to hear Him, and the Pharisees, and scribes murmured, saying, This Man receives sinners, and eats with them. And He spoke this parable unto them.* The deepest feelings of our Savior's heart seem to have been brought out by the two classes of persons here mentioned—His pity and compassion towards the sinful—and His righteous anger at the perpetual objections of the hypocritical Pharisees and scribes. The one class caused His heart to overflow with love, the other excited His burning in-

dignation, yet, even then, His soul was moved with pity and tenderness toward the wandering and erring. We ought to be grateful to the Pharisees for having led our Lord to utter the three wonderful parables which we are about to read. Luke says, "He spoke this parable unto them," implying that the three are really one, a picture in three panels. The whole plan of salvation is not to be found in either of the parables by itself, but in all three combined. Some points omitted in any one of them will be found in one of the others. "He spoke this parable unto them, saying."

3-7. *Saying, what man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, does not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost until he find it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulder, 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 that repents, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.* The shepherd had an extraordinary joy in his flock through the wandering and recovery of that one sheep. If they had all stayed in the fold and none of them had strayed away, he would have been glad, but there would have been a sort of tameness and sameness about his constant satisfaction with them. But that wandering sheep stirred up other emotions in his heart and when he had found it, he experienced a new joy, a higher joy than he would otherwise have known! So, though sin is a great evil, yet it has been overruled by God in such a way as to introduce a new joy into the universe.

Songs of praise that would never have made the angels' harps to ring are now heard in Paradise! There would never have been any repentance if there had never been any sin—and the love of the Great and Good Shepherd towards wandering sheep would never have been revealed if no sheep had ever wandered from the fold. I suppose it was some such feeling as this that caused Augustine somewhat rashly to exclaim, concerning the Fall, "O beata culpa!"—O happy fault which has thus made manifest the abounding mercy of God! Looked at in one aspect, all sin is an unutterable calamity, but as it has had the effect of displaying still more of the matchless mercy of God in the Person of Jesus Christ, we see how God brings forth good out of evil!

The chief point of the parable is the shepherd's joy derived from the finding of the lost sheep. Our Savior needed no other reason for looking after publicans and sinners than the fact that He would get far more joy out of them than He would out of the Pharisees and scribes, even if they were what they professed to be, "just persons, which need no repentance." This first panel of the picture specially sets forth the work of the Son of God. Why was not the Father's work put first, as the Trinity is, "the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit"? Why is it, also, that in the Benediction, Paul writes, "The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all." Why, because the love of Christ is the first thing that the sinner apprehends! Our first Christian experience is not, as a rule, a knowledge of the Holy Spirit or the Father, but, to our consciousness, it is Jesus Christ who is first

revealed to us. I think it is for this reason that the work of the Son of God is here set forth first.

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 seek diligently till she find 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 that repents.* As I have already said concerning the lost sheep, there was a new joy over the recovery of the lost silver. The woman always rejoiced over the pieces of silver, but that one particular piece had been the cause of new joy—the joy which is experienced whenever the sorrow of loss is outweighed by the joy of finding again that which was lost! Is this woman intended to represent the Church of Chris, and is she thus set before us because the Church is the great agent under the control of the Divine Spirit, in seeking the lost, carrying the lighted candle of the Word, sweeping with the besom of earnest, faithful preaching, applying the Law of the Lord to the conscience of man and turning everything upside down until, at last, the lost piece of silver is found? If so, this second panel of the picture sets forth the work of the Holy Spirit as worked through the Church of Christ.

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*—for sin is very rapid in its development and sinners are often in great haste to get away from God. The young man's heart was already wrong, or he would not have wanted to be his own master. He was already away in the far country—so far as his heart was concerned—and it was not long before his body followed. "Not many days after"—

13-15. *The younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in need. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.* Probably that was the best thing he could do for him and, usually, when the world does the best it can for a sinner, it sets him feeding swine. It was the most degrading employment to which a Hebrew could be put and, in like manner, sin, before it is finished, brings forth degradation on the way to bringing forth death!

16. *And he would gladly have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: but no man gave unto him.* "He would gladly have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat," but he could not, for he was a man and not one of the swine. Worldlings are happy in their own poor way and I, for one, never grudge them their husks. One never craves the slop that is given to the pigs—we let them have their trough as full as they please, and never want so much as a taste of it! So, when sinners are full of worldly joys, we may not envy them and we may scarcely blame them. Let the swine have their husks. Once, we too would gladly

have filled our belly with them—and if we *did not*, it was not because we *would not*, but because we *could not*.

17. *And when he came to himself.* For sin is insanity! He was out of his mind while he was acting so foolishly—"When he came to himself."

17-19. *He said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son: make me as one of your hired servants.* It was the knowledge that there was plenty in his father's house that led him back! And you may depend upon it that the preaching of full salvation rich in blessing is a strong inducement to a sinner to cry, "I will arise and go to my Father." This prodigal son might never have gone back if his father had kept a miserly house with a scanty table. But he knew that even the servants in the kitchen had "bread enough and to spare." His father never stinted them—they had what they needed, and there was always more than they could eat—so there was no need for his son to "perish with hunger." In like manner, the extraordinary bounty of God in Christ Jesus—the richness of His free Redemption is, I doubt not, the means of bringing many a starving soul to Christ.

The prodigal said that the servants had "bread enough and to spare." There are some who seem to think that in Christ there is only just bread enough, but we believe that the largest possible idea of the value of His Redemption may be indulged and, oftentimes, the thought that first enters the sinner's ear and heart is that there is "bread enough and to spare," so why should he not have some of the spare bread, at any rate? That was the way that the prodigal argued. He felt sure that his father could feed another hired servant, so he resolved that he would ask to be engaged in that capacity. Yet you know that he never asked that—his father stopped him before he could make that request.

20. *And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him.* Perhaps before he saw his father—"his father saw him."

20. *And had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him.* Matthew Henry's comment on this verse is excellent—"'His father saw him.' Here were eyes of mercy. 'And had compassion.' Here was a heart of mercy. 'And ran.' Here were feet of mercy. 'And fell on his neck.' Here were arms of mercy. 'And kissed him.' Here were lips of mercy." It was all mercy from first to last!

21. *And the son said unto him.* The father kissed his son before he had time to say anything! And Divine compassion is swifter even than our prayers.

21, 22. *Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in your sight, and am no more worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe and put it on him.* He did not let him finish his prayer with the request that he might be taken on as a hired servant. That part which was legal he stopped with a kiss on his mouth and then he said to his servants, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him."

22-24. *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.* This, again, was a new joy in that family circle! There was joy when the elder brother was born and joy when the younger son came into the household—but this joy over his return was one that they never would have known if he had not gone away. So, there is joy to be had even out of sinners. Christ's objective was to show that, bad as the publicans and other gross sinners were, and despised as they were by the Pharisees and scribes, yet there was joy to be had out of them. By their salvation, the very heart of the Great Father is rejoiced!

25. *Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing.* The elder brother in our day says, "I do not believe in these revival services. I like regular, orderly proceedings and I do not approve of these crowds of people coming to hear the Word under such undue excitement as is sure to result." That elder brother thought he knew a great many things. He did not get carried away by excitement, as other people did—he was too old for that—he was a man of very proper habits and he liked everything done in a cold orthodox style.

26. *And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.* "What are you all doing? Have you gone out of your minds? Why are you all dancing? Who is to pay for that music? You had better have been along with me out in the fields at work. What is the meaning of all this merriment?"

27. *And he said unto him, Your brother is home: and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.* These servants spoke as some of us have told to others what the Lord has done when souls have been saved—the unregenerate quickened, and those that were far off from God, by wicked works, have come back to Him. We have told it all in the simplicity of our hearts and have been so glad to tell the good tidings that we felt as if we could keep on dancing to the music while we were telling the story!

28. *And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him.* I never know which to admire the more—the love of the father in going to meet the returning prodigal, or in going out to talk with this coldhearted elder brother. He was a son, but he had not the true spirit of his father—he had fallen into a very wrong state of mind—just like certain Christians I know who have always been very proper, and who have little sympathy with those who have been great sinners. They seem as if they do not want to see such people as these brought to the Savior. "Why," they exclaim, "there are girls from the street and men that have been burglars, and all sorts of rabble being brought into the church!" I have heard such remarks and I have seen the same sort of spirit displayed in the looks of others who have not liked to say what they thought. Yet they themselves were no better than others by nature, though Grace has done much in restraining them from the sin

into which others have fallen—and it was wrong for them to talk as if they were sheer legalists, as this Pharisaic elder brother did!

29. *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.* A Christian of this stamp seems to say to the Lord, "I have been Your child all these years, yet I am still full of doubts and fears. I have none of the high joys that I see these other people have! 'You never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.' I am chastened every morning and I go sighing all the day long. I seem to get but little comfort, yet here are these young folk who have not been saved a week—and they seem to be full of assurance and they are as happy as ever they can be. Surely, they cannot belong to the tried family of God! How can they be sincere with all that music and dancing? I cannot endure it, for I never had such an experience."

30, 31. *But as soon as this your son was come, which has devoured your living with harlots, you have killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.* Think of that, you who are the Lord's people, but who have fallen into a grumbling state of heart. Are you not always with your Lord and is not all that He has yours? If you have never had a kid to make merry with your friends, whose fault is that? Your Father never denied it to you. All in His house is yours, so take the good that He provides for you and rejoice over it, for then you will be in a fit state to go to meet your poor returning prodigal brother and to welcome him with a smiling face and a gladsome heart!

32. *It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this, your brother, was dead, and is alive again; and was lost and is found.* After that reply, there was nothing more that could be said, even by the grumbling elder brother.

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

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